

Mr Nichols Coombes
The Planning Inspectorate A14 Investigation

21 July 2015

Dear Mr Coombes

A Case for an A14- A1 alternative design

I write following the Planning Inspectorate's recent Brampton Open Meeting. May I put forward an alternative design proposal from that of the HE; my premise being that the two roads, A14 –A1 should be more widely separated for both traffic safety and local population health reasons, a concept embodied in some of the original designs.

As a thirty four years former GP caring for the rural population of West Huntingdonshire with surgeries in Brampton, Alconbury and Buckden and a founder member of the Mid Anglia GP Accident Scheme attending many road incidents, I have some professional experience of the complex issues involved for the Inspectorate. In addition, my part time academic career in Cambridge and the UEA Medical Schools and as an NHS PGME Director obliged me to travel frequently on the A14 and A1 across East Anglia with the familiar attendant delays. A former national role as a Lead Inspector for the UK Joint Committee on Postgraduate Training, gives me some understanding of the Planning Inspectorate's rational duty to follow the correct rules of action in considering the complex array of Human , Technical , Financial , and. Legal aspects involved .

Clearly there can be no absolute right and wrong in the A14-A1 redesign but I submit the most recent HE proposals are inappropriate. The Brampton Parish Council Chair has stated publically that "Brampton has drawn the short straw ". If various meetings and exhibitions are to be believed , those living relatively distant from the elevated 10 lane structure : those desirous of more rapid, safer road travel : those with local or national commercial interests , favour the utilitarian approach - the highest good for the greatest number . From my MAGPAS experience, their justification and that of HE is no doubt the numerous accidents arising from increased traffic volumes, the planned population expansions and the existing A14 design faults. Unfortunately the utilitarian attitude does not always take account of the vulnerable or voiceless minorities in our community, particularly those with homes very close to the proposed new construction. This group's very real concerns are the well researched environmental risks of permanent damage to their children's lungsⁱ. There are already 742 asthmatics in the Alconbury –Brampton Prctaiice, 8% of its population. We surely should take every precaution to minimise any increase in those statistics since long term studies have shown that children are more susceptible to atmospheric pollution as their lungs develop. They breathe faster and inhale more as a consequence

Evidence shows that air pollution harms children's lungs for lifeⁱⁱ. Those exposed to the air pollutants have lower lung function at 18 yoaⁱⁱⁱ. Indeed there is evidence that children playing active sports, as many do, are more likely to develop asthma than non players. Attention has also been drawn to the cardiovascular risks for older people from atmospheric pollution [PM25, NO2, and Ozone] and from noise aggravation^{iv} arising during and after construction^v. Added to this are the social penalties and stress consequences of property devaluations and life changing decisions on whether to move to a healthier environment.

Advocates of the HE current design cite efficient traffic movements to reduce exposure to pollution, but that argument takes no account of the consequences from a potential five years of stationary, idling diesel engines in excavators and lorries . The presence of a cement works will exacerbate the particulate and gaseous threats. Moreover the HE's current proposals carry the potential for long A1 tail backs from the existing Buckden roundabout - already a problem for the Buckden community. As traffic volumes increase, such tail backs of static Buckden traffic could well stretch back to the proposed A14 –A1 intersection and beyond with all the attendant dangers from accidents and particulate exposure outlined above. My verbal questions regards this aspect to HE on two occasions have produced no satisfactory answer.

An alternative design

A compromise between undoubted traffic safety issues and the clear public health hazards for local children and older people is surely needed , one closer to some of the original solutions. I suggest rejection of the A1 –A14 convergence into 10 lanes on an elevated viaduct. It is too close to many Brampton homes where young children live and play; too noisy for the elderly to endure without damage to their health and wellbeing. Far preferable would be a wide split between the two roads by construction of an A14 route west of Spaldwick down to a redeveloped A 428 and a reconstructed A1 just west of Buckden between that village and Grafham water to avoid the Buckden Roundabout blockage , both reaching a redeveloped intersection of all three routes south of Wyboston. Such a compromise would surely receive support from many parties to the debate,

Yours sincerely

Prof Robert M Berrington MBE



ⁱ Lancet Vol 385: 384 p2224 June 2015

ⁱⁱ exposed childrens' poorer lung function persists into adulthood (AJRCCMED 2000 :162 : 1383)

ⁱⁱⁱ NEJM 2004 351 1057.

^{iv} 2006 no 2238 . The Environmental Noise [England regulations 2006

^v Muzel T et al In European Heart Journal 2014 Apr.35 [3] :829-36