

IPC

- 7 MAR 2012

Mrs L Robinson

REF:

1<sup>st</sup> March 2012

**Re: A556 "Environmental Improvement" Scheme**

Dear Ms Powell,

I write to inform IPC that I wish to be registered as an interested party regarding the above-mentioned scheme. I would also like to register my opposition to the scheme in the strongest terms and on the following grounds.

1. **Unfair Consultation**

The IPC require the HA to undertake "adequate public consultation". Having read IPC's Scoping Report, I believe this consultation to be unfair, does not meet the required standards set by IPC and is not in the spirit of localism. The consultation is unfair in the following respects:

- The Summary Document (SD) is, at best, extremely misleading, at worst, downright fraudulent; diagrams illustrate all the properties in Mere but do not acknowledge the homes to the West of the road, indeed the very word "Millington", which would mark the location of the area about to be destroyed, appears to have been omitted. The maps at the Public Exhibition confirm that cuttings to be provided along the majority of the route (as promised in 2007), which appear in the SD diagrams, will actually **not** be provided after all, despite the HA's assurances to the public that they intend to "minimise the environmental impacts of the scheme"; Non-locals, from as far away as Sandbach (15-20 miles), are being asked to choose an option from the SD and complete a questionnaire based on flawed and misleading information. Without local knowledge, one would believe the scheme to have little or no impact, since there appears to be little more than empty fields to the West of the road, as far as Booth Bank. In fact there are dozens of homes, farms, livery yards and a care home for the elderly all along the proposed route. Interestingly Booth Bank, a group of six or so homes, is marked on the map, subtly adding to the impression that there is nothing inbetween. Millington, it appears has already been deleted. The public cannot possibly make an informed decision and therefore IPC cannot consider the results of the questionnaires.
- HA state they put forward the new "Preferred Route" in 2010 as a result of "feedback from local residents and community groups in 2009". With whom exactly did they consult? As an active member of the action group I have spoken to dozens of residents in Millington, High Legh, Bucklow Hill, Hoo Green, Hulseheath, Rostherne and Tabley, I cannot find anyone who was consulted. Indeed these residents are utterly confused by the new proposals as they bear no resemblance to the proposals they were presented with in 2007 and were totally unaware that such draconian changes had been made. I strongly suspect HA's consultation was only with one community, the Mere property owners and their representatives, Mere parish council, who persuaded them to move the road even further offline, and to abandon their 2007 options in favour of the creation of Millington and Tabley Junctions. Clearly, they were successful.
- HA informed CBO that they would be contacting all landowners and their representatives in advance of the public consultation. The principal landowner in Millington, Mr Henry Brooks, whose land will be decimated by this proposal, has never, even to this date, been approached by HA.

- HA were required to deliver Summary Documents before 23<sup>rd</sup> January when the public consultation began, in plenty of time to alert people to the three exhibition dates. There were six Deposit Locations, one as far away as Sandbach (15-20 miles), all received their SDs by Friday 20<sup>th</sup> Jan. Little Bollington School was the deposit for people living closest to the A556, they did not receive their SDs until 3.30pm on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> Jan, when almost all the children had already left and the school were unable to distribute them. The school were never even told that they were to be a Deposit Location and did not know what the documents were. By the time they were sent out on Tuesday, after investigations by the headmistress, the **only weekend exhibition** (Sat. 28<sup>th</sup>) had passed and only same-day notice was given for the second exhibition on Tues 31<sup>st</sup>. I know at least one person who was unable to attend on Thurs 9<sup>th</sup> and therefore missed the public exhibitions entirely. There is simply no excuse for this blatantly unfair tactic.
- HA are supposed to be an independent body yet their language, attitude and terminology are all biased and misleading. The latest incarnation of this scheme is termed "Environmental Improvement", in itself totally misleading, as this scheme spells environmental disaster for the countryside and everyone whose homes lie west of the A556. In a press release Jeremy Bloom states, "It will also improve life for people living along the existing route of the A556, by taking traffic away from local communities." Sounds good to the neutral non-local, what HA neglected to tell them is that it only improves the lives of **one** community, and that at least **six others** will have their lives devastated when that traffic is driven through the heart of their already vulnerable, rural communities. I attended all three public exhibitions and overheard many HA representatives describing the scheme, to many different people, as beneficial to the local community. The scheme is being "sold" as desirable, again, for whom?
- Many people have expressed the view that the Options laid out in the SD are too numerous and too confusing. HA's final tactic, Divide and Conquer.
- I wrote to you in October to express my deep concern over the sinister and inequitable manner in which HA was conducting itself with regard to this scheme. I gave several examples of HA's bias and subliminal persuasion techniques, I have now given you several more. Having examined your Scoping Report, I am quite sure that HA have categorically failed to undertake adequate public consultation and therefore IPC has no choice but to reject their proposals for the A556. Indeed if IPC does not reject this proposal, I and others will require IPC to provide considerable justification for its decision to depart from its own policy and procedure.

