

Construction of two bridges and all associated structures, ramped walkways, stairs, lifts, boundary wall, footway and cycle paths, lighting, utilities, construction access, construction compound, hard and soft landscaping works, planting, tree removal, earthworks, drainage infrastructure, surface water drainage features and all necessary enabling works and demolitions (application ref. 23/00482/FUL)

Thank you for consulting Hinxtton Parish Council ('HPC') on the above application. The matter was considered at our meeting on 13th March 2023, and the following comments have been endorsed on behalf of HPC.

KEY POINTS

In summary, our view on the principle of the bridges is as follows:

1. We are disappointed that U&C has made this application without further engagement with HPC, as previously promised;
2. The bridges are significant, over-engineered structures detracting from the rural character of the village;
3. The northern bridge is overbearing due to its location close to New Road, Hinxtton Hall and the listed Hinxtton church (while the illustrations of the bridges in the Design and Access Statement (DAS) appear to show trees at 25 year maturity);
4. The proposal does not reflect the likely patterns of movement to and from the village to the expansion area.

We now elaborate further :

1. HPC's previous concerns have not been addressed

From the point that the bridges were first mentioned in July 2022 in connection with the A1301 upgrade works, we have been challenging U&C (the Applicant) about the principle of the bridges, which were not deemed necessary under the outline planning consent. Please see the attached chronology as Appendix 1, but in summary:

HPC was first made aware of the bridges proposal during a call organised by the Applicant about the A1301 upgrades on 5th July 2022¹, when we were surprised at seeing advanced designs not part of the outline permission and which had not been previously discussed. This was followed up by our letter of 29th July 2022 (further copy attached as Appendix 2) and several emails to Caroline Foster and her colleagues.

Hinxtton Community Forum Meetings were then held on 19th October 2022 (general development update) and 30th November 2022 (bridge presentation), and a Community Liaison Group meeting (involving all the parishes) took place on 7th December 2022 (repeating the bridge presentation).

The meetings were well attended. There was widespread dissatisfaction expressed by the village at these presentations, including (inter alia) as to why the bridges were not included in the outline consent, why two bridges are needed, why the Applicant had been consulting with SCDC since September 2021 without reference to the village (as noted in the Statement of Community Engagement attached to the Planning Statement), why the Northerly bridge was so close to the village and how construction traffic would be managed. Several people pointed out that the Applicant

¹ Not 3rd July as mentioned in the Statement of Community Engagement

approached this exercise as though the A1301 were a “private road” and not a major link road between Saffron Walden and Cambridge.

The narrative from the Applicant was that design discussions were ongoing and that they would revert to HPC before the bridge application was submitted, but they needed to progress discussions with the Greater Cambs planning team first. In practice, that has not happened. There were no further meetings on the bridges prior to the submission of the bridges application, while the latest community liaison meeting (8th March 2023) was cancelled and has been rescheduled for 26th April 2023. One could be forgiven for thinking the Applicant does not want a community liaison meeting whilst the bridges application is live.

There is a strong feeling amongst the residents of the village that the Applicant appears to have closed off the channels of communication that existed prior to the 30th November 2022 meeting, both as regards the bridges, the A1301 upgrades and more generally. Other related examples:

- We were told at the 30th November meeting that the Applicant would come back to us with four options for discussion regarding the New Road/A1301 junction. That has not happened. We have only received the Applicant’s response to 22/03615/REM (Reserved Matters Approval in respect of the A1301 improvement works) which makes anecdotal reference the issue and appears to dismiss the concern;
- Other than the photos included in the bridges application itself, we have not received mock ups, as promised on 30th November, of the views south from New Road and across the playing field to the east;
- A promised update is still awaited regarding a study of the improvements at the A505/McDonalds roundabout;
- A commitment was given by the Applicant (30th November) to support HPC in looking at a speed reduction to 20mph through the village, however we have heard nothing more;
- There has been no further contact regarding ANPR traffic monitoring, despite promises that discussions would be progressed and despite the commencement of enabling works on the existing campus and within the expansion land. That discussion goes back to last July.

