

A14 Improvement Scheme TR0100015 – Final submission for Deadline 15 by Mark Williams and Buckden Marina Resident’s Association (Registrations of Interest 10030711 and 10030713)

1. Consistent with the Buckden Marina Resident’s Association’s (BMRA) earlier submissions during the examination, this single submission represents the collective views of the owners of the 81 private residential properties located at Buckden Marina. The SoCG between the BMRA and Highways England was submitted at Deadline 14; substantive progress was achieved since the Issue Specific Hearings in September and, while some areas remain unresolved or subject to further discussion during detailed design consultation, agreement was reached in some key areas.

2. On coherence with other schemes, issues regarding the possible A428 and Network Rail schemes are now agreed. However, the principal BMRA concern remains regarding potential cumulative effects which could arise from routing options for a future A1 upgrade in the vicinity of Buckden village. In this regard, the BMRA has always been clear that Highways England should incorporate appropriate mitigations now, such as including enabling works for noise barriers, to reduce the risk of potential later disproportionate work and costs being required if changes to the A14 scheme become necessary at a later date. While the A14 scheme and A1 Strategic Study are at different stages, the BMRA notes that Highways England has now awarded a contract to ARUP to undertake the study - hence, that matter is actually progressing now. Therefore, the Planning Inspectorate is requested to recommend that Highways England be required to ensure that:
 - a. The schemes remain coherent and that potential cumulative impacts upon the area are considered in more depth before the A14 detailed design is finalised.

 - b. The A1 Strategic Study engages at an early stage with local community groups and stakeholders.

3. Engagement by Highways England with the BMRA regarding noise mitigation has been constructive; the nature of the Marina site and its environment (with its predominant hard surface surroundings and the proximity of elevated structures of the scheme design) are unusual and quite different from other areas affected by the scheme. Highways England’s consideration of this and the resulting inclusion of vLNS and low noise road joints in the scheme design to reduce the impact of noise on the properties at the Marina, is much appreciated by the BMRA.

4. Highways England’s decision not to include noise barriers is, however, driven by external DEFRA policy and methodology for cost/benefit analysis; hence, the BMRA can but agree that Highways England’s stated position is in accordance with that imposed policy. However, this does not enable noise impacts to be minimised as far as is reasonably practicable (as is required in other EU countries, such as the Netherlands) which in this case would be upon an environment that is not presently characterised by traffic noise with a scheme that would generate constant noise, be intrusive and adversely affect the peaceful enjoyment of private properties. Moreover, as highlighted in the BMRA’s earlier submissions, the difference between the mutually agreed “winter” ambient level LAeq baseline and the ES predicted LAeq baseline represents a significant impact of a 9db increase upon the Marina. While the vLNS will reduce that impact by around 2db, the addition of noise barriers could reduce that by a further 3db. This would limit the impact of the increase upon the

Marina (in worst case conditions, as the scheme has been calculated) to a more acceptable lower increase of 5db LAeq.

4. The solution to do so is practically and easily achievable and would minimise the impacts wrought by a 6-lane major trunk road carrying around 80,000 vehicles a day only 600m from the Marina, upon the relatively peaceful and countryside site characteristics enjoyed there now. Thus, the BMRA remains of the view that noise barriers should be installed (or at least the capability included for them to be installed), although Highways England's position on the matter is understood. The BMRA appreciates Highway's England commitment to explore whether other limited mitigations may be possible for the bridge design, such as transparent barriers to be consistent with the "openness" of visual design aspirations. The intent is that these will be discussed during detailed design consultation.

5. The BMRA would be grateful for the Planning Inspectorate's consideration of this matter and to make recommendations accordingly, as to whether, from the Inspectorate's experience and judgement this approach is appropriate and sufficient, based on the level of further mitigation that noise barriers could provide, set against the uncertainties over the ES predicted baseline and the measured "summer" ambient noise levels, de-risking of future cumulative effects, and the reduction of the impact as far as is reasonably practicable.

6. The demonstration and consideration of visual impacts is the one matter where, disappointingly, there has been very limited progress, particularly in providing realistic 3D and cross-section visual modelling of both summer winter views to provide a better appreciation of the visual impacts of the scheme. The positioning of overhead sign gantries, located at the worst possible location of the highest point where the scheme crosses the ECML remains an issue as does, notwithstanding DMRB guidance, the unimaginative, unattractive bridge design of concrete and weathered (= rusty) steel beams and open 3-rail steel sides. Again, the BMRA welcomes Highway's England commitment to explore these matters during detailed design consultation. Nevertheless, the BMRA awaits the implementation of the Design Panel and consultation process – of which nothing has been heard to date - and requests that the Planning Inspectorate recommends that engagement with, and the proper taking account of the views of, stakeholders is required of Highways England as soon as possible.

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BMRA

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