



Registered Charity Number 204644

Hobson's Conduit Trust

The Guildhall

Cambridge

Please reply to

26, Highfield Avenue

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30th January 2026

By email to localplan@greatercambridgeplanning.org

Stephen Kelly, Esq., MBE

Joint Director,

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning

Dear Stephen,

Consultation on Draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan

I write as the Chairman of Hobson's Conduit Trust.

For four centuries the Trust and its precursors (known as the Feoffees) have been responsible for the protection and maintenance of Hobson's Brook and Conduit, with rights and obligations deriving initially from the 1610 Tripartite Indenture. A transcription of this has been attached for ease of reference. Suffice to say that the Trustees' focus remains on the maintenance of flow and water quality in the watercourse and the protection and

maintenance of the corridor and habitats through which Hobson's Brook and Conduit pass, and to which the Brook and Conduit bring water and thus life to this day.

We take our responsibilities for safeguarding the Brook and Conduit and the natural habit it represents and sustains with the utmost seriousness.

Nine Wells Local Nature Reserve was purchased in 1835 as a freehold under the 1834 Great Shelford Inclosure Act jointly by the City and the University, and it is managed by Cambridge City Council. Nine Wells remains the principal source of spring water feeding into our chalk stream system, and so it is axiomatic that the Trust is directly concerned with the health of the springs and the curation of Nine Wells LNR, where there is a Listed nineteenth century monument commemorating the Conduit and its benefactors. Hobson's Conduit was then Cambridge's principal potable water supply.

More recently, we have entered into a range of legal agreements (Deeds) with the developers of Clay Farm, and Cambridge University Hospitals and the Cambridge Biomedical Campus which are binding also upon all developers of new buildings on the hospital and CBC sites.

These Deeds of Grant of Easements cover surface water arriving into the Brook from effectively the entire Cambridge Biomedical Campus, together with an over-arching similar agreement (also a Deed) covering the Hospital land. All of these are very well understood and observed and are on the public register. Parameters have been carefully established for flow rates of run off, and many mitigation interventions have been successfully included in the Clay Farm residential development's surface water strategy, as well as the CBC and Cambridge South surface water drainage strategies. We are in contact with both East west rail and GCP/Atkins on the CSET busway with a view to optimising their drainage arrangements in relation to the Brook and its surrounds.

We currently expect analogous individual Deed-based arrangements to those existing ones covering the current Biomedical Campus to be set up relating to all future growth of the Biomedical Campus where surface water drainage comes towards Hobson's Brook. That means in effect the entire development area covered under Policy S/CBC: Cambridge Biomedical Campus (including Addenbrooke's Hospital). It will therefore be obvious to you why the Trustees are alarmed by the paucity of references in the SPD to the Trust, to Nine Wells, and to the Brook, and to the legal structure surrounding surface water in and around the Biomedical Campus. We believe that these legal arrangements and constraints should be recognised in Policy S/CBC: Cambridge Biomedical Campus (including Addenbrooke's Hospital).

We believe that the Local Plan, (as indeed the current CBC SPD), need to acknowledge and to state much more explicitly the extreme importance of the the maintenance of water quality and the natural environment and habitats along the city's green corridors, including that from Nine Wells to the City centre formed around Hobson's Brook and Conduit.

It will therefore be obvious that the Trust is keenly interested in those aspects of the draft Local Plan that actually or potentially impact our responsibilities, including the protection and enhancement of what may be called the green corridor through which the Brook and Conduit run. This is a community asset and amenity, much loved and valued by residents and visitors, which faces increasing pressure from the growing working and residential population around the Biomedical Campus, Clay Farm and the south-eastern axis.

We therefore believe that the ambitions set out for the area on the northern slopes of White Hill need far greater definition and greater ambition. This would also be entirely consistent with the Trust's Vision for Nine Wells.

Equally, it will be obvious that the Trust must take a close and active interest in Cambridge's wider groundwater crisis, and the impact of that on our chalk streams. Finding effective ways to mitigate and reduce the additional burdens created by any new development is a matter that concerns the Trustees directly. In this we are assisted greatly by the City Council's Sustainable Drainage Engineers, and by our expert advisers.

You may be aware that the augmentation that we receive at Nine Wells (mandated this year by the Environment Agency this past six month since July 2025 and continuing at c. 20 litres per second, the maximum rate) is made necessary by the impact of the cone of depression from the deep borehole Cambridge Water Company's Babraham Pumping Station which extends fully five kilometres around it.

The Trustees look with great anticipation to the arrival in Cambridge Water's public water supply of a major contribution from Grafham Water and from the new Chatteris Reservoir. Together, at least for five years from about 2025, these will mean that the pressure on chalk steams will be relieved. But that is only in the context of the general increase in demand that is envisaged by the current proposals in the new Local plan. There is no margin, I repeat, NO MARGIN, for further growth in demand if the existing damage to our environment and watercourses is to be contained and reversed to the point where, according to the Environment Agency, chalk stream and river flows can be restored to normal from around 2036.

