

BEVERLY HAKESLEY

WRITTEN REPRESENTATION

HIGHWAYS ENGLAND'S RESPONSE

In response to the montages we were sent, our son James has created some rough ones for us, looking directly down the site to the land which is to be acquired.

The site as it is now. Taken 11th February 2016



Possible scenario during construction - without cranes present.



Possible scenario on completion, with just a seeded bank. This picture shows the current bridge.



Highways England Comment

1. Highway England recognises that the view depicted in the baseline image is positioned more or less on the Order limits and would experience the greatest visual change as a result of the Scheme, when compared to other views from within the Caravan Park that are situated further away from Order limits.

In the worst case scenario the line of tall conifers which presently run along the highway boundary would be removed as part of the site clearance resulting in some open short range views, from the south part of the caravan park, to the M4 on embankment and the construction associated with the realigned earthworks and adjacent bridge work for the M4 Junctions 3 to 12 Smart Motorway scheme (the “Scheme”). Therefore, along the Order limits and within the adjacent open grassland area within the caravan park, the construction work, set against the backdrop of the M4 on embankment, would be the prominent element in the view. The visual effects of the Scheme would however reduce with distance from the Order limits as the intervening vegetation within the caravan park helps to provide a barrier to filter or screen the works.

With reference to paragraph 8.8.16 (c) of the Environmental Statement (“ES”) (Application Document Reference 6-1, APP-148), Highways England recognises that the Scheme construction would have a major change on the view from the Amerden caravan park, resulting in a large adverse short term visual effect.

2. Highways England has provided additional photomontages at Appendix A to this response, from the baseline viewpoint to illustrate the potential view at Year of Opening and at Design Year 2037. These show alternative designs for a reinforced earth slope and for a retaining wall with new planting on top of it. The gas main, which presently runs along the toe of the existing M4 embankment, is a linear constraint to the Scheme proposals at this location. The preference is for a retaining wall along the lower embankment at this location so that new planting can be provided on the upper section of the embankment and which overtime will help to integrate the higher elements of the Scheme such as the 3.0m high environmental barrier (EM17) and gantry G6-08.
3. With reference to the photomontages and paragraphs 8.8.18 and 8.8.19 of the ES, Highways England recognises that the operational Scheme at Opening Year and Design Year 2037, taking account of the replacement planting outlined on the Environmental Masterplan Drawing provided with the Deadline VIII submission, would result in a moderate and slight adverse residual effect on the view from the Amerden caravan park.
4. Highways England and the District Valuer will continue to engage with Mrs Hakesley following the closure of the Examination period in order to agree suitable compensation. In addition, Highways England is open to including additional, suitable visual impact mitigation for the duration of the construction works, in the form of a closed boarded fence or planting. However, that will be subject to the agreement of all parties involved including National Grid due to the presence of their gas main in that location. Highways England will continue to engage with Mrs Hakesley in relation to this post the close of the Examination.

Compulsory Acquisition Hearing 12 February 2016

After having attended additional hearings since the last compulsory acquisition hearing and also having had a meeting with Highways England on site. They have provided the additional information we requested.

Although Highways England have provided some detailed information of their expected programme unfortunately our concerns (expressed at the previous hearing) have not been allayed by the meeting and information, they have in fact increased.

With two lanes being added to the north side all noise and visual impact will move nearer to our business, our home and also to our other property, occupied by our son James.

There will be significant construction works on and immediately adjacent to our campsite, with major adverse visual and noise effects to what is a sensitive leisure business. (Whatever the Environmental Statement says). This will be for at least three years minimum if everything goes according to plan.

Having seen more detailed designs for the scheme we can now see the extent of the impact on our business, lifestyle and quality of life, which is immense.

The combination of the temporary access created in the field off Amerden Lane, known as Dorney Meadow and owned by Highways England, adjacent to the east of the site and the construction worksite and works to the land on Monkey Island Lane and to the West, and the worksite and works on and immediately adjacent to the campsite itself will have a significant urbanising effect on the character of the local area which will directly impact the amenity of the campsite.

This will be exacerbated by the removal of all screening vegetation, especially to the crucial Northern elevation.

The worksite on the caravan park itself will be significant, used by a variety of construction traffic comprising of large machinery including cranes and will facilitate significant and prolonged construction works which is completely incompatible with running a leisure campsite adjacent to it. It would not be fair to accept customers who come here to holiday and relax with their family and friends.

The works will include night works expected in summer 2019, however even without these the normal day works in themselves would be incompatible with running the camp site.

Even 1 year after scheme opening, with lack of screening and concrete wall replacing the screening there was, as shown in the montage sent to us by Highways England, the character and amenity of the campsite will be completely different, and in addition the land that was used during construction will not have recovered sufficiently for our use.

The temporary and permanent land take is approximately 25% of the available pitches. Moreover the campsite will be unable to operate at the same time as the construction works due to the impact on the amenity of the site and without fatal reputational damage to the business.

If we did try to trade during the construction phase which we don't think is feasible, as soon as a customer turned into Amerden Lane they would be faced with the access to a worksite and all that entails, including signage , harris fencing and portacabins and no screening from the motorway traffic. If they then entered the site they would be faced with further noise and clearly visible construction traffic.

People do not want to holiday next to a construction site and would soon turn away and promptly post a review via social media on Trip Advisor, Facebook and UK Campsites which most customers consult before holidaying anywhere. We are not able to remove the reviews so they would remain there for future potential customers to read.

Beyond construction works and on scheme opening it is likely that the impact on the business would be very significant in the long term. My husband Stewart will be 67 by the time the scheme is planned to be finished and re-building the business post 2021 is not viable.

We would like some assurance from Highways England to further mitigate our concerns.

Highways England Comment

5. Highways England acknowledges the comments made by Mrs Hakesley, but believes that all matters raised have been addressed in previous responses by Highways England to the Examination, in its responses to Mrs Hakesley's initial relevant representation, submitted at Deadlines I (REP1-003), and most recently in its written summary of submissions made at both the Compulsory Acquisition Issue Specific Hearing in November 2015, submitted at Deadline VI (REP4-003), and the Compulsory Acquisition Issue Specific Hearing in February 2016, submitted at Deadline VII.
6. Also as noted above, following the site visit on 12 January 2016, Highways England provided all of the information available, on the proposed construction activities, to Mrs Hakesley in order to alleviate her concerns as far as possible; the relevant photo montages are provided in the attached Appendix A.