It is disappointing to see that the Applicant has made no material changes to the bridge designs to reflect our concerns, and that there was effectively no further engagement with HPC between December 2022 and submission of the application in January 2023. The DAS states (5.1) that *“U&C has undertaken a substantial programme of pre-application engagement with key stakeholders... This work has had been a primary driver of the evolution of the proposed design from concept stage to the final design of the proposals subject to this FPA”*.

The statement above is very misleading because it does not account for the consistent concerns expressed by HPC as a key stakeholder.

The pattern of “consultation” is exactly as the same as was the case for the A1301 upgrades in August last year, whereby the Applicant seeks to discharge their community consultation obligation by presenting their developed design on the cusp of the planning application and with no real intention of making adjustments (see the summary at Appendix 1 for details). Is that really the limit of the Applicant’s obligation in planning terms, when embarking on a decade of development on the edge of Hinxton village?

Ultimately, it is the interests of both parties that the new development is well integrated with the existing village, and we urge the Applicant to engage with the concerns of local people.

2. The bridges are significant, over-engineered structures detracting from the rural character of the village;
3. The northern bridge is overbearing due to its location close to New Road, Hinxtton Hall and the listed Hinxtton church.

Bulk, Scale and Massing

The highest part of the Northern Bridge will be around 10.5m, with a span of 63m, and the Southern Bridge will be around 12m high, spanning 50m.

Both bridges will be between 6m and 10m wide. The associated ramp structures are also large, bulky structures, and it will take many years for them to be properly screened, if at all. The image at Figure 14 of the DAS confirms our particular concerns about the impact on the New Road corner where it has a particularly overbearing appearance.

We re-state our view that these are over-engineered, urban type structures introduced into an essentially rural landscape (“city in the countryside”). There is an absence of convincing evidence to suggest they need to be this large for the numbers of pedestrians and cyclists intended to use them.

They were not deemed necessary at all under the outline consent.

Lighting

We note the information supplied, proposing low-level lighting to the bridge decks, ramped access walkways and stairs, and “feature lighting” to the bridge, landscape features and to paths within the WGC, together with high level street lighting adjacent to the bridges themselves. This reinforces our concern that the proposal involves the introduction of alien urban type structures introduced into a rural landscape.

In comments on the previous RMA for the A1301 improvement works (22/03615/REM) we asked for further clarification of the actual effect of the new lighting in layperson’s terms, and confirmation that the proposal would accord with the Applicant’s previous commitment to an E1 lighting zone (Condition 24 site wide lighting strategy) in the land closest to Hinxtton. This has still not been received.

The additional features referred to above will only exacerbate the lighting impact, and we would again request clarification of this impact in lay terms. We do not currently accept the Lighting Strategy conclusion that there would be “a negligible impact onto the character of the existing area” and a “minimal impact on the existing ecology and surrounding areas”.

4. There are incorrect assumptions about movement patterns

We submit that the start point for the Applicant has been to introduce two bridges to match the U shaped development layout in the Expansion Land. The primary drivers are the esoteric architectural and landscape design principles of the masterplan rather than a genuine attempt to strengthen the relationship between the campus and the existing community. The Applicant has then tried to match the human movements to that design vision.

The Planning Statement (para 3.5) emphasises the importance of “*strengthening the relationship between the WGC and the wider community. In time, improved connectivity will support an opening up of the Campus and the facilities it will offer*”.

The point is also made in the DAS : (Para 7.30, p48) the northern bridge "given its proximity to Hinxtton Village, will become important infrastructure to supporting Hinxtton residents to cross the A1301 in order to access new facilities brought forwards as part of the Wider Development"

We submit these linkages could be achieved more simply and more sustainably without the need for a Northerly bridge at all.

Figure 9, p25 of the DAS assumes that both cyclists and pedestrians coming from the village will use the northern bridge to cross the A1301, whereas pedestrians only will cross the road at grade.