## **2. Millington Junction and Chapel Lane Link Road**

- I simply cannot conceive the reasoning behind the design for this potentially deadly link road. The concept that it is better to move traffic away from two existing A-roads and instead direct it all onto narrow and winding country lanes, some with very few passing places, defies all logic! Again we must ask, "why? for whose benefit?", by now I am sure you have deduced who the few beneficiaries would be.
- These lanes are far too narrow to cope with the 2000-3000 cars **on average** per day (HA estimate) which will be "fed" onto Chapel Lane, down Peacock Lane and on into High Legh. The junction will be yards from the most treacherous bend in the whole area and where the lane narrows to barely two cars wide. I dread that bend in good light and weather, I positively loathe it in the dark and bad weather, and I drive a 4X4!
- A short drive round a selection of Millington and High Legh lanes would demonstrate the number of roadkill victims. On any day, at any time, you will encounter half a dozen or more. Our family has been unlucky enough to lose two pets in the eight years we have lived here, my next door neighbour has also lost one. That is with the current level of traffic. Add horseriders, cyclists, tractors, sundry farm vehicles, gas and oil delivery tankers and children, walking to the post box or the bus stop or - God forbid! - playing, all using the lanes daily and

you will understand that the lanes cannot safely take any more. The idea that 2-3000 extra vehicles per day will be added literally terrifies me.

- In my previous letter, I reported that Mohammed Swapan, Project Leader had admitted to never having visited Millington (parish council meeting, summer 2011), I can only assume the same must therefore be true of the designer at Jacobs who created this disastrous junction scheme with poor (if any) local intelligence and a reckless disregard for safety.
- Mohammed Swapan informed me that he has now acquainted himself with the area. At exhibition he and Jeremy Bloom agreed that the lanes would be simply unable to cope with that level of traffic and that they too had serious safety concerns. Furthermore, they said that if we (as a parish) ask them to remove the link road, they will. Why then does it appear on **all 4 Options?** I have spoken to many people who selected Option Other on the questionnaires because they felt they had no choice, as they were not presented with an Option which does not include this link road.
- I witnessed an occasion when vehicles of all sizes (including a moron in an HGV) poured down Chapel Lane onto Back Lane and Thowler Lane and finally right onto Boothbank Lane and Reddy Lane in an attempt to rejoin at Bowdon roundabout. At the bottom, Boothbank Lane becomes a one-car wide passageway, with no passing place for 100 yards, alongside a six-foot ditch with a stream at the bottom! Within 10 minutes there was utter chaos, the police had to be called.
- 2000-3000 vehicles is an average estimate, locals know that when the M56 backs up beyond Junction 7, which it does on a weekly basis, and several times per week in poor weather, traffic will be unable to join the M56 and will queue back up the new road, just as they do now on the current one. The difference will be that traffic will be delivered to the queue more quickly than it is now, because there will be no traffic lights at Mere or Bucklow Hill to calm it. Inevitably, many will exit at Millington Junction and use the lanes as a rat run. Gridlock and accidents are not a risk, they are **guaranteed** and in icy conditions, (which is just about every day in winter), some of these accidents could be fatal.
- If deaths occur as a result of this junction and link road, blood will be on the hands of all those who knew the dangers and chose to ignore them, including; George Osborne MP for Tatton, Jeremy Bloom and Mohammed Swapan of HA, Ms Justine Greening, Secretary of State for Transport and IPC. I and others will make sure the nation knows that these deaths were completely avoidable, that grave concerns were raised by informed locals but were ignored.

### **3. Putting the Community and Environment at Risk**

- Millington, together with parts of Agden, Bucklow Hill and High Legh, lies in the tiny, remaining triangle of greenbelt countryside, sandwiched between the M56, the A556 and the A50, it was reduced in area and the community suffered hugely in the 1970's with the building of the M56. The current proposals for the A556 would further split this already vulnerable rural community into four.
- Those who currently live, by choice, in the heart of the peaceful countryside will suddenly find themselves living, by force, alongside a dual carriageway carrying tens of thousands of vehicles per day. This dual carriageway, having been moved at enormous taxpayers expense, for the benefit of a handful of property owners, will not solve any problems or provide any more capacity, it will simply transfer congestion, accidents and poor air quality onto the new road a few hundred metres to the west of where it is now, destroying precious greenbelt land in the process. This scheme is not a sustainable project and to label it "environmental improvement" would be laughable if the consequences were not so grave.

- Millington is listed in the Domesday Book, it has no church, village hall, shop, school, pub or Post Office, it is entirely dependant on its access to the wider community for these services including the parish church at Rostherne. HA propose the closure of three of the lanes which currently give access to Rostherne, Bowdon, Bucklow Hill and Knutsford for these vital services and amenities. How can it make sense to stop up three lanes which have been used for time immemorial and instead spend taxpayers money, carving up even more countryside, to build another?
- The surrounding countryside is productive, yielding milk, beef, lamb, chicken, eggs, wheat, corn and potatoes. There are many local farms which would be badly affected if this proposal goes ahead. How will our local food chain be affected by the changes in air pollution? So much for locally sourced, fresh produce in our shops.
- In the absence of a village hall, Little Bollington School plays a vital role in the community as a meeting point for various groups in Little Bollington, Agden and Millington, including the WI who have been meeting there for over 80 years. Four years ago, I and other parents and local residents, successfully fought an attempt to close the school. It was rejected primarily on grounds which put the community at risk. It seems rural communities are constantly under threat or at risk from one source or other. The headmistress has expressed very serious concerns to me regarding the A556 scheme, describing it as "the final nail in the coffin for the school". I will leave it to her to explain her very valid reasons for this opinion, as I have been assured she will be writing to IPC to register her opposition on behalf of the school.

IPC has no choice but to reject HA's proposal on these grounds alone, I am quite sure others will have made many more valid objections. Public Consultation ends in April, when will a decision be made by IPC? I would like to be informed of the decision at the earliest opportunity.

Thank you for your consideration of this letter.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Lorraine Robinson