

The A47 It happened on our Watch 5

Just attending the Issue Specific hearings, one is struck by the talent and intelligence of the participants and also struck by the defence of road building as normal. Why hasn't the message of "to carry on as we were is not logical" not got through or been accepted. Climate change and bio-diversity loss should not be separated.

COP 26 is for rhetoric, the A47 road build is the reality.

I do not know why we are discussing new road building in the middle of a Climate Emergency and what more one can do to convince people that this is a failed concept. Our skies are full of contrails this morning. Full of flights as normal.

Let us examine just the road pollution issues but expand the implications to include all forms of life .

First pollution; the increase in noise generated by a dual carriageway as vehicle speeds increase from engine noise, wind noise and wheel noise. The factors of motor manufacturers supplying larger and faster vehicles with fatter and fatter tyres is another total illogicality impacting upon this pollution, which spreads over the adjoining countryside with the removal of tranquility for all species. All forms of life using their acoustic sensors for survival are immediately affected.

Second, a dark skies policy illuminated. Water courses tend to provide insect ecological corridors. In two areas of these roadworks the Tud and Wensum Valleys and the Cantley streams will be impacted by dual carriageways being constructed over them or alongside them.

If we assume that dual carriageways will attract more traffic for longer periods, then the headlight effect or illuminated graded junctions means that these eco corridors will lose their privacy and darkness. Once again, the nocturnal residents surrounding these areas will be particularly impacted.

Third pollution; the petro-chemical stink. Pollution and particles kill people, including those who drive vehicles. What it does to the rest of the environment ecology appears not to be a concern. Is this why the insect world is dying ?

Fourth pollution; the danger from surface water flowing from our expanded hard surfaces. This product, polluted by tyre particles, oils and brake linings, has to be discharged somewhere, effectively into holding tanks and subsequently to the ground water providing and surrounding the rivers. Potential contamination accidents are avoided in documentation, being treated as "major incidents" with their own protocols applying. This is an environmental issue that should be part of the potential hazard evaluation as to whether the roads should be widened/relocated at all. And solutions to emergencies should be given.

Fifth pollution; the distance effect; Wider carriageways and higher traffic speeds provides a greater distance for all forms of life to cross if they wish to get to the other side. The killing zone has got bigger and the manner of construction from building "off road" to one side and then crossing coupled with construction compounds and the massive carbon vegetation and top soil strip generates a sterile zone of 30 metres plus stretching for miles across the countryside. This with the existing road and traffic remaining in place becomes a hostile, eco isolating zone for years.

Mitigation: the most quoted and biggest lie of all. The NPPF sustainable development objective to "contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment, including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy" appears to have got lost in these road building proposals. These road widenings cannot mitigate for the environmental damage and losses they will cause.

One cannot replace a mature oak supporting thousands of species with a young tree, even if substantial, (which tends not to happen in any event). How does one compensate for the strip clearance of A47 NTE 750 acres of vegetation and carbon sequestering soils, hedges and trees along the valley of the River Tud ?

The frustration is that we are not solving the problem. This is not a problem we can build our way out of. One can tinker and upgrade, enlarge and change, but the core issues of people numbers, vehicle numbers, journey numbers only change and enlarge to fill the space. One may shift some minor pieces on the chess board of vehicle transport, but the impacts of the consequential pollution will last forever. This is no plan.

The argument is that we are all paying too high a price for our “Freedom of Movement” and it is also the other residents of the countryside who are paying it. They don’t have a voice here, but we are increasingly aware of how important they are, from the pollinators to the older, mature trees. We are adding to an already polluted environment and increasing carbon emissions at a time when the scientific community world wide has provided us with the starkest warnings yet that ‘carrying on as we are’ is unsustainable.

The other price that is unsustainable is the quoted 300 million pounds to carry out these upgrades from Burlingham to Tuddenham. One has not seen any specific figures, but the probability is that figure will be swallowed up on the Easton To Tuddenham road sections with those huge grade separated junctions and the high degree of geotechnical difficulty in the floodplain.

Summary; Some activities may be worth the price to be paid, but it is evident that we cannot continue with old solutions that do not achieve a resolution, while literally costing us the earth to carry them out. These roads will pollute and the resulting environmental damage and degradation of special environments is too high a price to be paid for a few minutes shift in a journey time. One would therefore ask for reason to prevail and for these road schemes to be cancelled and instead for real plans to be made to reduce travel and vehicle over consumption and hence reduce our pollutions. This is not a plan for the future, this is a repeat of failures from the past.

So what did you do in the dying days
as the sun cooked the earth in a carbon haze ?

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