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Sent: 17 July 2015 13:51

To: A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon

Subject: Your Ref TR010018; My Ref 10030558: A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Improvement Scheme - Follow Up to Brampton Open Floor Meeting held on 14 July 2015

Importance: High

For the attention of the Panel of Examining Inspectors.

Dear Panel Members,

Further to the above-mentioned meeting at which I was grateful for the opportunity to speak I now write to offer further clarification and some context for the points I was trying to make. I am a former long-term resident of Brampton (up to 2012) and the views expressed below supplement those contained in my e-mail of 13 June 2015.

Historical Context

At the first public meeting held in Brampton in the summer of 2001 (organised by the Brampton Conservative Association and hosted by the then newly elected MP for Huntingdon, Mr Jonathan Djanogly) the senior Highways Agency representative present (can't recall the name) was forced to admit, after persistent questioning from the floor, that the route for the proposed 'new A14' **would not be optimised on the basis of minimising environmental impact for any/all affected communities.**

Development of Current Proposed Solution

In the intervening period since 2001 the primary optimisation criteria influencing solution design seems to have been the minimisation of cost by displacing the A14 between Fen Drayton and Ellington via the proposed Huntingdon Southern Bypass. The appeal of this proposed solution to many is understandable, not least to the road haulage lobby and Cambridge CBI who, I believe, have some influence with Huntingdon's MP and understandably want to see improvements to the A14 as soon as possible; also, there are many people living in and around south and east Huntingdon to whom displacement of the A14 further westward would be very attractive (irrespective of the possible extreme environmental cost to other communities!). For these reasons, this has been a very contentious issue with Brampton residents' concerns being cold shouldered by elected representatives at parliamentary and county council levels who have sought electoral gain from other constituents.

Accordingly, there has always been a strong lobby (supported by local politicians courting popular vote in some communities who perceive the prospect of gain by the mere displacement of the A14) for the solution currently being proposed by Highways England even though this poses maximum environmental impact for Brampton.

Further, concerning Brampton, it is worth noting that both county council politicians (of the same political party) who spoke at the above-mentioned meeting in favour of the proposed scheme have continued to hold significant influence with the Parish Council (both serving previously as Chairpersons and latterly with one continuing as a very influential deputy chair) from 2001 up to the present day – despite the very obvious conflicts of interest over the A14 issue.

It is respectfully suggested that the Panel should also interview Huntingdon MP Mr Djanogly to gauge his views and role in the development of the current proposals for the A14.

Public Consultation

It is the view of the undersigned that previous consultation exercises carried out on behalf of the HA (now HE) about the proposed improvements to the A14 were biased in favour of HE's preferred solution (i.e. the Huntingdon southern bypass running parallel with the A1 to the west of Brampton). Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that the subject consultation exercises and associated analyses be subject to independent scrutiny (for example, through the auspices of the Operational Research Society).

A14 Huntingdon Viaduct

Much investment has been made to upgrade and prolong the life of the existing A14 Huntingdon viaduct and this investment should be capitalised upon pending any better **long term** solution. Dismantling the existing viaduct and the resulting truncation of the existing A14 would exacerbate existing traffic flow problems through Huntingdon and adversely impact traffic accident and environmental risk to residential and other communities in the town (e.g. children travelling to/from school, hospital users/visitors).

Need for a More Strategic Approach

Improvements to the A14, particularly the section running northward from Cambridge, are long overdue; however, **pressing ahead with a 'quicker, cheaper and dirtier solution' should not be the answer**, even in economically challenging times.

Merely displacing the A14 along a Huntingdon southern bypass, while offering the prospect of improved traffic flow in normal conditions, would not provide necessary resilience in the event of stoppage in one or both directions. Further, the proposed connectivity to Huntingdon town centre and adjacent villages would exacerbate traffic flow problems resulting from stoppages on the A14.

Accordingly, retention of the existing A14 viaduct should form part of the medium-to-longer term solution.

Further, development of a solution should take into account existing proposals to dual the A428 from Caxton Gibbet to the A1 (to form part of the expressway between Cambridge and Oxford) which would serve to alleviate some east-west traffic flow on the A14.

Also, proper account should now be taken of Transport Minister Andrew Jones' public commitment to a study examining the upgrade of the A1, including changing the alignment of that road to "reduce environmental impact of the existing route and benefit local communities". The latter would be expected to lead to significant realignment of the existing A1 dual carriageway through Huntingdonshire, particularly westward displacement of the carriageway around Southoe and Buckden; that is, part of the route directly adjacent to the stretch being pushed closer to Brampton as part of the current A14 proposals.

A Way Forward

Most people recognise the need for improvements to the A14. However, so far, an opportunity has been missed to promote a solution that would minimise or avoid environmental impact for all affected communities and this is why the lack of effective

leadership on this issue by local politicians, indeed their divisive stance for respective short-term gain, is a major disappointment.

The existing proposals, which amount to the displacement of the existing A1 even closer to the western side of Brampton together with parallel running of an additional four or six lanes of A14 traffic (contrary to recently stated intentions with regard to realignment of the A1), would pose significant environmental risk to Brampton when in operation and also during construction, as is well documented in other submissions to the Panel .

A better solution in the medium term would comprise the following:

- Retention of the existing 14 Huntingdon viaduct pending longer term replacement (e.g. by means of a northern Huntingdon bypass that would also serve the north of the Anglia region) .
- Accelerate the dualling of the A428 from Caxton Gibbet to the A1 to spread traffic flow.
- Do not continue with current A14 proposals until clarity obtained with regard to possible re-alignment of the A1 because of significant implications for A14/A1 junction and parallel running at Brampton.
- If additional A14 road capacity is proven to be required (taking into account reduced road haulage due to improved rail freight distribution, etc), the latter should take into account shared traffic flow using the existing A14 Huntingdon viaduct and the improved A14-A428-A1 connection. Accordingly, the latter solution should be restricted to two lanes in either direction and routed well to the west of Brampton and designed to minimise environmental impact in all aspects of environmental pollution.

Remit of the Panel

At the open floor meeting I expressed my concern that, because of the considerable level of investment already made in the development of the existing proposals for the 'new A14' (together with an apparent reluctance by HE to examine and cost alternative schemes that would minimise environmental impact), the influence of the Panel's review would be limited. Accordingly, the re-assurance by the Lead Member that the review and consequent advice to the Secretary of State would be both independent and objective was most welcome.

M L Boyles

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