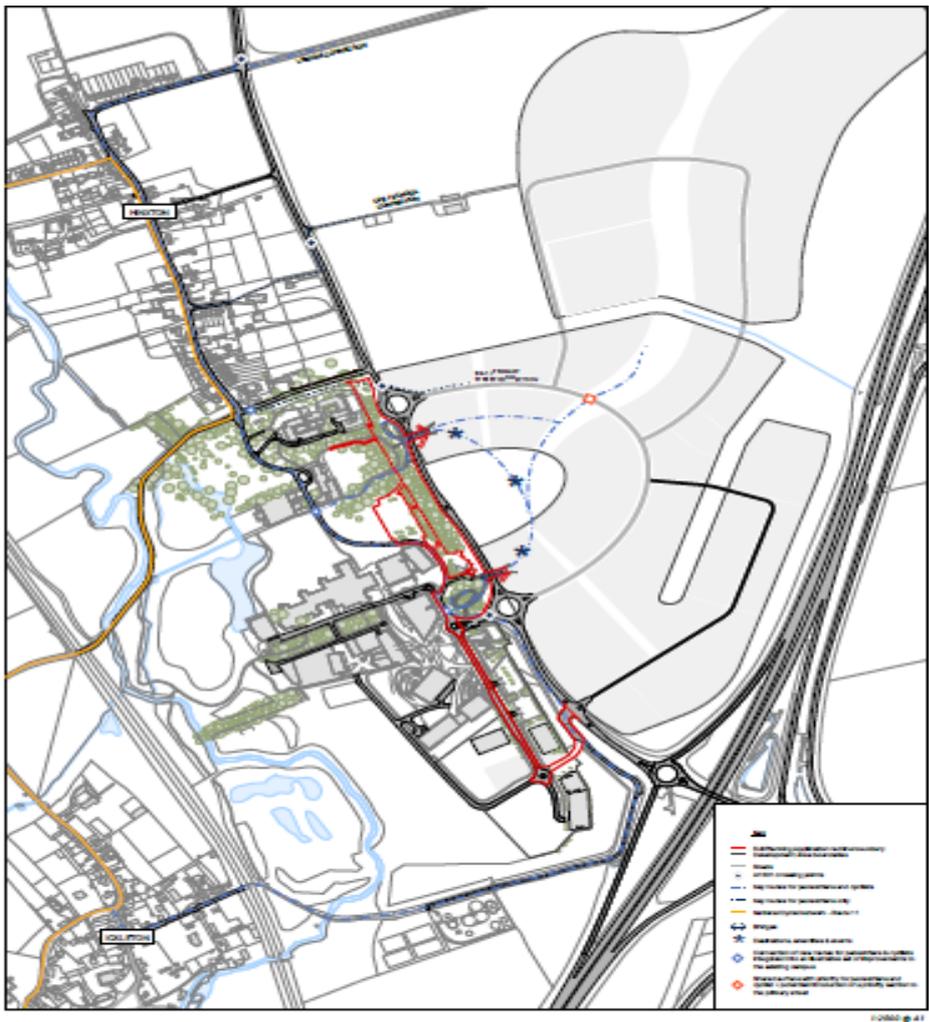
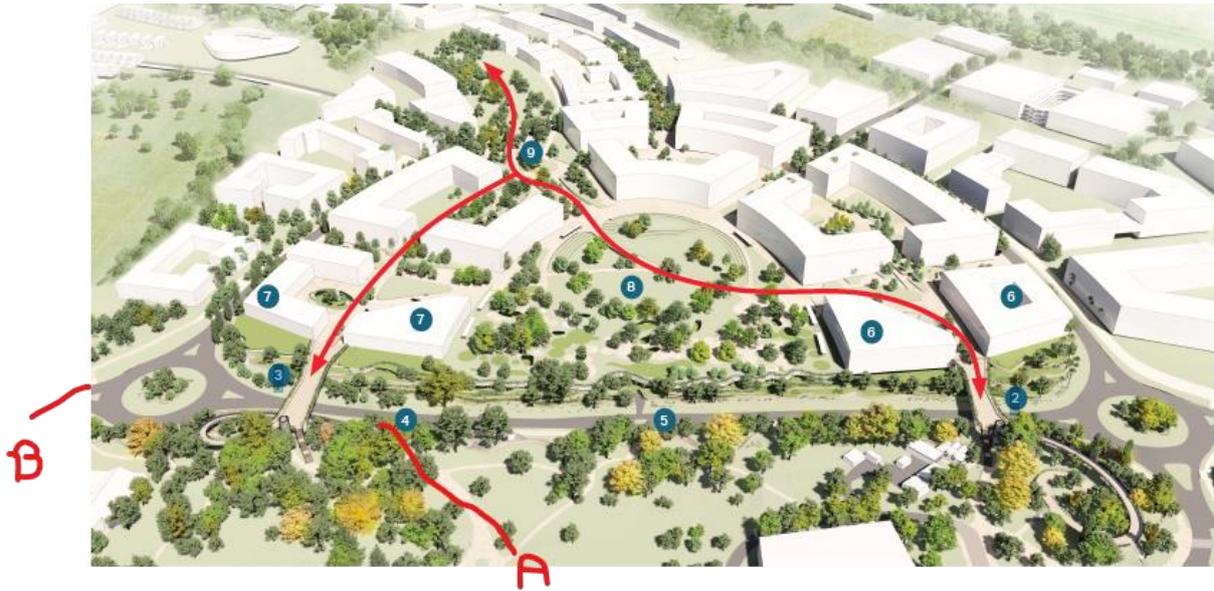


