

Brampton A14 Campaign Group (BCG) – Personal statement

My name is Eileen Collier - I am a parish councillor in Brampton and have supported local residents concerned about the A14 scheme since 2007 as leader of Brampton A14 Campaign Group (BCG). BCG strongly object to the Highways England A14 scheme as currently configured and the Huntingdon Southern Bypass ('new A14') in particular.

BCG contend that there is no rational justification for demolishing the Huntingdon A14 viaduct and destroying the existing A14 international freight route, particularly when HE is seeking additional capacity to reduce A14 congestion. We have submitted an alternative A14 scheme which the Planning Inspector at the Public Inquiry Pre-Meeting in May 2010 instructed the Highways Agency (now Highways England) to draw up by July 2010. HA (now HE) have still not done so.

Professional background

My professional background includes MoD environmental protection policy. In 1994, I was posted from the MoD environmental policy branch in London to RAF Brampton, where I joined Command staffs responsible for ensuring the implementation of environmental policy at RAF stations throughout the UK. Some 20 years later, I am amazed at the lack of environmental awareness at Highways England.

HE A14 Scheme - non-compliance

BCG consider that the HE A14 scheme is **unsound** as it contravenes current Government policy/law on transport and the environment. It is also **unjust** in that it imposes a disproportionate adverse environmental impact on affected Ouse Valley villages and on Brampton in particular. The HE A14 scheme is an out-dated concept based on the 2001 CHUMMS scheme. It fails to comply with current national or international (EU, WHO) policy on transport, environment, health or land use planning (NPPF) and may not comply with current law (Climate Change Act (2008), Carbon Budgets, EU Air Quality Directives).

Biodiversity & Ecological Conservation – Brampton Biodiversity Project

Dr Pat Doody is an Ecologist who lives in Brampton and is co-ordinating the important Brampton Biodiversity Project which covers the whole parish of Brampton, from Brampton Wood to Portholme Meadow. He has responded separately on this topic. The impact of the Brampton Interchange on the hydrology of Brampton Wood and its special wildlife habitats is a matter of concern - as is the impact of airborne pollution from construction works and road traffic on both SSSIs.

Brampton, Cambridgeshire – Environmental features

Brampton village conservation area has many listed buildings, including a grade II* parish church, and 17th century thatched cottages. Pepys House, boyhood home of diarist Samuel Pepys, stands at the entrance to the village on the Brampton-Huntingdon Road. There is an obelisk waymarker at the roundabout nearby which is listed as an ancient monument – English Heritage tells us this has the same protection status as Stonehenge. The primary school is situated next to the village green. It has been expanded to take an expected influx of children from a planned new development of some 470 homes on the former RAF Brampton, where there are already 250 homes for service families. These are close to the proposed borrowpit (sand and gravel quarry) site on Park Farm East.

The parish of Brampton is an environmental jewel in Cambridgeshire's agricultural heartland. There are five farms in the village, which is surrounded by high-grade arable farmland. Brampton Wood (ancient woodland & SSSI) lies in the west and Portholme Meadow (European Special Area of Conservation (SAC) & SSSI) is in the east on the river Ouse. The Great Ouse valley from Portholme to Earith is a protected landscape area and a candidate for designation as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Flooding (pluvial and fluvial) is a real risk to communities and to the resilience of local transport networks. The parish is low-lying and the water table is high - see the natural pond on the village green near the school in Victorian times below (pic1). This was drained (pic2) but the west end of the village still floods when it rains (pic3) below.



ENVIRONMENT AGENCY FLOOD MAP – BRAMPTON – BUCKDEN – OFFORDS



**BRAMPTON IS IN A FLOOD ZONE AND THE A1/A14 AREA REGULARLY FLOODS
RESILIENCE OF TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE WILL BE AT RISK**

REPORT OF BRAMPTON FLOODING MEETING ON 29 JANUARY 2013



115 people attended the public meeting called by Cllr Peter Downes to address concerns of Brampton residents following flooding incidents in the village in November and December 2012. Before and after the plenary session, residents had the opportunity to speak individually to staff from the Environment Agency (EA), the Bedford Internal Drainage Board (IDB), Anglian Water (AW) and the District Council (HDC). Some residents who had bought houses in vulnerable parts of the village said they had not been made fully aware of the flooding risk when deciding whether to buy.

