

From: Jo [mailto:]
Sent: 13 June 2015 12:31
To: A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon
Subject: written representations TR010018 my ref 10030531

10030531

Written Representations from Joanne Worsdall regarding the proposal by Highways England for the Cambridge to Huntingdon A14 Improvement Scheme

Thank you for the opportunity to register my objections to this latest scheme. I have lost count of how many similar objections I have submitted against the A14 southern route and do not know what if any status they have at this inquiry. It also seems that any objections to this route will not count for much compared to the great band wagon built up over time for this solution. But if I remain quiet won't that be taken as acquiescence ?

This was a bad scheme when it was first proposed – the passage of time has not made it any better.

The previous inquiry required alternatives put forward by objectors to be evaluated and costed by the Highways Agency . Then the inquiry and road scheme was scrapped due to the national debt . Perhaps this inquiry will be able to withstand the in favour band wagon, truly evaluate alternatives and come up with something less costly and less wasteful. Objectors can but hope.

My objections are detailed below. They are not in any particular order or ranked in terms of strength of objection.

Pollution

Pollution noise light air chemicals fumes particulates water soil

The proposed route brings additional traffic to the west of Brampton and very close to Buckden. Much of the route is elevated above surrounding ground levels.

The road will concentrate east west traffic instead of dispersing it around other east west routes further north or to the south of the A14. The growth of traffic therefore concentrates pollution for those settlements unfortunate enough to be close to the route. This is in breach of health and environmental legislation and I support the case made by other objectors on this issue including the Brampton A14 Campaign Group. The elevation of the road ensures that air borne pollutants will be widely dispersed.

Water bourn pollutants draining from the large hardened area of the new road will effect land close to the carriageway and potentially further afield via ground water and drainage ditches.

The aggregates and fill extraction adjacent to the proposed route is an additional cause for concern as regards pollution – noise, particulates, dust – and the restoration and future responsibility for the upkeep of these areas.

Environmental Impact

Environmental impact wildlife landscape flooding visual intrusion

The environmental impact of such a large scheme will inevitably have bad consequences for people and wildlife and the existing landscape. Any mitigation proposed whilst welcome is really only going to be of sticking plaster status given the scale of disruption. It is extremely difficult to assess what if any of the existing roadside vegetation will remain unscathed as a result of the construction and final design of the new A14 and its feeder or parallel roads. On going maintenance of any surviving and newly planted landscaping is a concern. The elevation of much of the route equates to increased visual intrusion over what is pleasant and alongside the river beautiful countryside and degrades the surrounds of the villages it passes close to. Covering yet more acres in tarmac will impact on surface water drainage, patterns of water flow and flooding.

Severance Rights of way

The addition of new sections of the route and the widening of the existing route by extra lanes, new parallel local roads, gravel extraction and flooding compensation areas combine to increase the severance of existing villages from the surrounding countryside. New rights of way again are welcome mitigation works but do not truly replace what is being lost here. Any new rights of way should be open to all non motorised users to maximise availability to walkers cyclists and horse riders with appropriate surfaces and separation where needed.

The blocking off of existing access points for traffic will involve longer journeys for local people and bring more vehicles through villages as they are forced to detour eg preventing access to the A1 and A14 from the Grafham Road. This needs to be re-considered. Particularly the closure of the existing A14 near Fenstanton which forces local traffic to use parallel local roads that do not connect to the new A14. The growth in traffic along the Thrapston Road and Huntingdon Road between Brampton and Huntingdon as a result of the scheme is especially worrying.

mitigation works adequacy future maintenance

The mitigation works proposed are difficult to assess. Vegetation is known to be a good absorber of noise and pollution yet the planting proposed does not seem to cover the whole route or be wider than a bare minimum when it is close to adversely affected homes and businesses. It takes about 10 years for planting to grow to be an effective size. Does the Highways England scheme include mature planting? My experience owning land adjoining the existing A14 is that flooding and drainage is worse than prior to the new road built in 1991 and that the trees and hedging took at least a decade to mature whilst alongside much of the route there was no additional planting. Future maintenance and the on going responsibility for it is a concern. Vegetation is routinely clear felled beside major roads to allow contractors access to drains wires etc.

The effectiveness of any mitigation works is questioned. Any attempts made to quieten noise from the existing A1 and A14 do not work. The drone or roar (depending on the strength of the wind) can be heard throughout Brampton village and for up to two miles away in open country to the west. What improvements to current provision are proposed?

Value for money not justified in terms of excessive cost

The cost of this scheme is increasing being one of the most expensive lengths of new road ever. For such a short distance is it worth it? The national deficit remains the same problem as when the last scheme was cancelled. Why are we adding to the problem? Alternatives which split the traffic east west along other routes such as the A47 and A21 deserve another look as do schemes to split the method of transport with more freight using the rail and off peak times and more individual transport going via public transport.

Viaduct

The demolition of the viaduct is an appalling waste of public money. Both in terms of it as an asset and in terms of the borrowing required for its construction and recent repairs and the additional high costs of its removal and remodelling afterwards. It has been repaired twice in recent years and the engineers have told me it has a predicted life of another 120 years. The crux of the matter seems to be future responsibility for its maintenance with neither the County Council or Highways England willing to accept the role.

Retaining the viaduct is a sensible option which has not been fully evaluated. Not least as a alternative route when inevitable accidents close the new A14 route. It seems sensible to retain this option as after all the A14 is a major european east west route.

The viaduct is a more direct route for west north and south east traffic. Splitting these flows from east west traffic would enable a lesser scheme to be built south of Huntingdon. Now that the road is no longer to be financed as a toll road it is no longer necessary to force traffic to divert and use this longer convoluted route to maximise funding of it. Retaining the viaduct would enable local journeys between Huntingdon and other villages and Cambridge to continue to use the existing A14 ,access the new stretch of it nearer Cambridge and not need to divert along parallel feeder local roads.

It is not the form of construction itself , not the use of viaducts per se that is the issue here. There are longer lengths of viaduct included in the A14 proposals to go across the river and its floodplain and the railway.

Development of Huntingdon

The development of Huntingdon is not dependant on the demolition of the viaduct. The case that it is is weak in the extreme. Local Plans can be re-written and frequently are when things don't work out. Currently both the development of Sainsbury's and the Regional college are in doubt. There are usually more than one way to access land and more than one alternative possibility for its development or use.

Alternative routes /Improvements to other alternative East West Routes splitting the traffic to continue to use the viaduct

The undertaking prior to the previous cancelled inquiry was to evaluate and fully cost up objectors alternatives. Has this now been abandoned? This Inquiry is requested to give detailed examination to the other solutions put forward .

The one I prefer is to retain the viaduct to enable the splitting of traffic flows west north and south east from the east west and west south flows. De-trunking the stretch of existing A14 between Brampton Hut and The Spittals to give the village some respite from traffic growth. Retaining direct

link at Fenstanton for A14 traffic and not diverting local traffic by restricting access to the new carriageway here. Consideration of a 2 lane rather than a 3 lane southern bypass for the A14. Improvements to other major east west routes further north and south eg A47 A421 Encouraging the continued growth in modal split for freight and public transport

This scheme is based on CHUMMS work which is now seriously out of date and needs to be reconsidered.

Modal shift for freight and people transport using the guided bus and other forms of public transport needs to be re-evaluated.

Joanne Worsdall

12th June 2015

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