

A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Improvement Scheme (TR010018)

Interested Party unique reference number 10030495

A14 Examination: Issue Specific Hearing 16th September 2015

Summary of oral statement by Roger Buisson, Vice-chairman of the Cambridgeshire Local Access Forum

Introduction

Roger Buisson, as Vice-chairman, provided the input from the Cambridgeshire Local Access Forum at the Issue Specific Hearing.

He explained that a Local Access Forum is a statutory body created by Section 94 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to advise other statutory bodies on the improvement of public access to land for the purposes of open-air recreation and enjoyment and functional or utility access by non-motorised users.

In relation to the proposed A14 Scheme, the Cambridgeshire Local Access Forum's aim is to ensure that there is high-quality provision for non-motorised users both alongside and across the A14, including that section of the A14 that is to be de-trunked and passed over to Cambridgeshire County Council as the local highways authority.

He had two points to make on the topic of Agenda Item 5: Sufficiency and routeing of provisions for non-motorised users.

These were on sufficiency, or lack of, in relation to:

- The amount (lengths) proposed to be provided alongside the to be de-trunked A14
- The amount (widths) proposed to be provided as part of the Local Access Road

The amount (lengths) proposed to be provided alongside the to be de-trunked A14

The Cambridgeshire Local Access Forum notes the very limited, and certainly not sufficient, provision of measures to remedy historic severance along the to-be de-trunked A14 between Fenstanton and Huntingdon town. The Local Access Road is proposed alongside the to-be de-trunked A14 for a short section only, from where the proposed new A14 departs from the existing A14 for a short distance toward Fenstanton, and there are also particular provisions for NMUs within Huntingdon town. In between there is nothing.

The de-trunking of this stretch of the A14 is clearly in the scope of the Scheme as can be seen from the fact that there is a specific part of the draft DCO [Rev 3 (Document ref HE/A14/EX/96)] solely concerned with de-trunking a length of the current A14. This is “Schedule 3 Classification of Roads etc: Part 3 Roads to be de-trunked”. The Applicant cannot argue that the to-be de-trunked A14 is not in the scope of the Scheme when it is clearly listed for all to read in the draft DCO. The Applicant has brought forward no convincing legal, policy or practical impediment as to why it could not have provided suitable provision to extend separated NMU provision along the full length of the to-be de-trunked A14 and to deal with a legacy of community severance and historic problems along that length. Instead it has chosen to do very little and is handing on a liability to the Cambridgeshire County Council. That Council will inherit the historic severance created by the predecessor bodies to Highways England.

The amount (widths) proposed to be provided as part of the Local Access Road

The Cambridgeshire Local Access Forum is concerned that while the draft DCO secures the line of NMU provision, it has no binding mechanism to secure sufficient width.

There has been much correspondence and discussion about securing the width of the NMU provision alongside the Local Access Road including most recently:

- at the ISH in to the draft DCO held on the 4th September
- a note submitted by the Applicant at Deadline 8 “Response to CCC’s submission on the widths of PRowWs within the DCO and its certified plans” (doc ref E/A14/EX/128)

In these discussions about points of law and precedents in other DCOs the Cambridgeshire Local Access Forum considers that an important point has been missed. Without a mechanism that is legally binding on the Applicant to deliver a minimum width for the NMU provision along the Local Access Road then, should consent be granted, what is finally delivered could differ from what was the implied basis of the consent. By implied I mean what the Applicant has submitted in writing to this Hearing - described by the Applicant at Deadline 2 in answer to the Examining Authority’s first round of questions in paragraph 39 of answer to Q1.5.8 as variously a 3m or 4m wide “*metalled path*” with a “*2m wide verge at the rear*” – but these widths are not written on the face of the DCO (and specifically not in Requirement 3, Requirement 7 or Article 24).

That difference between implied and delivered could be that the NMU provision is wider than currently suggested by the Applicant (which would be welcomed) but the logical, rational and inevitable conclusion is that the Applicant does not want the width defined in the DCO in order to give it the freedom to reduce the width of the NMU provision. The width of a route used by NMUs, and particularly when it is a multi-user route (walkers,

cyclists and horse-riders travelling together but at different speeds and travelling in both directions), is very important. We heard from the Applicant earlier today [16th September 2015] when giving an overview of the detailed design process, that they consider a one metre variation to be minor. Reducing a three metre wide NMU route to a two metre wide NMU route would not be minor, it would turn a two-way multiple-user route in to an unworkable design that will inevitably give rise to conflict between users as they attempt to pass each other in the same or opposite directions on such a narrow route.

Reducing the width of the Local Access Road from that currently implied, but not binding on the Applicant, would mean that the NMU provision on the Local Access Road would not be sufficient.

In summary

NMU provision, as currently proposed, is insufficient in length alongside the to be de-trunked A14 with little provided other than close to Fenstanton where the new A14 departs from the to-be de-trunked A14 and in Huntingdon town.

NMU provision, as currently proposed, does not assure sufficient width of metalled and/or un-metalled surface, particularly along the Local Access Road. A mechanism is required to establish a minimum width on the face of the DCO that becomes the binding objective to be delivered by the Applicant's engineers at the detailed design stage. This is a separate matter to how the as-built widths of PRoWs are defined for the Definitive Map and over which there might be a legal agreed mechanism agreed between the Applicant and Cambridgeshire County Council.