

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

Weston Longville Parish Council Reference:20028094

Written Representation: Wood Lane Junction: The case for review and an Issue Specific Hearing (ISH)

Weston Longville Parish Council recognises that a review and any potential changes to the design of the Wood Lane Junction would represent a significant amendment to the DCO. Nonetheless we believe that the rationale for the design choices needs to be made explicit and those choices interrogated. WLPC also recognises that the choice of route by Norfolk County Council (NCC) for the Norwich Western Link (NWL), the fact that two major interconnecting roads are being managed by different authorities, and the disconnect in terms of timescales has built in problems and restricted options. For example, if NCC had chosen Option D for the NWL, with a connection to the new Norwich Road roundabout, the old A47 could have been kept open and there would have been no need for a roundabout at Wood Lane or new side roads. However, the choice of Option C for the NWL, and the need to retain the B1535 as an HGV connection to the A1067, puts us where we are now, but HE could have taken steps to mitigate the problems this may create and thus prevented them from becoming endemic.

Constraints and problems

1. The NWL route is a dog leg from the A1067 to the A47 at Wood Lane which means that traffic traveling Northwest to Southeast and vice versa is forced back on itself by using the road. Vehicles may therefore continue to use the C167 and B1535. Traffic modelling indicates that even with the NWL in place 700 vehicles per day will still use the C167 through the Weston Longville village centre. The roundabout design means that the first choice for traffic leaving the dualled A47 will be the B1535 and the C167.
2. Assuming the A47 and NWL go ahead, Wood Lane will become a major junction equivalent to the A47 / A11 or A47 / A140 and if it lacks the capacity to deal with the volumes of traffic using it, and traffic starts to build up and back up then it may shift back to using the B1535 and C167. NCC suggested that the roundabout should be dualled, a suggestion rejected by HE.

Alternative options

The parish councillors of Weston Longville are not road engineers, but we do know a lot about how our local roads are used and by whom. This has been a live issue for us for more than 20 years. Recognizing the significance of the Wood Lane junction we first proposed an interchange rather than a roundabout. The design, together with the email setting out the case, was submitted to HE in January 2020 and is set out in Appendix A. Also included is the response from James Powis (Project Manager).

None of the proposals made by WLPC were reflected in the March 2020 HE consultation, other than an offer of improved signage and making the access to the B1535 a spur off the northern roundabout at Wood Lane. When, at the consultation event in Hockering, WLPC queried the decision to reject an interchange we were told the predicted traffic volumes did not justify the cost. WLPC went back to the drawing board. The proposal was amended to take account of HE's reservations about an interchange. WLPC's objective is to separate the

B1535 from any direct access to the roundabout at the Wood Lane junction and thus make the Norwich Western Link the default route. The design and justification are attached as Appendix B. Again, nothing in the subsequent DCO application reflected our concerns or our submission and WLPC have had no direct contact with HE since January 2021.

WLPC are not alone in being concerned about the impact of the Wood Lane junction design and we understand that the Berry Hall Estate is looking at a proposal for a single roundabout. Such a proposal has its merits if only on the grounds of simplicity. However, it is not one we could support if it made access to the B1535 easier and hence likely to lead to an increase in traffic through the parish with or without the NWL.

WLPC's objective of separating the B1535 from the roundabout could be achieved by moving the location of the roundabout and running the B1535 under the new road to connect to the old A47. In rejecting options which increased the number of underpasses on the grounds of cost HE has ended up with an over engineered, sprawling design more appropriate to an urban rather than a rural setting.

Conclusion

WLPC accepts that we are where we are, and that there has to be a junction at Wood Lane but nonetheless believes that an ISH is required so that Highways England, and all other interested parties - WLPC being one - have the opportunity to examine the rationale for the current design, and for HE to demonstrate to what extent the advantages and disadvantages of other options have been considered.

In terms of consultation Highways England has focussed primarily on the parishes adjacent to the A47. Nonetheless WLPC has attempted to engage constructively with HE at every stage of the process but remains seriously concerned that the combination of the design of the Wood Lane Junction and road closures will confer few benefits and many unacceptable consequences.