Figure 9 Future Connections to Hinxtton Village and Ickleton - this figure shows how the bridges relate to wider connections within the local area (to Hinxtton Village and Ickleton)

Once cyclists / ramp users from Hinxtton enter the existing campus from High Street, under the current proposals, they then need to travel past the Northerly bridge, to get on to the ramp marked A under the drawing below. The spiralling ramp gravitates away from the village and not towards it.



We do not accept the Applicant's assumptions that this will be the likely movement of pedestrians and cyclists from Hinxton. We consider there is little chance that they will use the northern bridge (which the Applicant states to be 130 metres South of New Road), and will instead use the DA1 at-grade crossing at the northern roundabout (marked B above). It is so much closer.

The DA1 crossing at the Northern roundabout is also shown more clearly in figure 32 of the DAS, page 42 (repeated below), here acknowledging the crossing to be for cyclists and pedestrians (in reality one cannot stop cyclists using it).



Figure 32 The Purpose and Function of the Proposed Route Network and Indicative Future Routes within the Existing Campus

Imagine yourself at the top of New Road, you look to your right. You see the at grade crossing North of the Northerly roundabout (by the car in the figure below). People leaving Hinxtan Village are far more likely to cross there than to continue another 130 metres down the road to get on to the Northerly bridge.



With regard to cyclists and pedestrians accessing the school, we consider that the vast majority will use neither the bridge nor the DA1 crossing; rather they will take the central path from the village to access the school through DA3, which is much closer.

Table 1 on p24 of the DAS identifies the alternative options for crossing the A1301 (including the central path through DA3). An extract from figure 9 on p25 is repeated below, under which the Applicant quite clearly shows the school connection across the DA3 expansion land.

Of course it is also worth pointing out the primary school provision has not been finally settled in any event. Against the S106 agreement there is a process of consultation with the County Council, with the ability for the Council to seek an off-site primary education contribution instead.



Why does the Applicant dismiss a central bridge?

Table 1 of the DAS identifies the alternative options for crossing the A1301.

