

## **ARBORFIELD AND NEWLAND PARISH COUNCIL**

### **WRITTEN REPRESENTATION**

#### **HIGHWAYS ENGLAND'S RESPONSE**

#### **APPLICATION BY THE HIGHWAY (NOW HIGHWAYS ENGLAND) FOR AN ORDER GRANTING DEVELOPMENT CONSENT FOR THE PROPOSED M4 JUNCTIONS 3 TO 12 SMART MOTORWAY**

*1.1 I am writing to you to seek some assurance on a matter that we raised in our original Statement of Reason, submitted in July.*

*1.2 One of the issues of concern to the Council was that of reflected noise from new noise barriers that might be incorporated into the scheme. Specifically, we were aware that Earley Town Council was seeking new noise barriers on the northern side of the scheme between junctions 10 and 11.*

*1.3 We were heartened by the publication of the Statement of Common Ground (SOCG) between Earley Town Council and Highways England, in which the Town Council accepted that there would be no significant adverse noise impact from the scheme. The SOCG also, most helpfully, confirmed what is shown on the proposal maps: that the only new noise barriers proposed in or close to the parish of Arborfield and Newland are two short lengths across Mill Lane underbridge. We were not, therefore proposing to trouble the Examining Authority further.*

*1.4 However it has come to light that individual Councillors from Early may still wish to appear at the Examination and press for additional noise barrier. This is a matter of great concern to our residents living with in the noise envelope of the M4 motorway, and they have asked us to intervene on their behalf.*

*1.5 Rather than generate further work for the Council, Highways England, and the Examining Authority in making further representations over what we believe to be a non-existent issue the council have asked me to seek assurances from you as follows:*

- *That no additional noise barriers are proposed in or near the parish of Arborfield and Newland other than the two lengths over Mill Lane underbridge shown on the published scheme plans and referred to in the SOCG with Earley Town Council*
- *That should additional noise barriers in or near the parish be proposed then either:*
  - *Fresh consultation would be required, leading to a new application for an amended scheme being submitted, and fresh procedures being initiated or if not*
  - *Arborfield and Newland Parish Council would be afforded the opportunity to appear at the Examination to make representations on the modified proposal*

*1.6 The Council hopes that you will be able to provide such assurances, given that a good deal of time and effort may be this saved.*

## Highways England Comment

- 1.1 A copy of this representation was issued directly to Highways England and a response provided to Arborfield and Newland Parish Council on 4 December 2015. Key information from the letter is repeated below together with pertinent updates.
- 1.2 The proposed mitigation, to mitigate the effects of the M4 Junctions 3 to 12 Smart Motorway scheme (the “Scheme”), comprises low noise surfacing across all lanes, along the complete extent of the Scheme, and a number of new noise barriers. The locations and extents of these new noise barriers are provided in Drawing 12.2 (Application Document Reference 6-2, APP-257, APP-258, APP-259, and APP-260). As Arborfield and Newland Parish Council rightly observes, the only new noise barriers between junction 10 and junction 11 of the motorway are to the eastbound and westbound carriageways of the Scheme where it crosses Mill Lane Underbridge. On the westbound side there will be an additional 50m length across the bridge. On the eastbound side there will be an additional 200m length, which again crosses the bridge and includes lengths on both approaches.
- 1.3 As reported in Chapter 12 of the Environmental Statement (“ES”) (Application Document Reference 6-1, APP-152), the magnitude of impact of the Scheme on ambient noise is minor beneficial in the short term and negligible in the long term, with the vast majority of the Scheme corridor experiencing negligible or minor reductions in noise levels with the Scheme in operation.
- 1.4 However, it is noted in paragraph 12.4.112 of the ES (Application Document Reference 6-1, APP-152) that there is the potential to improve further the noise climate within the Scheme corridor. A qualitative appraisal of an enhanced noise mitigation study to achieve this is provided in Appendix 12.5 of the ES (Application Document Reference 6-3, APP-351). This enhanced noise mitigation study comprises the possible provision of additional noise barriers and the possible replacement of some existing noise barriers with higher noise barriers.
- 1.5 Work has been undertaken to provide a quantitative assessment of this enhanced noise mitigation study and the results of this assessment are provided with the submission at Deadline V. The additional / replacement barriers recommended between junction 10 and 11 are:
  - 1.5.1 Eastbound - Lower Earley – 2126m of new 2.5m barrier (ref EM8);
  - 1.5.2 Westbound – Cutbush Lane – 125m of new 2.5m barrier (ref EM8A);
  - 1.5.3 Eastbound – Mill Lane – 297m of new 3.5m barrier (2m on bridge) (EM9);
  - 1.5.4 Eastbound – Winnersh – 1188m of replacement 3.5m barrier (2m on bridges) (EM9);
  - 1.5.5 Westbound – Mill Lane – 314m of new 3.5m barrier (2m on bridge) (EM10);
  - 1.5.6 Westbound – Sindlesham – 583m of replacement 3.5m barrier (2m on bridge) (EM10); and
  - 1.5.7 Westbound – Emmbrook – 577m of new 3.5m barrier (EM11).
- 1.6 The potential for reflected noise and the potential effects of noise reflections from new barriers has been taken into account in the enhanced noise mitigation study. In the assessment

reported in the ES (Application Document Reference 6-1, APP-152), all noise barriers were assumed to be reflective, thus providing a worst case assessment. The new barriers provided on the eastbound carriageway between junction 10 and junction 11 as a result of the enhanced noise mitigation study will be high performance absorptive barriers. Absorptive barriers have a sound absorbing layer facing the motorway, which absorbs road traffic noise rather than the noise being reflected from the barrier (as would be the case with a hard-faced standard noise barrier) and potentially impacting on sensitive receptors on the other side of the motorway.. This will mitigate any risk that residents of Arborfield and Newland Parish will be exposed to elevated noise levels as a result of reflected noise from newly installed noise barriers.

- 1.7 Highways England is meeting with the Parish Council on 14 January 2016 to discuss these issues further.