

Planning Inspectorate NSIP ref no TR010037

A47 – A11 Thickthorn Junction

Submission from Richard Hawker IP ref No 20028387 Date: 18 January 2022

Deadline 6 response to applicant's response at Deadline 4, with apologies for delay in response.

Air quality

I am grateful for the detailed response provided by the applicant in REP4-026. This provides useful figures for comparison. Thank you.

Transport and Traffic.

The applicant has stated that the traffic modelling conforms to the requirements of the TAG guidelines. But we have no way of checking the accuracy of that statement. We are not told what the TAG guidelines are. We are given no turning-count figures, from which we might ascertain that the massively-expensive underpass from northbound A11 to eastbound A47 was justified.

It would be just as informative if the applicant were to simply state that because the scheme provides more roads, it is bound to alleviate traffic problems, a statement it would be difficult to argue with; the expense of traffic modelling could have been avoided. The question is surely whether the predictions are believable, and whether the expense is justified, or whether other interventions would be better value for money. This can only be assessed with sufficient traffic data.

I appreciate that the applicant may not want to comment on the figures I have shown from the NDR scheme; nevertheless, as the same basic traffic modelling programme is being used, the analysis I show is relevant in that it shows such a vast difference between predicted and actual figures. A clear understanding of the underlying assumptions, and especially the turning counts and origin–destination figures, should give us some means of checking that the figures are reasonable and that the predictions for Thickthorn are likely to be much more accurate than the woeful predictions for the NDR.

It is of little comfort to learn that the NATS2019 base model shows an increase in traffic over the NATS2015 base model of around the same value as expected in the whole country. 'Plugging in' a year-on-year increase in the computer programme to generate this increase is surely very simple indeed. That still does not give any confidence that it can predict what will happen at the Thickthorn junction as a result of the proposed scheme, which is what we are interested in.

Please can we be shown actual and predicted figures, and the criteria for accuracy or validation given.

Please can we be shown turning count and origin-and-destination figures for vehicles using the junction. Without these, it is impossible to assess the need for and effect of the proposed design with regard to traffic levels on the roundabout.

The applicant states that there is not enough detail in my suggestion of a slip-road from the A47NW to allow a review. Surely there is not much more detail required: I suggest a slip-road taking traffic from the A47NW to the larger of the two small roundabouts to the west of the main junction.

I am grateful for the more detailed explanation regarding the slip road from A47W to A11S, stating that the design criteria have changed since the Thickthorn junction was first built, and that a direct

entry onto the trunk road would not now be allowed in new designs, unless not feasible, on safety grounds. What is the accident record here? Is there any reason to alter the arrangement here at all? It would seem a great stretch of the term 'feasible' to include building a whole new stretch of road and bridge spanning at least two carriageways.

I appreciate the more detailed review of the existing footbridge over the A47. I do not agree that the bridge could not be made more suitable for cyclists (for equestrians, I agree this would not be feasible). It is usable now by cyclists, if one is prepared to lift and wheel one's bike. Some modifications could improve it, if not bring it to modern required standard. But is any change really needed at all? Again, the suggested movement of the bridge, precipitating a new bridge to modern standards, is only made necessary because of the underpass proposed. The need for it cannot be properly assessed without the traffic figures I have requested.

Achieving modal shift to public transport may not be specific aim of this scheme, but it IS a stated general government policy. The Park-and-Ride facility is to be expanded, which one hopes will encourage more motorists to use it, or reflects an existing pressure on it, and this indicates a desire on NCC's part to encourage a modal shift. The applicant stated, with no figures, that the numbers of cars accessing the site from the A11 is not significant. What ARE those figures, and surely they would be expected to rise? Also the applicant states that cycling and walking facilities from the Park-and-Ride site are planned to be improved. I do not see the relevance of this; surely the Park-and-Ride facility is intended for motorists to leave their cars and catch a bus to their final destination, not generally use a bicycle or walk to their final destination?

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Richard Hawker