Ruth Goodall

Weston Longville Parish Council

31 August 2021

Appendix A
January 2020
Email to James Powis
Project Manager – Regional Investment Programme (East)

“Dear James,

Please find attached a revised drawing for an interchange at Wood Lane which Weston Longville Parish Council has agreed merits serious consideration as a viable and more effective alternative to the current junction proposals for the following reasons:

- 1. It achieves the objective of keeping traffic on the A47 / Norwich Western Link rather than encouraging drivers to choose the option of the B1535, or the C167. The current design significantly increases this risk. Our proposal avoids three roads funnelling traffic through the parish of Weston Longville and protects Berry’s Lane for local users.*
- 2. It guarantees that traffic will use the Norwich Western Link and thereby maximise the potential of the NDR.*
- 3. The proposal means that there will be no roundabouts and no need for new side roads to be built*
- 4. The old A47 remains open and intact for the use of local traffic and avoids the creation of new rat runs.*
- 5. The design involves only 3 over or under passes*
- 6. It exploits the topography of the existing junction, and the 'footprint' would be smaller and less damaging to the countryside.*

I would be grateful if you can arrange for the proposal to be considered by the Galliford Try and SWECO design teams whom we are happy to meet for further discussions.

I look forward to hearing from you.”

Response from HE

“Hi Ruth

Thank you for sending this through, I have sent the plan onto our designers for an initial review where they can consider the requirements under the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges DMRB and the plan provided. I would suggest running this proposal past NCC as the junction as show mainly deals with the connection / interchange between the NWL and the A47 for access and egress. As currently depicted, it does not address access for the local villages such as Honingham which is something HE will need to consider in any junction strategy for the A47 North Tuddenham to Easton scheme.

Just one point to note: There will likely need to be additional structures under or over the A47 (greater than 3) to accommodate this proposal. NCC would also need to look at how this proposal would impact on the current environmental boundary for the scheme in addition to other project related elements such as constructability (as it may be a challenge for HE to provide accommodation works in advance) and any additional potential land take to name a few.

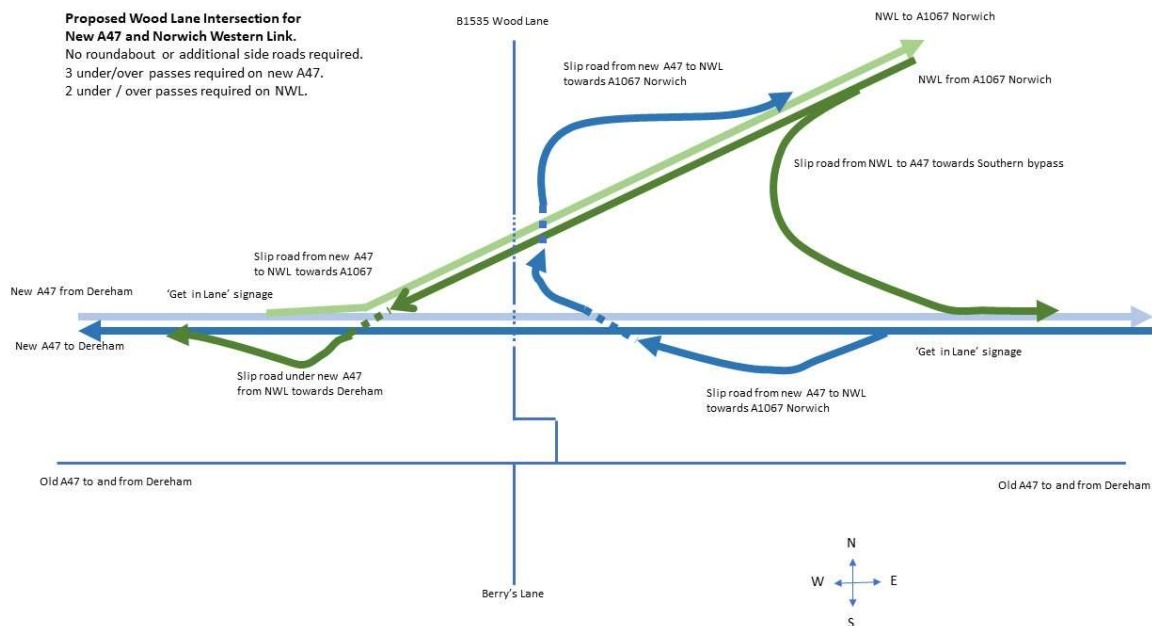
I do take your comments on board and understand the rationale behind the attached plan which may potentially have some benefits as suggested however, I must advise that the remit for such changes would not sit solely with HE and our supplier GT to design and incorporate into the A47 North Tuddenham to Easton scheme.

