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Mr. M. Parkinson

13 MAR 2012

REF:

9<sup>th</sup> March 2012

**Re: A556 Knutsford to Bowdon 'Environmental Improvement Scheme'**

Dear Kathryn Powell

As a resident of High Legh for twenty-five years I am writing to you to express my dissatisfaction at the way the Highways Agency have conducted the consultation process into this proposed road scheme. As such I would request that I be registered as an interested party, as I would very much like to be kept informed of developments and possible progress of their proposal.

The first I heard about this road scheme was last August (2011) in the local paper, Knutsford Guardian. It was written as if the proposal was a 'fait accompli' and the public were being asked to vote on some junction options. Apparently the Highways Agency put forward their 'Preferred Route' in 2010 as a result of "feedback from local residents and community groups" in 2009. I was astonished to read this because at no point did I hear of anything about the Highways Agency consulting with local people in my parish, High Legh, nor any of the other parishes on the western side of the current A556. The current proposals shift the congestion and air pollution a few hundred metres to the west, at the expense of people living in vulnerable rural communities such as Hoo Green, Tabley and Millington. The new road will result in 2-3000 vehicles a day using quiet country lanes through High Legh as a 'rat-run' to reach the proposed junction at Millington. How could they have possibly consulted the hundreds of people that live in these villages and come up with the plans they are now putting forward?!

I have grave concerns surrounding the issue of road safety. Both Chapel Lane and Peacock Lane are barely wide enough for two vehicles to pass one another safely and the proposed Millington Hall Lane link road to Chapel Lane will be sited only yards from the most dangerous bend in the area, not actually wide enough for two vehicles to pass one another; unless one vehicle mounts the kerb/hedgerow. These lanes are also criss-crossed by public rights of way and the lanes form part of a popular well-known cycle route. There is also a nearby primary school situated on Wrenshot Lane. The Highways Agency claim the new road will improve safety for nearby residents; I fail to see how these proposals can do anything but have a detrimental effect on road safety in the locality and would actually increase the risk of accidents.

My third issue of significant concern is that of the environment and in particular the devastating ecological implications should this road scheme go-ahead. The Highways Agencies own environmental studies list the vast array of threatened and endangered species whose habitats would be destroyed. The European-wide protected Great Crested Newt; plus the habitat of endangered barn owls, species of bat and many badger setts would be obliterated. The Council for the Protection of Rural England have written a damning report into this road scheme and suggest other alternatives which do not damage the environment, consume anywhere near as much land, and all of which are safer and considerably less expensive than the current proposals being pushed by the Highways Agency.

I fail to understand how, particularly in this age of massive public cutbacks and government austerity; the Highways Agency are pressing ahead with this shamefully financially wasteful project. The proposals do not even increase capacity, and only deliver traffic to the M56 bottleneck a couple of minutes quicker than they do at present (at 70mph rather than the current 50mph); which in itself is dangerous.

I appreciate your time in reading my letter and trust that my views will be taken into account when considering the Highway Agency's planning application.

Yours sincerely,