The Trustees therefore warmly welcome the gratifying way in which the new draft plan has focused on water, especially, for example through Policy CC/IW: Integrated water management, sustainable drainage and water quality.

We are, however, conscious that a number of the measures and engineering innovations require progress on a number of fronts, including legislative and regulatory, in order to make targets such as 80 litres pppd actually achievable. Eddington is a perfect worked example of having installed systems to improve water efficiency to that point but that cannot yet be used. Under the current frameworks these are not yet solutions.

Taking a further example, the new proposed settlement at Grange Farm Policy S/GF: Land adjacent to A11 and A1307 already exhibits laudable elements and characteristics (being up-slope) so that it could, if all the proposed mitigations and water handling systems are included, be neutral to positive in overall impact on the River Granta. Sadly, not by any means all of the new developments, especially those which expand on existing recent growth, can be seen in the same positive light.

As you may well already be aware, the Trustees have for years been very concerned about the impact of the CSET proposals, particularly on Nine Wells and the Brook. The Trust supports the on-road alternative being put forward by the Better Ways for Busways group. We wish to comment specifically on the following.

Policy S/DS: Development strategy Development strategy

Para 2.90 (PDF page 75) We agree that improvements to key corridors should be pivotal to the transport strategy. However, CSET is not proposed to sit within a public transport corridor. Rather, it will create a new bus road across greenbelt land from the A11 at Grange Farm travelling north to terminate at Cambridge South Station.

Better Ways for Busways has proposed an alternative route, supported by the Trustees, which does adopt the existing transport corridor, already substantially exists though partly marked out of use, and is, therefore, much less environmentally destructive, improves accessibility for a range of different users, and is more cost-efficient.

Policy S/CBC clause 20f: Policy S/CBC: Cambridge Biomedical Campus (including Addenbrooke's Hospital)

The plan proposes a new vehicle access into the Cambridge Biomedical Campus (CBC) from Granham's Road. We question whether this multi-modal access road is needed at all if the Better Ways for Busways' alternative for a busway spur off the A1307 Hinton Way roundabout was adopted.

Furthermore, this route would connect all parts of the CBC with Cambridge South Station, which CSET completely fails to do.

The alternative spur proposed by Better Ways for Busways would significantly reduce traffic volumes in the immediate vicinity of Addenbrooke's, relieving congestion on Babrahan Road and Hills Road, and offers proximity to Babraham P&R as an active travel route.

It would also have the added advantage of offering direct access to the hospitals for emergency vehicles: an effective blue light route.

To facilitate the alternative CSET route, we support upgrades to Francis Crick Avenue and Dame Mary Archer Way, as per clause 20b.

A link from Granham's Road into CBC will exacerbate the already severe congestion at the junction with the A1301 High Green (at the Coop) and the queuing at the level crossing.

Policy BG/GI clause 5(3) Policy BG/GI: Green and blue infrastructure

We note the rightful inclusion of the Gog Magog Hills and chalkland fringe in the list of identified priorities for enhancing strategic green infrastructure across Greater Cambridge.

However, the Gog Magog Hills will be negatively impacted by CSET.

The Gog Magog Hills, despite being a priority for enhancing strategic green infrastructure across Greater Cambridge, are not being accorded sufficient value and hence protection when evaluating the environmental and landscape impacts of the proposed route of the CSET busway. As proposed by the Greater Cambridge Partnership, the lengthy section of the busway from where it crosses the track to the east of Stapleford Granary and continues in a north-westerly direction to where it passes Nine Wells Local Nature Reserve near Cambridge South Station will use the lower slopes of the Gog Magog Hills.

There is, therefore, *a glaring inconsistency* between the green infrastructure aims of the draft Local Plan and its transport strategy.

This inconsistency could be at least partly mitigated if an alternative, on-road route along the A1307 corridor from the A11 to the Cambridge Biomedical Campus was pursued instead.

In the context of the setting of Nine Wells, but also in the wider context of a local plan that includes the entire green corridor represented and sustained by Hobson's Brook and Conduit we share the concerns about the lack of general prioritisation of green space expressed by James Littlewood in his article in the Current Cambridge Independent. A scan of this is attached for ease of reference.

The popularity of the path along the Conduit and Brook through Hobson's Park out to Nine Wells makes the Trustees acutely aware of the importance of green space in a growing city. We feel strongly that this demonstrates fully the importance of making the preservation and provision of accessible high quality green space and natural habitat a much higher and better delineated priority than it is in the current draft.

Thank you for your kind attention

Yours sincerely



John A Latham

Chairman

Hobson's Conduit Trust