

**Dear Mr Hunter and the Inspectorate Team,**

I have listened to the two Issue Specific Hearings - not the Compulsory Acquisition Hearings - and would be grateful if you would consider my questions and record my comments, as follows:

### **1. THREE GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.**

#### ***a). The transcriber.***

The transcriber is awful. It was hard to correctly identify the speaker's names and also, at times, to make much sense of what was said. I have partial hearing loss and would have really struggled to follow the sense of the live proceedings as text had my hearing been any worse. I obviously took the more ludicrous phrasings with a pinch of salt - '.... bat sandwich' for example (?!!). **Can this system be improved?**

#### ***b). The benefits of legal representation.***

I, amongst a number of people I believe, formed a very distinct impression that the balance of time, discussion and emphasis in these examinations was significantly skewed by the presence and constant intervention of Mr Meynell's large expert team. Whilst the Wood Lane junction is a major element of the scheme and warrants proper discussion, it is not the only major issue.

Every intervention by that team was focussed on bringing the discussion back to Berry Hall's concerns. Clearly there are land issues there, but one might have thought the 'lesser' issues and some of the detail could have been addressed in writing and the disagreements worked through 'off air' and reported back later. There are only so many ways of stating the issue - and we seemed to hear most of the variations.

You will have seen that the actual Hall is quite some distance from the junction and a 'glimpse' of the junction from a relatively distant woodland walk did not need to be used as yet another intervention to reintroduce the main issue. I would have thought Mr Meynell might have been a bit more concerned about the implications of the Alston ambition to build a petrol station (we now learn) adjacent to the proposed junction. I thought the days of building more petrol stations were now past.

The reality of the road impact is that there are properties almost directly looking out at the proposed Norwich Road junction and these will have to contend with a far larger intrusion on their visual and acoustic amenity than that which will be experienced by the Berry Hall residents. I will raise the question about mitigation measures later in this submission.

Last word on this topic: most local residents and interested parties probably don't have the resources needed to employ the type of representation demonstrated by the Berry Hall and Alston organisations. **Perhaps you can reassure me that you will take that into account when you judge the balance of all the issues and concerns raised?**

**c). Statements of Common Ground.**

There were numerous occasions when issues were deferred to 'Statements of Common Ground' which were in the process of being, or would be, prepared. It seemed that this was where contentious / divergent views were frequently (and conveniently) 'parked'. **Do these Statements get publicly aired again and each party's concluded positions get examined where there is no agreement? What happens when there is no agreement - can design changes ever be required / brokered from this process?**

The discussion about the Wood Lane junction design seems to be one of these items. Was it necessary to hear a detailed recital of the mooted alternatives in this forum at this stage? I have previously indicated some alternatives for the southern end of Taverham Road - thoughts shared by a number of people affected by the proposed design - which avoid the present direct connection to the Norwich Road junction complex from the north, but these have not been developed for public examination. There is no professional team here to review these ideas and HE has not at any time been prepared to engage on this. **Why is it not possible to have some engagement with HE to consider alternative options for Taverham Road and to consider whether they might (or might not) offer a better solution for avoiding the rat-run which the present scheme seems to produce?**

**2. QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS ARISING FROM THE HEARINGS.**

**a) Hearing 2. Item 2. Design.**

*Comment and question.*

It was disappointing that, though prompted, HE was unable to mention landscape 'beauty' in its response. There seemed to be nothing in the primary HE 'vision' about sensitivity to the local landscape and no stated ambition for the side roads and the affected communities after HE's interventions were complete.

For a scheme costing this amount of money and with such local sensitivities and intersection issues, it was incredible to hear that there has been no proper internal Design Review ('it's not a complex scheme' we were blandly told and we have 'experienced road designers'). Well, they may know the standards, but designers should always be imaginative and creative - and always challenged to revisit their assumptions and decisions. In this case, unfortunately and evidently, this hasn't happened. It started with the two roundabout complex junctions and HE has not moved from that throughout the 'consultations'.

