

Barry Garwood

Reply to Highways England's response to Relevant Representation RR-1651

As set out in TR010025-000595

"The Scheme should only consist of a bypass around Winterbourne Stoke"

RR-1651

As set out within its Road Investment Strategy

(https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/408514/ris-for-2015-16-road-period-web-version.pdf), the Government's aim is to upgrade all remaining single carriageway sections of the A303/A358 corridor into a high-quality dual carriageway route, improving connectivity to the South West. Solely building the Winterbourne Stoke bypass would not achieve that aim. Countess roundabout and the stretch of A303 past Stonehenge would remain congested and the WHS would still suffer the adverse effects of the A303. Separating the Scheme in this way would also be inefficient and less cost efficient.

My Reply

While building Winterbourne Stoke bypass alone would not fulfil the Government objective, the policy itself is questionable in the light of the Climate Emergency.

The proposed scheme would be highly destructive of the Stonehenge landscape, including archaeology and monument rich areas outside the WHS. As such, any attempt to bypass Stonehenge should be outside the WHS and avoid further damage to any monuments.

I have proposed a number of alternative routes, as have others, which should be considered.

In terms of cost, I am sure that the route to the north that I have suggested would be much cheaper than the tunnel proposal.

It would also be less destructive of the Winterbourne Stoke area, as it could follow the landform closely, without need for very large embankments to dispose of the tunnel excavation material, which would also turn a large area of nature reserve and productive farmland into a barren Chalk wasteland.

The proposed constructional compound and slurry treatment plant will bring further destruction to the archaeology rich landscape close to Longbarrow Cross Roads roundabout.

I am also hugely concerned about the possible changes to the hydrogeology of the Chalk aquifer and visual impact of tunnel portals and approach roads within the WHS, with the potential for loss, or damage to unique heritage assets, particularly at Blick Mead.

We are now in the Anthropocene and need to think of the long term future, not short sighted and destructive schemes such as this, which will contribute to the current Climate Emergency.

Winterbourne Stoke bypass should ideally feed into an alternative route, outside the WHS.

Please see my Written Representation and those of others for suggestions of alternative routes.

In particular, the two routes I described in response to a question at the Open Floor Hearing of 22 May 2019 would appear to have considerable advantages over the current application.

Please see the plans I have submitted as Annexes to my Open Floor Hearing Summary.

The northern route would doubtless be cheaper and the southern route would have considerable benefits for the road system in the wider area, as it could link to the A30 and form part of a Salisbury northern bypass, taking further pressure off the A303.

Both routes would address the concerns raised in your response to my Relevant Representation.

Extract from my Open Floor Hearing summary:

I propose an alternative scheme routed outside the WHS and have included several suggestions in my Written Response.

One possibility is a route to the north of Winterbourne Stoke, closely following the landform as there will be no need to create large embankments to dispose of tunnel excavation material. This could feed into the Packway at Larkhill, with a new Bulford southern bypass from Durrington roundabout to the A303.

Such a route would be outside the WHS, of similar length to the proposed scheme and undoubtedly cheaper to construct.

Another possibility is a route to the south via Boscombe Down and the A345, crossing the Avon to the north of Old Sarum. This could then re-join the A303 by way of the A360 and a Winterbourne Stoke southern bypass, or by feeding into the A36 with suitable improvements.

This route would also be outside the WHS and have the advantages of providing an Amesbury southern bypass and Salisbury northern bypass.

Both Larkhill and Boscombe Down are military bases and could be moved if there was the political will to do so.

The statement of OUV considers removing the A344 from the vicinity of Stonehenge, which has already been achieved, of great importance. Removing the A303 is considered of lesser importance and other features impede on the setting of Stonehenge, including Larkhill army camp, the old visitor centre infrastructure to the north-west and increasingly, Boscombe Down.

It would then be possible to remove the surface of the A303 past Stonehenge by reducing the route to a Byway and removing the modern dual carriageway by Blick Mead entirely. This would allow access to views of Stonehenge for those who want them, while reducing traffic volume and speed through the WHS, eliminating most of the current traffic noise at Stonehenge and hence improving the OUV.