

## APPLICATION BY HIGHWAYS ENGLAND FOR AN ORDER GRANTING DEVELOPMENT CONSENT FOR THE A47 NORTH TUDDENHAM TO EASTON

I am making this submission on behalf of Weston Longville Parish Council. The Council has two issues which it would be grateful if the examiners would look at more closely. The first is the configuration of the Wood Lane junction. The Council will be submitting a written representation in respect of the junction and supports the request from Mr Anthony Meynell (Berry Hall) that this should be the subject of a Special Issue Hearing.

The second issue is the side road strategy. The Council requests that the side road strategy implicit in the Highways England application should be considered at a Special Issue Hearing. A site visit to Weston Longville would also help to provide evidence of why this request is being made.

The HE High Level Strategy contained in the A47 North Tuddenham to Easton Junction Sideroad Report published in February 2020 states that the development of the scheme was based on maintaining the old A47 and *'connecting severed roads or accesses either with new connector roads or utilising the existing local road network'*.

However, the HE application involves the closure of seven north/south access roads leaving only three routes - the Mattishall Link Road, the B1535 HGV route and the C167. Both the B1535 and the C167 are in Weston Longville. Nobody would argue that either road is suitable for the high volumes of traffic which they already carry. See Appendix A.

Most, but not all these issues, may be resolved if the Norwich Western Link is delivered. However, if for any reason the NWL is significantly delayed or doesn't go ahead the C167 and the B1535 will become the only direct means of connecting the A47 to the A1067 and the Northern Distributor Road. Traffic through the parish will increase by 30%.

Yet Weston Longville was listed by Highways England as an 'unaffected parish'. Weston Parish Council have been in discussion with Norfolk County Council about measures to mitigate the impact if the NWL is delayed or doesn't happen but as yet there is no agreement. Highways England have only recently acknowledged that this is a problem which will arise as a direct consequence of dualling the A47.

That we find ourselves making this request at this late stage arises from the following failures of process in terms of design and consultation which are set out below:

- The failure of HE to fully recognise the impact the project would have on Weston if the NWL was delayed or doesn't go ahead
- The failure of HE to take responsibility, or to share with NCC, the responsibility for developing a coherent side road strategy. At one point we were told by HE that the side road strategy was an NCC responsibility, but we learn now that the expectation is that any measures which become necessary must be funded by HE.
- The adoption by HE of a piecemeal approach which involved separate negotiations with different groups leading to an inequitable outcome.

- The designation of Honingham Road as a TTRO without exploring alternative options with affected parishes.

Weston Longville Parish Council would very much welcome an independent examination through a Special Issue Hearing of the side road strategy implicit in the current application. A copy of WLPC's Side Road Strategy proposals submitted to NCC and HE in May 2020 are set out in Appendix B.

As a parish we need the examination process to provide the reassurance that an equitable Plan B will be built into any DCO which follows this application.

Ruth Goodall

5<sup>th</sup> August 2021

## Appendix A: We have been here before

### C167

In 2014 the planning application by Norfolk County Council for the Northern Distributor Road ((NDR) did not include a section of road between the A1067 and A47. The traffic modelling indicated that traffic through Weston Longville, as one of the major connecting routes, would increase by 90%. The road which passes through the centre of the village, is a single carriageway in parts, and includes a 6' 6" width restriction. The Examiners for the Planning Inspectorate recognised the severity of the problem and included in the DCO were requirements for NCC to provide traffic calming measures. These were put in place and were designed as a deterrent. The measures have displaced traffic elsewhere, although the volume of traffic still exceeds the percentage increase at which NCC were required to undertake further measures. The measures currently in place are deeply unpopular with village residents who have on a daily basis to negotiate access to the A1067. The construction of the Norwich Western Link will, to a significant extent, alleviate the problem of 'rat running'. However, if the construction of the NWL is delayed, or fails to go ahead, the dualling of the A47 and proposed road closures will exacerbate the problem. Current proposals from NCC involve more of the same type of measures, but at the other end of the village, and aims only to achieve the status quo in terms of volumes of traffic.

### B1535

Prior to the opening of the NDR the B1535 was upgraded from a C to a B road which involved widening the Wood Lane section of the road and changing the priority at the Wood Lane / Paddy's Lane junction as well as designating it as a two-way road for HGV traffic. It remains a tortuous and unsatisfactory route, prone to flooding and with poor access to the A1067 at Lenwade.