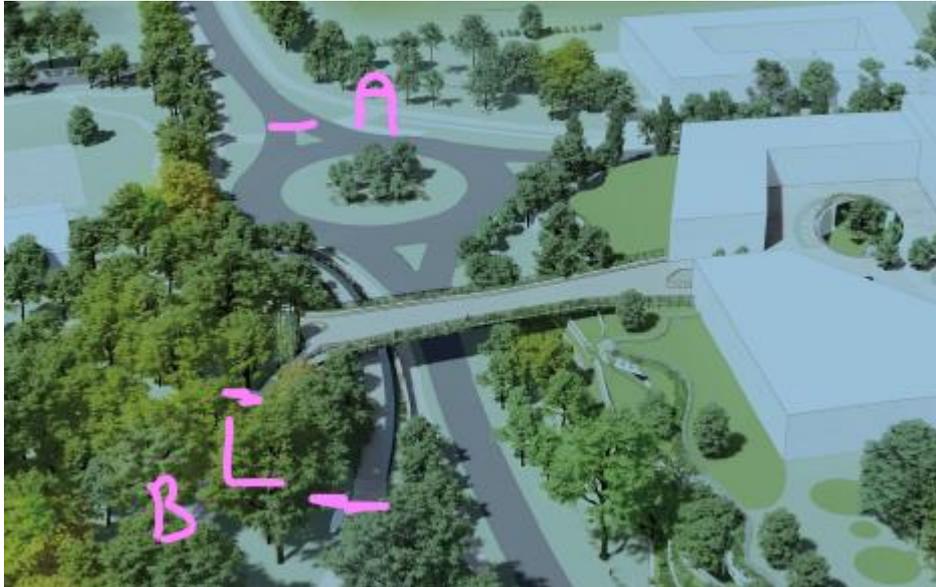
The Applicant states that a single, centrally located bridge was discounted because:

“The provision of two bridges and their proposed locations has been informed by consideration resident and staff numbers and their most likely desire lines.

These connections provide a safe route from the existing campus and the village to the primary school [emphasis added] and the other amenities that will be provided on the campus

There is the potential that a central bridge could influence more pedestrians and cyclists to cross at grade in the location of the two gateway clusters proposed on the emerging masterplan”.

The need for a safe route to and from the primary school appears to “officially” underpin the choice of two bridges rather than one, but as noted above, we consider anyway that the school (if built) will not be accessed in this way from Hinxtton, and that the Northern footway across DA3 will be used instead. Further, the use of two bridges does not stop pedestrians and cyclists crossing the road on the DA1 crossing at the Northern roundabout. DA1 is so much quicker. See the extract from figure 40 of the DAS below, with the Northern crossing marked A and the bridge access marked B.



There is also a further road level crossing centrally located between the two bridges.

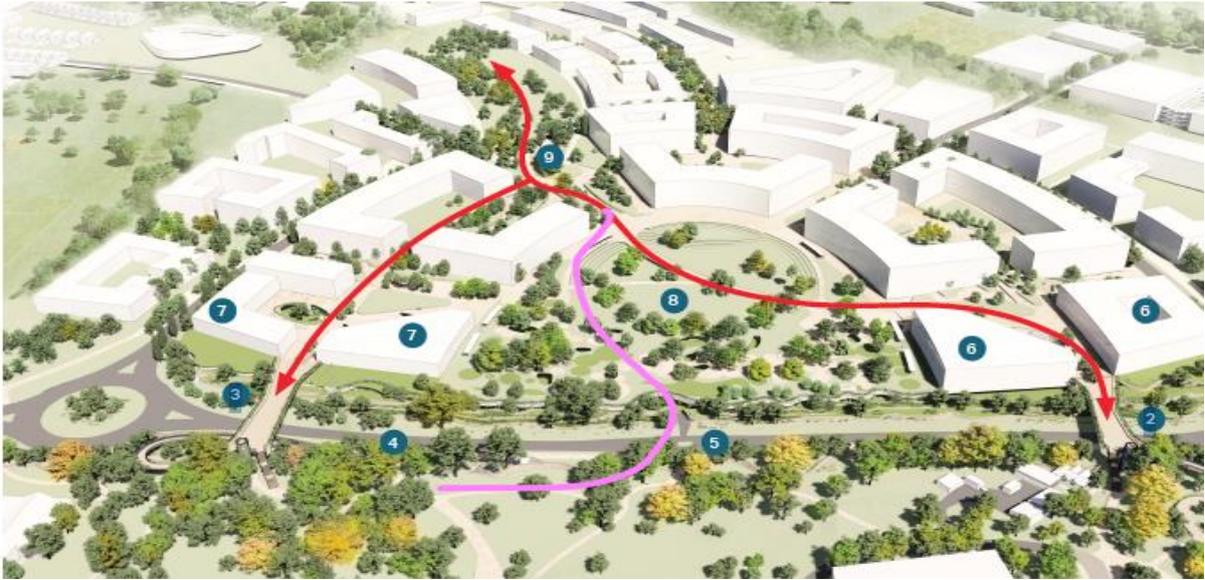
Why would a single central bridge be preferable?

