



The Planning Inspectorate
National Infrastructure Directorate
By e-mail

1st October 2015

Dear Sir

**Proposed M4 Junctions 3 to 12 Smart Motorway:
Written Representation & Accompanied Site Inspection**

As part of the examination of the application we would like to request that the ExA investigate the points outlined below, which we believe were overlooked (or ignored) during the application process.

The Proposed Scheme

The scheme does not appear to achieve the aims as laid out in the application (Statement of Community Consultation).

It aims to relieve congestion and smooth the flow of traffic as well as improve journey times and reliability. However, it is not clear who will experience the benefit of this as drivers' views, as stated in section 12.1.3 of the Non-Technical Summary, are not expected to be materially different following completion of the scheme. Therefore, this suggests that drivers are managing their own journey times and don't see any benefits of the scheme. As regular users of the motorway, we would concur with this view. In addition, London-bound traffic would still be reduced to two lanes after junction 3 and, as now, problems on the M25 would still cause knock-on congestion on the M4 starting at junction 4b.

The scheme also aims to support economic development and facilitate economic growth *within* the region. It seems the reality is that the proposed scheme is attempting to speed up the flow of traffic *through* the region and on to Heathrow and London; though the success of this is questionable for the reasons mentioned above. Investment within the region's communities and public transport links may be a better use of public funds.

The final aim is to minimise the effect on the environment but given the long list of adverse impacts outlined in the Public Consultation Brochure this appears to be a non-starter.

The aims do not specifically mention (minimising) the effects on local residents although the assessment does discuss significant adverse impacts. The Human Rights Act states that a person has the right to peaceful enjoyment of all of their possessions, which includes the home and other land as well as the substantive right to respect for their private and family life, which encompasses not only the home but also the surroundings. In all of the consultation/application documentation available, we have seen nothing that addresses this major issue and we have set out below specific concerns in relation to the impact of the scheme on The Myrke.

We urge the ExA to decline the application on the basis that it does not achieve the aims and it will have a detrimental impact on our neighbourhood (The Myrke being in close proximity to the M4 carriageway between junctions 5 and 6).

Detrimental Impact on The Myrke

Should the application be approved, as residents of The Myrke, we are very concerned as to the impact the various elements of the proposed scheme and its construction will have on the neighbourhood and day-to-day life.

Construction Compound 8

Proposed construction compound 8 is only 35 metres from some homes on The Myrke and, according to the application, there may be significant night time noise impacts and potential adverse effects from construction dust, and therefore air quality, on homes in The Myrke (assessment ref 14.10.23 Main Text). There are alternative sites that are further away from residential property (e.g. construction compound 7) with noise impacts "unlikely to be significant" so we strongly urge the ExA to remove compound 8 from consideration to reduce the impact on local residents in the event that the application is approved.

Four of the proposed construction compounds (1, 10, 12 & 13) were deleted by the HA from the application; two of these were removed due to the potential disturbance to a traveller park (13) and to a hotel (12). Surely permanent residents of The Myrke should be afforded similar consideration and compound 8 removed from consideration.

Datchet Road Bridge & Recreation Ground Bridge

The replacement of the two bridges in close proximity to The Myrke is likely to involve work both day and night for a considerable period of time. This is unacceptable as it would have a serious detrimental impact on the standard of life for all those living on The Myrke.

Also, the removal of the existing Datchet Road Bridge may include destroying some, or all, of the mature vegetation on the Datchet Road (west-side) embankment which runs behind homes on The Myrke. These trees and plants have been established over the last half century and provide an essential visual and aural screen to the traffic, as well as wildlife habitation, and should not be removed.

Vibrations

The bridge works are likely to increase the level of vibrations, which may adversely impact some of the homes on The Myrke particularly given their age and shallow foundations. If the scheme goes ahead, all homes on The Myrke should be inspected by an independent structural surveyor, at the scheme's expense, and each homeowner provided with the resulting report for their property; a similar inspection should be carried out following completion of the scheme to identify any damage. The resolution of any damage should then be funded by the scheme.

Creation of Additional Running Lane

There is no existing hard shoulder on the west-bound carriageway adjacent to the north end of The Myrke. The application therefore requires the creation of an additional lane which, it was feared, may have required permanent land take of The Myrke if the space between the existing carriageway and wooden fence (separating the carriageway from The Myrke) was deemed insufficient.

The order limit included in the application appears to have been amended to exclude land take here but reassurance is required that this is indeed the case. Any intrusion into The Myrke itself, and permanent land take of The Myrke, would be unacceptable as it would effectively bring the motorway closer to our homes bringing with it noise and pollution. It is complicated further by the existence of mains gas, water and sewers situated here. It would also result in the removal of existing vegetation, which provides a screen between The Myrke and the motorway.

The application doesn't offer the alternative of widening the motorway on the east-bound carriageway, which is further away from housing.

Further Design Elements

The application does include the installation of noise barriers between the M4 and The Myrke as well as low noise surfacing. Both of these are essential and should be considered mandatory but the low noise surfacing has a finite effective life and it's not clear what the ongoing resurfacing programme will be. (This work should be carried out even if the application is declined; the current low noise surfacing, laid in about 2000, requires replacing and then maintaining on a suitably regular basis.)

The application includes digging up the current northbound approach to the existing Datchet Road Bridge and landscaping it. It is essential that this be designed with dense evergreen woodland/shrubs/plants to increase the visual and aural screen rather than being an open, social area that could attract fly-tipping and/or loiterers.

The area around The Myrke is designated as a high flood risk so it is essential that the application does not exacerbate this and mitigation is built into the design. The application as it stands does not provide any comfort in this regard.

The application includes retaining the existing footpath and extending it to meet the new Datchet Road Bridge. Detailed design should include additional lighting and minimise access from the footpath to the rear of houses on The Myrke. Improvements should be discussed with Slough Borough Council.

Site Visit

We would like to request a site inspection of The Myrke, to include our property, in order for the ExA to see and discuss the points raised above. We believe that the approval of this application will have serious implications on people's lives, rights and well-being.

In summary, we are of the view that the proposed scheme will not achieve its aims and will have a detrimental impact on our standard of living, and those of our neighbours, and demonstrably harm the amenities enjoyed by us, in particular the right to enjoy a quiet and safe residential environment.

The Myrke is a small community, which is under threat from this proposed scheme; it has many elderly residents, some of whom may not put their fears in writing. We would like our objection and concerns to be given serious consideration and await your response accordingly.

Yours faithfully,

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Mr Malcolm Hunt & Mrs Beverley Hunt

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A copy of this letter has been sent to the following postal address: Temple Quay House, Temple Quay, Bristol BS1 6PN