The first speaker in the plenary session was **Jim Parker**, Coordinator of the **Brampton Emergency Response Group (BERG)**. He explained that BERG works with the WRVS and is a group of trained volunteers available if a serious emergency arises in the village. It works through the statutory services (police and fire) rather than responding to individual requests. He would welcome further offers of help to increase the strength of the team and can be contacted at 41, Layton Crescent (**Tel: 01480 451928**)

Staff from the **Environment Agency** reported on what they observed in 2012, the wettest year on record. The surges of rain caused the worst flooding in Brampton since 1998 but only the Mill restaurant suffered from property flooding. Elsewhere streets were flooded and there was contamination of flood water by sewage. They stressed how important it is for the EA to have feedback from residents so that they can plan what mitigating measures might be taken. **Graham Verrier** responded to a number of questions from concerned residents. Several speakers repeated questions giving a personal perspective so these are the main issues raised:

Do you actively control the water coming through the great Ouse catchment?

EA: No, we do not hold back water. If it rains heavily in the Brackley and Milton Keynes area, it can cause the Great Ouse river level to be so high that the water-courses (Brampton Brook etc) can back up and flood out on to the flood plain.

The Brampton Brook is badly silted and full of debris. Can't you dredge it more often?

EA: Dredging is very expensive and is unlikely to make a difference during a flood event.

The logging of the flood area on the web-site was not kept up to date during the incident.

EA: The River Levels on the Internet service are up-dated daily and more regularly during a flood event dependent upon our operational need in the incident room. There is then a delay within the system before the information goes on to our web-site of between 15 minutes and one hour over which we have no control. Our Flood Alert and Flood Warning information is up-dated up to three times a day and then takes 15 minutes to get on the web-site. We want to improve the service we provide and will feed these comments back.

The difference between 'flood alert' and 'flood warning' needs to be explained more clearly. Some residents not best pleased to be woken at 3 a.m. by an automated flood alert when there was no imminent danger of property flooding.

EA: Agree that we need to clarify with residents which warning lists they want to be on. Apology for disturbance. Residents can change the service they are signed up to by calling **Floodline on 0845 988 1188** or by accessing their account in Floodline Warnings Direct on the EA web-site. The Flood Alert is a low level warning of possible flooding to low lying land and roads. The Flood Warning aims to give 2-3 hours' warning of the first property flooding. We are always looking to improve the service we provide and will use the information from this event to look at where we can make changes.

BCG consider the cancellation of the A14 scheme in 2010 was a missed opportunity for HE (and local authorities) to re-assess their scheme in the light of current Government policies and alternative options submitted by local communities as instructed by the Planning Inspector in May 2010.

HE scheme: funding and value for money

The HE A14 scheme is the costliest non-motorway road scheme in the country. It has not been tested against alternative schemes/proposals submitted by local communities (such as the BCG alternative scheme) as required by Treasury Green Book 'value for money' rules.

The table below shows the funding announced in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement for road projects in the East of England, including the HE A14 scheme. This includes funding for the **Huntingdon Southern Bypass (HSB)** which would be **redundant in our alternative scheme**.

- **BCG scheme cost saving: £600 million (HSB) plus additional cost savings** related to retention of the A14 viaduct and cancellation of the road scheme within Huntingdon (which would have the added environmental benefit of saving Huntingdon's ancient commons).

