

**A14 Public Examination
Brampton Open Floor Hearing 14 July 2015 & Site Visit 16 July 2015**

Summary and further evidence from Mrs Liz Olding (10030609)

I am a 74 yr old widow living at Brook End cottage in Brampton which the Panel visited on 16 July 2015. As stated at the open floor hearing in Brampton on 14 July, my prime concern is the flooding risk associated with the proposed Brampton A1/A14 Interchange so close to my home.



My husband and I bought the house, a 17th Century thatched cottage, in 1970. From then until 1998 the house never flooded – despite its location with the Alconbury & Ellington Brook on one side and the Brampton Brook, which flows into the river Great Ouse, on the other.

The significant event that occurred prior to the flooding was the building of houses in 1994 on nearby fields on the flood plain – namely, Centenary Way, Riddiford Crescent and Stewart Close – which the Panel also visited.

At a previous planning inquiry in 1987/88, DEFRA stated that the fields should remain as agricultural land and Anglia Water said that houses should not be built on the flood plain and the planning application was rejected.

However, the builder continued to appeal this decision, which was finally overturned in the early 1990s when local planners required more houses to be built in Brampton. At that Inquiry the builder employed solicitors and a barrister from London to argue his case. Over Easter weekend 1998, heavy and persistent rain resulted in extensive local flooding and for the first time since 1970 our home was flooded.

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The impact on Brook End cottage is shown below with house and gardens under water



Brook End cottage was flooded again in 2003 and faced several near misses, including two in November and December 2012 and three in January and February 2014, when the waters rose around the house but thankfully did not enter.

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Roads and gardens in the Centenary Way estate were also flooded in 1998, 2003 and November and December 2012 – see photos below:



With forecasts of increasingly torrential downpours as a result of Climate Change, I fear the impact of the proposed Brampton Interchange so close to my home. Apart from the noise, dust and pollution from the quarries and construction sites, the footprint of the finished scheme is greater than the whole of Brampton village and many times larger than the Centenary Way housing estate which has caused my home to be flooded.

Another concern is that the water table in the Ouse Valley is very high which severely limits the capacity of the flood plain to absorb surface water. The picture below shows the swimming pool of my neighbour Ann Callow (Kenmore. Park Farm) which was forced out of position by rising flood waters in 1998 and now has to be permanently filled with water otherwise it moves up and down with the rise and fall of the water table.

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In conclusion, I am gravely concerned about what might happen if the huge ten-lane elevated Brampton A1/A14 Interchange is built. Due to funding cuts, the Environment Agency no longer dredges Brampton Brook, which now has half the capacity it did in the 1970s-80s. Highways England suggest that the borrowpits (when no longer required for the extraction of sand and gravel) would be used to contain the flood water likely to arise from the construction of the Interchange.

I doubt that the borrow pits would have the capacity to contain the likely volume of flood water which would arise when such a large area of open fields would be covered by tarmac – this is because the (significantly reduced) flood plain area would be saturated by the rain and the water table is already very high. Additionally, underground springs feed the brooks near to my house and local drainage/sewage systems also overflow, contaminating the water and exacerbating the flooding situation.

I hear that the Environment Agency is considering a system of weirs to cope with the expected floods. My neighbours and I would expect to be consulted about this. I cannot imagine what the Environment Agency proposal involves or what it is expected to achieve. The key aims, presumably, would be to alleviate the flooding risk and protect our homes. We would appreciate being kept informed.

I am also concerned about the noise and air pollution from the huge increase in traffic if the Interchange is finally built. Noise from traffic on the much smaller A1 is currently unacceptable but the Highways Agency did not provide any sound barriers at all when they built it. I also read that road traffic air pollution is extremely dangerous for the elderly but that there are no steps the Highways Agency can take to prevent it from polluting our homes and gardens. If red sand can reach us from the Sahara desert (and it did), I am certain that dust and fumes from diesel traffic on the Brampton Interchange will have no trouble reaching us. I understand that we all have a human right to breathe clean air – what is the Highways Agency/Highways England going to do about that?

Liz Olding 20 July 2015