Thank you

Kind Regards

James Powis

Project Manager – Regional Investment Programme (East)”



Appendix B

Relevant extract from the Side Road Strategy Proposals submitted by WLPC to HE and NCC in May 2020

“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*

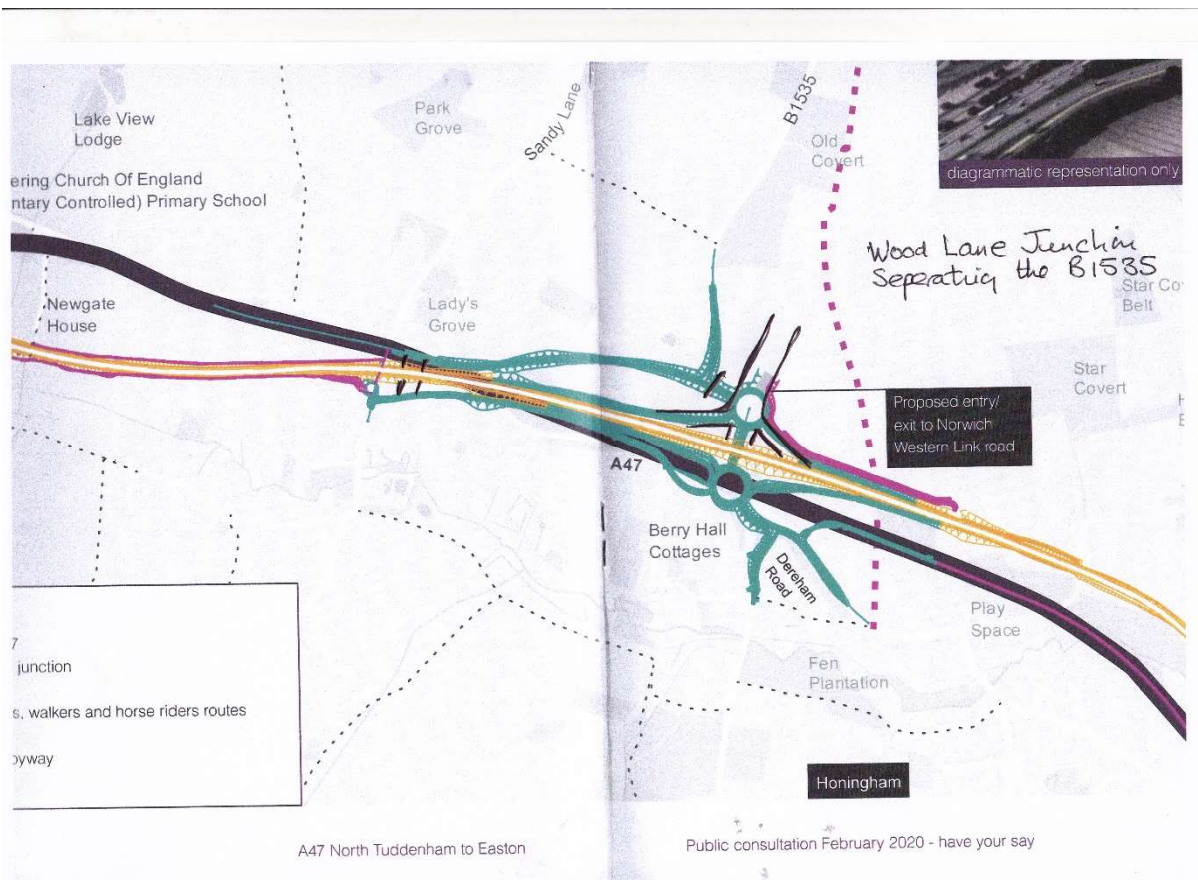
The measures by which this might be achieved are set out below:

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 northwest of the county. This must be addressed as part of a side road strategy. Signage is not an answer."

May 2020