Removal or relocation of the northern bridge further south would dramatically soften the visual impact when viewed from the corner of New Road and the A1301. The impact is demonstrated by the image at Figure 14 (p.28) of the DAS (this image is also misleading in that it does not show the proposed DA1 at-grade crossing, while the trees appear to have been added at 25 year maturity).

In terms of human movement if the bridge were centrally located, there would be a more legible diagonal route through the campus to then cross the road.

Correspondingly, on the northern side of the road, the route would be straight up through the Green Spine, a shorter and more direct route than currently proposed through the northern gateway buildings.

We have annotated Figures 30 and 31 (pp.40 and 41) of the DAS (in pink below) to illustrate the point below and we would request that these aggregate distances be modelled (central bridge vs northern bridge). It would also be useful if the diagrammatic aerial image at Figure 40 (p50) could be updated to show the DA1 at-grade crossing.



Other issues:

Without prejudice to the in primary concerns, we also provide the following comments on the details of the submission.

a) Tree removal

We are concerned to see that 62 trees and 10 tree groups are to be removed including some Category B/C and Category B trees (total canopy lost 1,555 sq m).

Whilst we welcome the proposed replacement with 2,776 sq m new canopy it appears from the Tree Replacement Strategy that this will only be achieved after 25 years. How many of the images in the DAS are showing trees at 25 year maturity?

The Applicant should please clarify whether more ambitious targets can be met, for example enabling the status quo to be achieved more quickly.

b) Disruption during construction

Accepting that this will be addressed in detail at reserved matters stage through the CEMP, we would welcome more information now as to how the work will be implemented, because it presumably adds a significant layer of difficulty to an already complex operation. For example, will temporary closure of the A1301 be required to implement the bridge crossings?

We note that the Highways authority have objected to this application based on the lack of traffic planning. We share their concern. The A1301 and the A505 are already under immense traffic pressure.

Summary

We are disappointed that the Applicant has made this application without further engagement with HPC, as previously promised.

The bridges are significant, over-engineered, urban type structures introduced into an essentially rural landscape.

There is an absence of convincing evidence to suggest they need to be this large for the numbers of pedestrians and cyclists intended to use them.

There is an absence of convincing evidence to suggest that two bridges are needed at all.

We are disappointed that anything other than the two bridge option has been ruled out by the Applicant. We consider that, in proposing the two bridges as set out, the Applicant is simply paying lip-service to the objective of strengthening the relationship between the WGC and the wider community.

In reality, we believe, the primary drivers are the esoteric architectural and landscape design principles of the masterplan rather than a genuine attempt to strengthen the relationship between the campus and the existing community.

We ask the planning authority to consider this matter carefully at committee and in particular to ensure the village of Hinxton is not wholly subordinated to the development ambition of the Applicant.

