

Honingham Parish Council - A47 Examination – Deadline 7 Written Submission

Having attended the last ISH on 6th January, Honingham Parish Council want to make this additional submission for your further consideration.

The council and the parishioners we represent remain deeply frustrated and concerned around the continued absence of amendments to the scheme that in our view are required for the people, businesses, environment and wildlife of this special place. In particular it seems that at this critical point the reasonable views and proposals of local people, local businesses and local parish councils are being ignored in order to progress the scheme without amendment in accordance with the input of professional advisors and ‘experts’ – some of which, as was revealed at the hearing, have not even taken the time and effort to fully visit, explore and understand the location that they are now opining on. It is the residents of this area that will need to live with this scheme on a daily basis for decades to come when all of these ‘experts’ have long since moved on and moreover the needless loss of trees, hedgerows, habitats and local heritage that could be avoided in what is a climate emergency. Surely it is not unreasonable to expect this emergency to be reflected in scheme amendments?

Whilst we continue to support the need for a new dual carriageway and the maintenance of a constructive relationship with National Highways, it is our view that the current scheme design and especially its junctions are flawed and should be rejected.

It is evident that the existing Norwich Western Link (NWL) solution to Wensum Valley north-south motorised transit is now a diminishing prospect once the improved designation of what is an internationally important and rare Barbastelle bat super colony is achieved. In Honingham itself large numbers and a rich variety of bat species can be readily observed. As an illustration the below are the analysed results of a Norfolk Bat Survey that was conducted in Honingham in August 2019 over three nights in three locations close to the River Tud. It is clearly important that any and all steps are taken to minimise disruption to bats and their feeding areas. Note this data was a provisional analysis with a further 419 passes not fully identified.

Species	Total number of passes (all nights)
Barbastelle	15
Brown long-eared bat	20
Common pipistrelle	992
Daubenton's bat	10
Leisler's bat	5
Nathusius' pipistrelle	1
Natterer's bat	13
Noctule	52
Serotine	45
Soprano pipistrelle	590

As we have submitted previously it remains our contention that the current enormous proposed roundabouts of the Wood Lane/NWL-A47 junction are in any case oversized (based upon avoiding modelled roundabout queues in the far future of 2040 that may well never materialise given increased working from home and more flexible working that together will

reduce modelled peak flows) and now look increasingly likely to be being built for a NWL scheme that may never take place – at least in its current location. This is unacceptable given what is then the unnecessary immediate destruction of trees, hedgerows and habitats. National Highways should be capable of designing a junction here that significantly reduces land take and environmental destruction, not least starting with the presumption of not building new roads where they are not necessary. As we and others have stated repeatedly previously, this includes making better use of the entire existing A47 which gives opportunity to fully retain existing side road connections for local traffic movements. This instantly avoids the necessity of building multiple additional link roads and creating unresolved issues of severed access. It is frustrating when alternative potentially plausible designs are explored and put forward by local concerned parties that seek to maintain local connectivity and reduce environmental destruction that then do not lead to any movement in the National Highways proposal. The absence of any change in these proposals and especially given the now diminished prospect of the NWL going ahead in its current form should in our view mean that the A47 scheme, without further amendment is rejected.

National Highways and Norfolk County Council have continued to remain vacuous on any effective constructive proposal to alleviate the potential for grid lock on the clearly unsuitable and unsafe combination of Taverham Road and Weston Road narrow single track country lanes which is a **DIRECT** result of the current National Highways proposal to sever access at the current Easton roundabout. As was discussed at the last ISH, local residents and representatives have no confidence in the various traffic modelling outputs which remain in our view largely unreconciled and unintelligible. We appreciate that it is difficult for non-experts to get a full appreciation of these models, but it is concerning that when as was pointed out to you when one local representative who has had the time, energy and tenacity to pursue this remains unconvinced and in particular on the absence of comprehensive origin and destination analysis. Residents of Taverham Road itself have made similar representations to you. This is now a very real issue for local people since the delivery of the A47 scheme as is, without the NWL, will create considerable unsafe flows of traffic through Taverham Road and Weston Road. Whilst the proposed closure of Honingham Lane north of the Merry Hill cross-roads will clearly reduce traffic through Ringland itself, we are not convinced that this will especially reduce traffic flow along Taverham Road given the obvious re-routing options available (i.e. Ringland Road/Costessey Lane to avoid Ringland). As a minimum, as submitted previously, our view is that Taverham Road should remain connected to the existing Mattishall Road roundabout via an enlarged new dualled A47 underpass (WCHR underpass already in the proposed scheme) and **NOT** be directly connected to the new Norwich Road A47 junction.

Whilst the current A47 scheme may meet current minimum regulations and requirements it could and should deliver much more strongly in terms of minimising immediate environmental destruction, reducing land take, preserving local heritage and bring forward the point of 'net environmental gain'. In our view the climate emergency that we are all now in must mean that this is of increased importance in your considerations. The scheme should much better preserve, protect and enhance the rural value of what is a special area in and around the Tud valley.