**We never received a clear statement from HE as to what is 'good design' - a lot about standards and relaxations from their 'design guide' - nothing about people and places. I would challenge HE to present a much more concise and project tailored list of ambitions, including those 'softer' design aspirations, and how it judges it has met those ambitions?**

**b) Hearing 2. Item 3. Transport and Traffic.**

**Comment and question.**

We heard of 'very productive' discussions between HE and NCC, but these appear not to have produced any serious solution to the transfer of rat-run traffic onto Taverham Road once the Church Lane link and Easton roundabout are removed. A 30mph speed limit on Taverham Road seems to be the only current proposal for when '4000 vehicles' daily are transferred onto Taverham Road. It is currently an attractive and elevated country lane across the valley, wholly single vehicle width, with blind humps and bends, raised banks and limited passing places : it certainly shouldn't be littered with Speed Limit signage ... 30mph is too fast on much of the road anyway ... and who could ever police such a control.

The question as to why the organisations (HE and NCC) can't agree on one traffic predictive model was not properly addressed by HE. Barrie Arthur then stated it was 'an unreasonable assumption to assume traffic will transfer to Taverham Road'. This has not been proved by HE. In fact, NCC (the only people who have been prepared to talk about this to the local residents) seem to disagree with that opinion. And yet there is still no strategy presented and HE designers have never explained or presented their thinking on this. Neither has a side road strategy been presented yet from NCC - though, to be fair, NCC Highway's hands seem to be tied by the fait accompli handed out (down!) by HE. The Questions below have yet to be answered, albeit that they have been asked repeatedly. Would the Planning Inspector please attempt to cut through the fudging around and press for some very clear and constructive answers.

**Will HE please explain why they are wedded to the connection of Taverham Road to the proposed roundabout complex at Norwich Road? Does HE agree that this is setting up an enhanced rat-run by linking through from Taverham to the A47? If HE does not agree, would it please set out the evidence (with origin/destination) that traffic will be able to / prefer to join the A47 elsewhere. Where will all the through-traffic presently coming down the Ringland Road / Church Lane rat-run disperse to? What is NCC Highway's view on the present proposal - does it feel that there is an impasse with HE?**

**Why is the junction (and elevated main line road) directly in front of the Taverham Road houses? Where is the mitigation for these properties?**

**Do the HE calculations include a new source of rat-run traffic down Taverham Road to the food hub site? On behalf of the food hub development Mr Rushe quickly pointed out he didn't like the word 'rat-run' - but what are the predicted figures for food hub traffic up Taverham Road? It seems that Taverham Road is being set up as the 'safety valve' in a flawed solution. What is the NCC (and HE) strategy to prevent, deter, reduce, limit this?**

**Please ask HE / NCC to explain the process and the short and long-term success of taking a road off satellite routing maps? (This seems to be the sort of 'no ideas fudge' frequently served up when there is a dearth of effective possibilities). What are the other options being considered by NCC (and HE)?**

**Does HE and NCC consider Taverham Road a suitable and capable route for carrying articulated lorry traffic - in both directions and combined with cars, tractors, cyclists and .... horses?! There is already a weight restriction at the A47 junction on Taverham Road. Will this be enforced? Likewise, is the single lane of Weston Road suitable for very large vehicles and cars running in both directions?**

**Does HE and NCC consider Taverham Road a suitable road for Equinor to gain cross-country access to the Easton compound? What is the nature / size and daily number of vehicles predicted to require this access? Why exactly is it not possible for Equinor to access their site/compound from the A47 direct in the same manner as HE?**

**What does HE / NCC believe will be the consequences for the side roads when the Western Link doesn't open at the same time as the new A47 (or is, quite possibly, never built at all?). We have seen various predictive figures - we want to know exactly how the consequent traffic on Taverham Road in particular (and elsewhere for that matter) will be addressed. Will HE and NCC provide a joint agreed statement on that, with some jointly agreed figures - and will they explain it to the local residents and answer questions on that in person?**

***c) Hearing 2. Item 4 Biodiversity and Item 5 Climate Change.  
Comment and question.***

What we heard here from the HE team did not come across as being much in tune with the current environmental climate sensibilities. Most of the HE statements seemed to boil down to saying that such-and-such is not a statutory requirement and that the Government can make its decision irrespective of the climate impact effects. The latter is clearly beyond HE's control, but they might have tried to better demonstrate that they were striving to put before the Minister the most climate friendly design possible - within the obvious limitations of a road-building scheme.

**Can HE indicate the number of new trees to be planted in the scheme and, more or less, the number of trees to be removed?**

I certainly concur with the principle of Mr A Cawdron's 'Sir, let's just hope our children will forgive us'. However, there are without doubt many good reasons for trying to sort out this particularly dangerous short section of the network - but certainly not dualling it all the way to the Midlands as the business community seem to want. I was surprised that there is predicted to be an increase in 'end-user' emissions, despite the scheme addressing the long slow tailback queues we witness daily at peak times.