Hinxton Parish Council

4 April 2023

APPENDIX 1

CHRONOLOGY OF MEETINGS AND DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN HPC AND U&C: JULY TO DECEMBER 2022

PROJECT	COMMENTARY FROM HPC
A1301 UPGRADES	<p>DLA's letter 4th August 2022 (cover letter to A1301 upgrades) makes clear the extensive pre-application discussions between Greater Cambs Planning (Greater Cambs), U&C and CCC.</p> <p>Seven meetings took place, essentially monthly, between November 2021 and July 2022 and pre-application letters were issued by Greater Cambs in March and July 2022.</p> <p>However, we only became aware of the emerging proposals for the A1301 at a meeting with U&C on 5th July 2022, just four weeks before the application was validated on 8th August 2022.</p> <p>We are disappointed that the discussions between Greater Cambs Planning and U&C evolved to the point of application without any significant involvement of HPC.</p> <p>In practice, we have had no ability to influence the design, even if can be perceived positively by 'greening' the A1301 and making it more welcoming to pedestrians and cyclists.</p> <p>We are told of U&C's commitment to "meaningful community engagement" but this is not evidenced in practice; designs were presented to HPC at a very late stage and with no real prospect of taking account of the Parish's views before an application is made, let alone determination.</p>
BRIDGES	
Meeting, 5th July 2022	The suggestion of two bridges was first raised by U&C at the 5th July meeting, when we were surprised at seeing advanced designs which

PROJECT	COMMENTARY FROM HPC
	<p>were not part of the outline permission and had not been previously discussed.</p>
<p>HPC letter 29th July 2022</p>	<p>This was followed up by our letter of 29th July 2022 (attached), our key concerns being that the bridges are significant, over-engineered structures detracting from the rural character of the village</p>
<p>HPC views within response to A1301 RMA 30th September 2022</p>	<p>HPC is not necessarily opposed to a single bridge per se, and CamCycle's suggestion of a single bridge in a more central or Southerly location between the two A1301 roundabouts is one that we may be prepared to support.</p> <p>It is a more obvious location and there would be less impact on Hinxton's rural character, but it would need to be in the context of a comprehensive proposal making Hinxton more attractive to cyclists and pedestrians.</p> <p>There is nothing we have seen to date that really justifies the need for two major road bridges in such close proximity, or for the elaborate spiralling footways that define the Northerly bridge (which reads as a feature of an urban landscape and which to be honest is completely impractical).</p> <p>We also note the observations of SCDC / Greater Cambs under their referenced 28 March letter following a preapplication meeting of 16 March, where they note the considerable height of the bridges (7 metres above ground) and ask whether tunnel crossings have been considered, as in the Netherlands where bike tunnels are commonplace.</p> <p>We acknowledge CCC's stance regarding the 30 mph / 40 mph speed limit through the area. We support the view that the inclusion of a non-light controlled at grade crossing should be part of the solution (even with a single bridge) since it would naturally regulate speeds through as the A1301 passes through the expanded campus area. This idea is also supported by CamCycle.</p> <p>We note with interest that the Local Highways Authority in their consultee comments (paragraph 7) are not in fact guaranteeing a speed reduction to 40mph in the expanded campus area, presumably given concerns over traffic congestion in this corridor (see our related comments on New Road and traffic in the villages below).</p> <p>Pulling all this together, there are clearly many loose ends surrounding the relationship between the A1301 upgrade and the bridges, and we therefore do not understand why this application is being progressed now in the absence of a settled position on the bridges.</p>