**Table of traffic volumes per day.**

% compared to 2019 model

	<b>B1535 Wood Lane</b>	<b>B1535 Weston Hall Rd</b>	<b>C167 Honingham Rd (south of Weston Longville)</b>
<b>2019 NATS model</b>	<b>4600</b>	<b>3900</b>	<b>2100</b>
<b>2019 actual vols</b>	<b>4889 (+6.2%)</b>	<b>4401 (+12.8%)</b>	<b>2857 (+36.0%)</b>
<b>2025 – A47 dualled, no NWL model vols</b>	<b>6000 (+30.4%)</b>	<b>3400 (-14.7%)</b>	<b>3800 (+80.9%)</b>
<b>2040 – A47 dualled, no NWL model vols</b>	<b>7800 (+69.6%)</b>	<b>4400 (+12.8%)</b>	<b>4700 (+123.8%)</b>

## **Appendix B: WLPC Side Road Strategy Submission to Highways England and Norfolk County Council May 2020**

### **Weston Longville Parish Council: a side road strategy for the NWL and Dualled A47**

Weston Longville Parish Council has stressed, throughout the long debate about the NWL Options and A47 route and junctions, the need to look at both projects together and consider carefully how decisions taken will affect traffic flows through the adjacent parishes. Yet the Highways England consultation which ended in April, and the consultation on the NWL deferred from March, focus only on proposals which impact directly on the NWL and the new A47. However, there is a bigger picture which requires NCC to urgently develop a coherent plan for a side road strategy which looks at the wider traffic context for both the NWL and A47 and which seeks a consensus around a balanced outcome.

#### **Weston Longville Parish Council has been consistent in its objectives in regard to the NWL and The A47 which are as follows:**

- To reduce to a minimum the funnel effect of having three roads the B1535, the C167 and the NWL crossing the parish and to reduce the pressure of the A 1067 junctions at Lenwade and Morton.
- To ensure that the NWL is used by all non-local parish traffic
- To reduce the impact of the NWL on the environment and residents of Weston Green

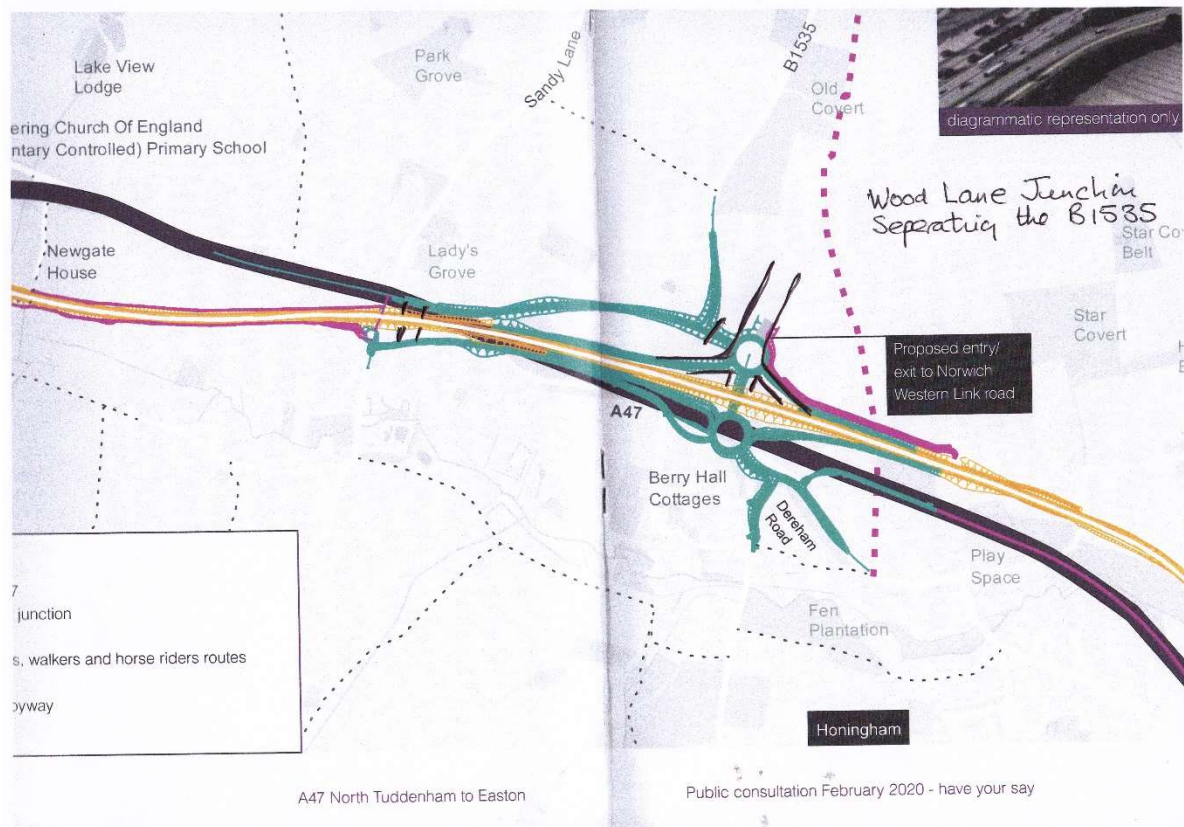
#### **The measures by which this might be achieved are set out below:**

##### **The Wood Lane Junction**

WLPC have put forward two proposals designed to separate the B1535 from the junction at Wood Lane firstly by creating an interchange, and secondly in our submission to Highways England proposing no access from the B1535 from the northern roundabout and access to the old A47 by an underpass at Lady's Grove. A copy of the parish council's submission to HE is attached for information. The relevant section states:

*"If the old A47 were to be retained as far as the Norwich Road Junction and the junction at Wood Lane replaced with an interchange connecting the new road to the Norwich Western Link Road there would be no need for the northern roundabout at Wood Lane. Traffic from the B1535 would turn right on to the new section of road and join the old A47 at Lady's Grove. An underpass (which could be combined with the Sandy Lane / Church Lane underpass) would take the old A47 under the new road and then continue until it picked up the new section of road east of the Norwich junction. The only underpass required at Wood Lane would be the one carrying the slip road from the NWL to the east bound new A47 and the northbound traffic from the new road to the NWL. Through traffic would flow more seamlessly from the new A47 to the NWL. The old A47 would cater for local traffic."*

## Diagram showing the separation of the B1535



We note that the NCC in its own response to the HE Consultation accepted the HE Wood Lane junction proposal and the partial closure of the old A47. The only amendment being that the roundabout should be dualled to avoid traffic backing up. An amendment that WLPC supports. However, WLPC believes that closing part of the old A47 is a serious mistake and a lost opportunity to spread the impact of local traffic. As a consequence of this partial closure the tendency for traffic funnel at the Wood Lane and Norwich Road junctions will be exacerbated. All traffic options become junction related. The gain of a couple of miles of traffic free byway does not outweigh the loss of flexibility that such a closure entails. Moreover, keeping the old A47 open was supported by local parishes.

**Furthermore, neither HE or NCC have come up with any substantial proposals to deal with the problem of traffic continuing to use the B1535 and C167, if the current proposals go ahead, particularly when travelling to the north west of the county. This must be addressed as part of a side road strategy. Signage is not an answer.**

### Taverham Road and Church Lane

The current HE consultation plan connects Lower Easton and Easton via Church Lane and a new section of road to the Norwich roundabout

Taverham Lane connects from the Norwich roundabout to Ringland.

WLPC are aware that Easton and Ringland Parish Councils are not supportive of HE's current proposals. WLPC are concerned that if either of the above roads is closed to north/ south traffic then this will put more pressure on the C167 and B1535. NCC is urged to adopt a strategy which, as now, shares the flow of north /south local traffic across parishes .

**The only circumstances in which WLPC would support the closure of Taverham Road at Merryhill (thus diverting traffic via Church Lane or down Breck Road and the Broadway, or to the C167 and B1535 via the Wood Lane junction) would be when the mitigation measures in relation to the NWL are agreed and fully implemented. This would include Weston's proposals for the closure of Breck Road, Weston Road, and the downgrading of the B1535 and the inclusion of a planning condition limiting traffic volumes on the C167.**

WLPC supports the principle of an asymmetric local network which makes north / south and east/ west travel difficult, but it must be applied across the board and the consequences of each change fully assessed.

WLPC has already submitted proposals for road closures and changes to NCC and we are pleased to note that some of those changes will be included in the NWL consultation, but we believe that the focus is too narrow and should include all the measures listed below:

#### **Footpaths, road closures and restrictions**

Breck Road to be closed to vehicles with access for cyclists, walkers, and horse riders only.

Weston Road to be closed to vehicles and a pedestrian/ horse and cycle crossing provided. Preferably this should be a ramped bridge or underpass.

If planning permission for the NWL is granted it should include a condition that if the volume of traffic passing through the village of Weston Longville is not reduced to a level agreed in advance with WLPC then NCC will be required to implement further measures to reduce volumes of traffic.

The HGV status to be removed from the B1535 other than for access only.

HGV status to be removed from Ringland Lane other than for access only.

Preserve access to all existing footpaths and look to create new and alternative permissive footpaths with the cooperation of adjacent estates.

To enable access to bus services on the A47, a bridle way/ footpath / cycleway should be provided along the western side of the road to be constructed between Ringland Lane and the A47. This will also provide a circular route for walkers to compensate for the loss of easy access to the Ringland Hills.

The footpath from Royal Hill (Ringland) to the A 1067 to be improved to allow for pedestrian and cycle access.

NCC to ensure that SATNAV technology is updated so that drivers use appropriate routes.



## **Reducing community severance**

The existing permissive path which runs alongside Marl Hill from the A1067 to Church Street is inadequate and therefore unused and should be upgraded to provide easy pedestrian access from Morton and Attlebridge to the playing field, village hall, church and Parson Woodforde pub and to bus services on the A1067.

Given that traffic volumes on the A1067 are predicted to rise considerably a footbridge or traffic light crossing across the A1067 should be provided to mitigate severance between Weston, Morton and Attlebridge, all of which share a village hall in Weston.

## **Recommendations**

Because the NWL and the A47 are being managed as separate projects by NCC and HE the risk of decisions being taken which have damaging consequences is much higher and therefore Weston Longville Parish Council has agreed the following recommendations:

- 1. that NCC and HE examine ways in which the B1535 can be separated from the current proposal for a roundabout junction at Wood Lane**
- 2. that HE review the decision to close the section of the old A47 from the Wood Lane junction to the Norwich Road junction**
- 3. that NCC works actively with affected parishes to build a consensus around a balanced side road strategy for the NWL and the A47. The NWL Liaison Group has been useful but has not so far fulfilled this function.**

Ruth Goodall

26<sup>th</sup> May 2020