

Dear Mr Hunter and the Inspectorate Team,

I have read the various Deadline 5 submissions, in particular those under REP5-016 – 9.22 Applicant's Responses to Deadline 4 Comments. Under Content 9.1.2, Highways England responded to my own comments. I thank the Applicant for providing each question with a response which, though sometimes couched in 'official speak' and references, did in fairness on the whole give some sort of answer.

I have only a few observations and questions to add relating to my previous Taverham Road concerns, which I make below.

1. Traffic Predictions.

Highways England's responses suggest that it is quite clear in its own mind that, once completed, its current scheme proposals will not adversely affect Taverham Road and probably benefit the lane. My understanding is that even if the NWL does not happen, (HE is saying that) the mitigation measure of closing Honingham Lane, coupled with the present HGV restriction and a new 30mph speed limit will result in 400 vehicles passing along the lane each day (as opposed to the 600 a day apparently experienced at present). With the NWL built and open, Taverham Road can anticipate only 200 vehicles a day. HE says that it has factored in the food hub connection link: we hope that includes not only HGVs, but also vans and employee traffic predicted to be using Taverham Road.

If this were to prove accurate (setting aside the lighting and visual impacts) the scenario would be quite reassuring. It does concern me, however, that there isn't any clear explanation as to what will actually happen to all that 4k plus traffic currently running through Lower Easton. In particular, if there is no NWL road in place, ever, where does it all go? The figures seem to need further explanation, because the increase in Taverham Road traffic without the NWL built is still, at most, only half that currently passing through to the Easton roundabout. It makes the predictions seem 'unreliable', but perhaps there is an explanation? I would also comment that the vast majority of through traffic currently uses Ringland Road to get directly through Lower Easton to the Easton roundabout and relatively little heads further west through Ringland village to use the Honingham Lane route to the A47 via Taverham Road.

Question to HE.

HE's answer to Mr Hooker in 9.22, 5.1.2, states that the interim closure of Honingham Lane keeps '..... traffic along Taverham Road to 1,300 AADT compared to 2,600 without Honingham Lane closed.' However, the answer given in response to my question was that the interim measure (with the NWL unopened) would result in 400 AADT. Please clarify which is correct, as there is an enormous difference between 400 vehicles a day and 1300 a day.

Question to NCC Highways.

I have asked this of NCC on 24.11.21 but have had no reply. Does NCC Highways now accept HE's figures as stated above? What has happened to NCC's previously stated concerns and their own predictions? Does NCC Highways now believe that the rat run traffic we fear will move over to Taverham Road will in fact 'dissipate' as HE predicts? Where do all the vehicles go when the NWL is not open? It would be reassuring to know that both agencies are equally sure that the issue is resolved – does NCC have evidence which leads it to believe it is resolved? A succinct 'Yes' or 'No' would be a good starting point to the answer.

2. Controlling traffic on the country lanes.

One has to be sceptical about measures that rely on putting a 30mph speed limit on a country lane, HGV prohibition signs and removing a road from Sat – Nav preferred routes. HE states the number of signposted pull-ins already existing on Taverham Road: it fails to note also that many of the signs have been knocked over or are lost in undergrowth. HE's monitoring also clearly didn't observe and record the number of HGV vehicles which currently ignore the restrictions and seek to nip across the valley. The District Council are unable to patrol and limit the amount of fly-tipping on the lane, so one wonders what chance there is of catching (the majority of) cars and rogue HGVs which currently exceed 30mph along this road.

Question to NCC Highways.

Firstly – would you please undertake NOT to litter this lovely lane with more useless and inappropriate signs? This is a country lane, not a major highway – or at least it is at present. The northern exit to Weston Longville is an almost hilarious riot of random signage – and it does absolutely nothing to traffic ... other than to bewilder drivers.

Secondly – would you please explain quite how you anticipate a 30mph speed limit can be effectively policed in a country lane location? In fact, there are locations where the limit should be 20mph – but, please, this is not an invitation to double the signage!

3. Equinor's proposed use of Taverham Road for its site access.

The Applicant states that it is'only ensuring that a short section of Taverham Road from the Norwich Road junction northern roundabout is suitable for Orsted's construction traffic requirements'. Well, it may have escaped HE's observations, but that is precisely the length of lane along which almost all the Taverham Road residents live!

HE also failed to answer the clear question put in my last response – what is the nature / size and daily number of vehicles predicted to require this access?

Question to HE.

Please comment on my first observation – do you understand that almost all the [REDACTED] residents live (and have accesses) along precisely that part of [REDACTED] which Orsted proposes to use for access? Do you also understand that it is probably the most tortuous and dangerous part of the lane, narrow, steep, blind bended by a barn and banks?

Please answer the question I asked originally. What is the nature / size and daily number of vehicles predicted to require this access along Taverham Road?

Question to NCC Highways.

Please answer the question I asked originally of HE and please give your appreciation of the safety issues and the likely 'mitigation works' you will require of Orsted / Equinor?. What is the nature / size and daily number of vehicles predicted to require this access along Taverham Road?

4. Biodiversity and Climate Change.

I still see no plain answer to the very straightforward and simple question I asked about trees.

Question to HE.

Will HE please indicate the number of new trees to be planted in the scheme and, more or less, the number of trees to be removed? It must be possible to provide these figures to within a few thousand / hundred – after all, how otherwise can the cost of the works be known?

5. Heritage.

HE is keen to state that the new road will be moved over 200 metres south of the existing A47 and away from properties near St Andrew's Church and the Taverham Road properties. The truth of the statement is actually that whilst the main road itself will be moved away that distance, the new junction to the north and its access roads are only half that distance further south and, crucially, they are being moved into a more direct visual proximity (vertically as well) with the residential properties. Noted that the second plan extract in the HE response did not include the residents that will be almost on axis with the junction.

I thank Mr Hunter for hearing these comments and also for the pertinent questions he has now put to HE regarding low noise surfacing (12.3.1) and noise barriers (12.3.2). In particular, thank you for your further probing on the Taverham Road figures (14.3.6).

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

Yours sincerely,

Mark Kenney
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