PROJECT	COMMENTARY FROM HPC
	<p>The A1301 road infrastructure assumes the bridges consent will be granted in the form currently contemplated. The two concepts are inextricably linked, and the current application is therefore premature unless and until the bridge proposal has detailed approval as part of a comprehensive package.</p> <p>Procedurally it creates an odd situation where in this application there is extensive bridge related narrative, even though the bridges are not the subject of this application at all.</p> <p>We ask that Greater Cambs do not fetter their discretion in the later evaluation of the bridge proposal. This is a problem of the applicant's own making, given the bridges do not form part of the outline permission.</p>
<p>Meeting with HPC 19th October 2022:</p>	<p>General development update for the purposes of Hinxtton Village. No detailed information on bridges.</p>
<p>Meeting with the Parish on 30th November 2022 – Bridges presentation</p>	<p>Concern from villagers over the Northerly roundabout. Caroline Foster explained there would be a design team review with the County Council also, with four options shortlisted for HPC comment. Northern roundabout, cycle and pedestrian crossing and weir also discussed.</p> <p>U&C's civil engineer stated that the 2018 proposal was still robust, and a CPPF design meeting was scheduled for 8th December 2022).</p> <p>Bridge options discussed, as well as the alternative use of road tunnel. Described by U&C engineer as "less pleasant".</p> <p>Bridge in central location discussed. Bridges 305 metres apart. Northern bridge 305 metres from New Road. Bridges 6-10 metres wide. 2.5 metres above bridges to top of trees. 5.3 metres clearance under bridges. Bridge lighting: stairs handrail and bridge downlighter. Highways lighting around roundabouts. Under lights on bridge also. Northerly road crossing at North End Road discussed. Car access and egress, cyclists crossing to pick up the cycle lane on the East side down to Campus.</p> <p>School and S106. U&C willing to bring forward the timing of school delivery. Process with the County Council. School used to mandate Northerly Road bridge.</p> <p>Site line drawing awaited. Building heights – North side expansion land 11 metres. South side 16 metres.</p> <p>U&C to update HPC before planning submission on bridges.</p>

PROJECT	COMMENTARY FROM HPC
Community Liaison Group 7th December 2022	Rolled out the bridge presentation to the CLG.

APPENDIX 2 : LETTER FROM HPC TO U&C 29TH JULY 2022

HINXTON PARISH COUNCIL (HPC)

Acting Chairman: Chris Elliott

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29 July 2022

Caroline Foster
Project Director
Urban & Civic plc
50 New Bond Street
London
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By Email

Dear Caroline

A1301 Road Infrastructure and Bridges

We write further to the A1301 road improvements workshop on 5 July and to Helen Pearson-Flett's follow up email of 11 July (16.15).

The new emphasis on a landscape led corridor along the A1301 is generally welcome. While we are happy to meet and discuss the A1301 reserved matters application, you explained that the application is now ready for submission, such that it is probably better we respond to the application itself when submitted (it being too late for HPC to influence the design development). We remain of the view that the new Northerly roundabout is too close to New Road and that access to and egress from New Road will be complicated by its introduction, with traffic accelerating off the roundabout heading North and queuing to get on to the roundabout heading South towards Saffron Walden.

As regards the introduction of the proposed introduction of the bridges, we were admittedly taken by surprise by your drawings, given that they are not part of the outline consent and have not been previously discussed. We would like you to come and consult with the village on the bridge infrastructure and the wider master plan as soon as possible and before the concept designs are progressed. There are a number of potential concerns:

- Over engineering: in a relatively short stretch of road we would be left with two major roundabouts and two substantial bridges, which looks like over engineering to facilitate site access, pedestrian

access and cycle movement. It appears that the two bridges are not much more than 100 meters apart. We don't see why two bridges are needed within such close proximity.

- Scale: these bridges would need to be large enough for an HGV to pass underneath and as drawn are incredibly wide. With HGV heights around 5 meters the underside the bridge will presumably be somewhere between 6-8 meters high and the upper side closer to 10 meters. Then those structures would no doubt be illuminated at night. Remember your commitment to an E1 lighting zone in the land bordering the village.
- Rural Character: we are concerned that the Northerly bridge in particular would detract from the rural character and feel of the village itself and is simply too close to New Road and to the grade 2* listed church just beyond. That it would materially change the rural environment in which the village exists, even if the bridge is "greened" with planting.
- Other options: to the extent that a Northerly crossing is need at all, we ask whether you have assessed the viability of an underpass, which would be more low key and in sympathy with the landscape.

We look forward to discussing these issues with you in the village hall and with the people of Hinxton and surrounding villages in the near future.

Yours sincerely

(Signed)

Sam Nichols
Hinxton Parish Councillor on behalf of Hinxton Parish Council

cc. by email

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Edward James and Sheila Stones – Historic England