

Growth chief and mayor to give evidence at C2C busway inquiry

By Gemma Gardner

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Cambridge Growth Company chair Peter Freeman will be among those called to give evidence at a public inquiry into the £200million Cambourne to Cambridge (C2C) busway – but Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority mayor Paul Bristow will speak against the plans.

It was confirmed at a pre-inquiry meeting held on Tuesday (24 June) at Wolfson College to discuss procedural and logistical arrangements that Mr Bristow will present a statement to the eight-week hearing in September.

Alison Melton, special adviser to the mayor, told the meeting: “He will be objecting and there are a number of grounds, most of which are in the

public domain already. He’s got concerns around environmental issues, value for money, safety etc.”

East West Rail also has a “holding objection” against the scheme, which it says it “supports the principle”, because the busway “crosses the planned route of EWR on land that the Secretary of State has safeguarded for the new railway”.

Meanwhile, the county council, as the applicant, will call Mr Freeman to give evidence. He has been put in charge of the Cambridge Growth Company by the government to facilitate economic growth here.

Tuesday’s meeting was led by Richard Clegg and Geoff Underwood, as the appointed panel of inspectors.

They explained that a result would not come straight after the inquiry. Instead, a recommendation will be passed to the secretaries of state.

Mr Underwood said: “There will be a time lag between the closing of the inquiry, and the time you actually hear from the secretaries of state on what their decision is.”

Among those who will argue against the route proposed will be the conservation charity Cambridge Past, Present and Future and Coton Parish Council, as well as Clare Hall and Coton Orchard.

The two-way 8.5-mile (13.6km) busway has been devised by the Greater Cambridge Partnership on behalf of the county council as highways authority, to improve public transport between Cambourne and the city.

But the busway, expected to cost at least £200m, has faced huge opposition from campaigners for the off-road route it is due to take through the West Fields at Coton, which will mean

cutting down hundreds of mature trees at Coton Orchard.

A detailed programme for the inquiry will now be produced. This will be published ahead of the inquiry, which is due to be held from the week commencing 15 September until 21 November. It is due to sit each week from Tuesday to Friday, but will not meet during the weeks of 6-10 October and 27-31 October.

All sessions will take place at the Cambridge Belfry hotel in Cambourne, except for the final day, which will be held at South Cambridgeshire District Council’s offices in Cambourne.

Application documents show the busway is due to run from Sterling Way in Cambourne to Grange Road in Cambridge and will be segregated from roads except for stretches of running along St Neots Road in Hardwick and on Charles Babbage Road.