NEW ROAD PROJECTS ANNOUNCED IN AUTUMN STATEMENT 2014

NOTE: BCG notes shown in red

Scheme name	Scheme Description	Announced
A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon	A14 Junction 20 (Ellington) to Junction 33 (Milton): major upgrade between the A1 and A10 at Milton, widening to dual three lanes, creating a bypass for Huntingdon and new distributor roads for local traffic and remodelling key junctions.	2013 Estimated cost £1.5billion (c. £60 million per mile)
A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet (part of A428-A421-M1 alternative Huntingdon southern bypass)	A428: dualling of remaining single carriageway section between Caxton Gibbet west of Cambridge and the M1, including a grade separated junction at the A1 Black Cat roundabout.	Autumn Statement 2014 Estimated cost?
Oxford to Cambridge Expressway Study A428-A421 route to M1 and beyond	Study of the potential to link Oxford, Milton Keynes and Cambridge, making use of existing roads where possible and considering the case for filling missing links.	Autumn Statement 2014 Estimated cost of study? Cost limit for scheme?
A1 East of England Feasibility Study A14 scheme now includes widening the A1 between Alconbury and Brampton to six lanes.	Study of how to improve the safety and performance of the A1 between Peterborough and the M25 , including the possibility of upgrading the road to motorway standard.	Autumn Statement 2014 Estimated cost of study? Cost limit for scheme? Not part of A14 scheme -why now included?

BCG ALTERNATIVE A14 SCHEME

BCG consider that current A14 congestion could be resolved by wider dispersal of freight traffic via **existing** alternative routes (road, rail or sea) in accordance with **EU/UK transport policy**.

These include the A428-A421- M1 route (**alternative Huntingdon Southern Bypass**) and the Felixstowe-Nuneaton rail freight route (**Huntingdon Eastern Bypass**). The latter would reduce freight traffic from Felixstowe to Nuneaton (and beyond) instead of just between Cambridge and Huntingdon.

BCG alternative scheme funding - roads:

Elements of the BCG scheme included in the table are:

- Dualling of the A428-A421 (this route would also be part of the proposed Oxford-Cambridge Expressway study);
- a grade-separated junction at the **Black Cat roundabout** (A1-A428-A421 junction);

BCG alternative scheme funding – rail:

The Rail Freight Group advise us that rail improvements needed are already funded in Network Rail Control Period 5 (2014-2019).

Conclusion

BCG consider the **HE scheme** is **unsound** in that it does not comply with Government policy/law and is **unjust** in its **disproportionate adverse impact** on Ouse Valley villages - and on Brampton in particular. The HE scheme also ignores the **Precautionary Principle** central to sustainable development and the environmental element of the **NPPF**. Please see the detailed definition of **sustainable development** published by **DEFRA** (p6).

UK Government Food Security policy - Land use: Safe-guarding high-grade agricultural farmland, such as that at Park Farm (Grade 2) and other Ouse farms, is a key element of DEFRA's food security policy.

Brampton A14 Campaign Group is seeking **social and environmental justice** for affected villages. The Huntingdon Southern Bypass at the core of the HE scheme, would channel high levels of A14 HGV traffic, and associated toxic air pollution, onto roads surrounding Brampton, including the ten-lane A1/A14 Brampton Interchange. BCG consider this to be **wilfully perverse** in the light of the acknowledged risk to public health of road traffic air pollution.

The **Environmental Audit Committee** have also expressed concern about the threat to public health indicated by recent NHS mortality statistics. We understand that mitigation for such pollution is not possible. We also note that the annual cost to the NHS of road traffic air pollution in 2009 was estimated at **£11billion**.

The good news is that funding for key elements of the BCG alternative scheme has already been announced (see above) and Arup, consulting civil engineers to HE, have now requested a meeting to discuss drawing up the BCG alternative scheme.

Our children and grand-children will inherit the results of decisions we make today. Brampton A14 Campaign Group advocate the principle of **sustainable development** defined in the Brundtland report (1987):

"development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Eileen Collier (Cllr) – Brampton A14 Campaign Group - 21 July 2015

Extract from information on DEFRA website:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/sustainable/government/what/principles.htm>

What is sustainable development?

A widely-used and accepted international definition of sustainable development is: *'development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'* - Globally we are not even meeting the needs of the present let alone considering the needs of future generations.

Guiding principles of sustainable development

The UK Government, Scottish Executive, Welsh Assembly Government and the Northern Ireland Administration have agreed upon a set of principles that provide a basis for sustainable development policy in the UK. For a policy to be sustainable, it must respect all five principles.

Shared UK principles of sustainable development

This page sets out the shared UK principles of sustainable development in the UK. They apply to the UK Government, Scottish Executive, Welsh Assembly Government and the Northern Ireland Administration. For a policy to be sustainable, it must respect all five principles. We want to live within environmental limits and achieve a just society, and we will do so by means of sustainable economy, good governance, and sound science.