Can HE indicate what it calculates to be the present end-user (congested) emissions figures on this stretch of road and how these compare with the projected increase in end-user emissions on the dualled road?

**d) Hearing 2. Item 6 Heritage.**

**Questions.**

When the heritage bodies asked for the Norwich Road junction to be moved 150m further east to avoid impact on the setting (and deceased souls) of Honingham Church, did HE ever equally consider the impact on the (living) souls now facing directly onto the new junction position?

It is understood locally that the field immediately west of the Blind Lane / A47 junction is the location of the original old village of Honingham, apparently abandoned as a response to the Black Death. Were HE's archaeologists aware of this and did they uncover any findings to support this? Is there any interesting research here which might be shared with Honingham Parish?

**e) Hearing 2. Item 7 Population and human health.**

**Comment and question.**

I would put it to HE and NCC Highways that by increasing the traffic on the small country lanes adjacent to this scheme and by not producing a coherent side road strategy to address it, the net result will actually be an end to safe cycling in the Ringland Hills. Unless, of course, cyclists wish to stick solely to the new fume-laden routes alongside the new dual carriageways.

**Does HE and NCC consider that the Ringland Hill lanes \* will be sufficiently quiet and traffic free for safe family cycling and horse-riding once the new roadway scheme is operational? (\* In particular, Telegraph Hill, Weston Road, Taverham Road, Honingham Lane, Ringland Road).**

The proposed dead-end vehicle access to St Andrew's Church continues to concern local people who see this option as an open invitation for illegal camping, traveller parking and fly-tipping. The lockable gate is little deterrent and would be easily skirted past.

**Will HE explain why the pedestrian underpass beyond the church cannot be moved to become a vehicular underpass linking to Honingham village, thereby maintaining a local road network and avoiding the direct connection of Taverham Road to the Norwich Road roundabout?**

**f) Hearing 2. Item 8 Landscape and visual effect. Item 9 Other Issues.**

**Comment and question.**

The proposed new Easton footbridge was described as the answer to crossing the A47 at Easton as other options 'involved multiple switchbacks'. The design we currently have for the new footbridge actually requires considerable ramping to achieve the crossing and it seems in fact to have become a very significant construction in the chosen location.

**Can HE indicate who will judge the design of this new bridge (which will be prominent in the landscape) and who will decide that a suitably elegant structure has been designed - will HE be sole judge and jury?**

The Berry Hall team were very worried about the clear view which the Hall might have of the construction compounds. Putting aside the fact that these are temporary intrusions, surely the most critical views are those of the completed scheme and, in particular, those views of the new roadway (now to be elevated out of its present valley) from the north Wensum / Tud valley areas laying to the east of the Norwich Road junction. These must surely be the most critical and long term encroachments into the visual landscape and yet these didn't seem to get the discussion / emphasis they merit.

**Does HE's landscape mitigation design fully address the views south (towards the road) from the higher country lanes to the north of the scheme? What will users of Taverham Road see of the new dualled roads from the elevated areas as they drive south? What will the residents at the southern end of Taverham Road see from their properties (some of which appear to be directly north of the elevated junction)? Please spell out what mitigation measures are proposed to address increased traffic noise and junction lighting at these locations in the completed scheme?**

Early in the consultation process, great concern was raised with HE about the potential loss of the dark skies in this area of countryside. A verbal assurance was received from the former HE Project Manager that the lighting of the Norwich Road junction would be limited to the underpass area and would be very low level. It seems that this may not be the case, as we learn (at the hearing) that the slip roads will also be lit. This makes the removal of the present (very bright) Easton roundabout lights almost irrelevant if this night sky pollution is to be transferred down the road to this new junction.

**Will HE share and discuss with Taverham Road residents the layout and design detail of the lighting proposals for the Norwich Road junction? We would like to see the proposals and have an opportunity to comment. We would like to see that information at this stage and not when/after it is built.**

May I also ask whether you are satisfied that the apparent discrepancy I identified (between distances in text and drawing) in HE's DCO Draft (advised in my last submission) has now received an answer / correction?

Thank you for listening and for your consideration of these matters.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Kenney

