

## Open Floor Hearing - Brampton Community Centre – 7.00 pm 14<sup>th</sup> July 2015

Ian Bennett, Parish Councillor, representing Buckden Parish Council

### Main Points

1. Although Buckden Parish Council fully supports the need to make significant improvements to the A14, it firmly believes that these objectives can be achieved at a significantly lower cost to the public purse if the option of retaining the Huntingdon viaduct and building the new Huntingdon southern bypass a D2 Dual 2 lane carriageway is reconsidered and accepted. This you may recall was option 5 in the list of options for the scheme put forward by the Highways Agency for consideration at the outset of the consultation process
2. We believe that Option 5 would not only be considerably cheaper, probably in the order of several hundred million pounds, but would also provide the best solution optimising traffic flows along the route
3. Highways England have confirmed that our preferred option would be cheaper, but they have also totally confused us through their comments on potential future congestion issues, and here I quote from Highways England's response to a section in our Statement of Common Ground:

**“The option of retaining the viaduct at Huntingdon and a reduced standard (i.e. 4 lanes instead of 6) Huntingdon southern bypass has been investigated as part of the scheme proposal development. Although initially cheaper than the proposed scheme, traffic flow over the dual two lane carriageway would continue to deteriorate to the extent that congestion would return and further widening would be needed.”**

Are they really saying that our proposal which would provide 8 lanes of motorway standard carriageway would quickly lead to further congestion and require widening and their 6 lane solution would not!

Highways England also state that retention of the viaduct would require continual maintenance. This is undoubtedly true. However, we believe these

costs pale into insignificance, even over a period many years, compared with the very large potential savings in the capital costs

4. Further, we also believe that the resultant cost savings would negate any justification for local authorities in general, and Huntingdon District Council, in particular, to contribute to the scheme. In our view these potential contributions are, in any case, very insignificant in relation to the £1.5 billion overall cost of the scheme and would be much better used on the provision of local services
5. A final point on finance. If a decision is eventually made to retain the A14 viaduct, we strongly believe that it should, of course, remain part of the national trunk road system and that its maintenance should remain a responsibility of Highways England and not become the responsibility of the County Council

**Buckden Parish Council very much hope that the Planning Inspectorate will carefully examine all comparative costings that have been done on this issue and, if they consider it necessary carry out a new costings exercise**

6. I would now like to turn, briefly, to another impact of the proposed removal of the A14 viaduct. This is in regard to the inevitable increase in congestion that will arise on the Brampton Road into Huntingdon and consequently make access to the town and, particularly, Hinchingsbrooke School, Hinchingsbrooke Hospital, Huntingdon Railway Station and other facilities in the in the Hinchingsbrooke area much more difficult for those of us who live to the west of Huntingdon. The current traffic modelling figures provided by Highways England show a significant increase in traffic on the section of Brampton Road between the Hinchingsbrooke Junction and the Railway Station. This is hardly surprising as the new roads planned for this area will connect the two truncated ends of the existing A14 and – again I quote from Highways England document – **“as such a through route for ‘light’ traffic will be maintained”**. The resultant congestion problems will clearly be particularly severe at peak times
7. Incidentally, I know that traffic modelling is not an exact science, but I suspect that the forecast increase in this case may turn out to be an underestimate. Some 6 years ago, in my then role as Chairman of the Governing Body of Hinchingsbrooke School, I had numerous meetings with Highways Agency related to the impact on the school of the

previous A14 scheme prior to its postponement, I seem to recall that the predicted traffic flows for these roads at the time was significantly higher than more recent forecasts