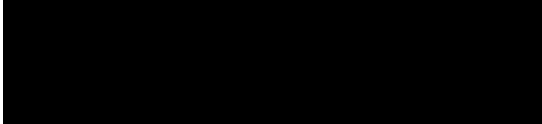


Submission ID: 15595

Mr J. Hallam
Miss R. Bay



The Planning Inspectorate
Temple Quay House
Temple Quay
Bristol
BS1 6PN
31 March 2023

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: A12 Chelmsford to A120 Widening Scheme – Proposed construction and site of Gershwin Boulevard Bridge at Witham

We have recently inspected plans to reintroduce a decades-lost public footpath near to our home, that many residents were and are unaware of, with a multi-use bridge for pedestrians, cyclists and horses.

We're writing to you today to oppose this plan as it stands, seeing it as a waste of time and effort that would undoubtedly have a negative impact on the residential area around Gershwin Boulevard, Howbridge Hall Road, Olivers Drive, Kinloch Chase, and Halfacres streets.

The reasons for this are multiple:

1. Removal of Green Area & Air Ambulance Landing Zone:

The proposed building of the multi-use bridge would see the green area at the end of Olivers Drive turn into a worksite, removing a pleasant area where people now take dogs for walks, children play, and insects populate.

More importantly, the area is an air ambulance landing zone, having recently played an important role in treating an elderly woman hit by a car at the Ashby Road/Maltings Lane junction just 0.3 miles away.

2. A Forgotten Footpath, Leading to Nowhere:

The footpath lost 60 years ago when the A12 was built has been forgotten. We know of no one campaigning to restore this link. However, having lived in the area for several years, we are aware that there are several public footpaths in the fields south of the A12. None of these lead along Howbridge Hall Road from Maldon Road. Currently, Howbridge Hall Road runs parallel to the A12 for over 300 metres, but this does not end in a public footpath.

This means that pedestrians would have to walk south down Howbridge Hall Road to join Maldon Road, which is a national speed limit road (60mph limit) with no pathways, or trespass on farming land used for crops and shooting game. This is dangerous and I see no reason to believe that local residents would use the footbridge because of it. Likewise, the local gamekeepers would be none too happy about bumbling pedestrians getting lost in fields.

Granted, the proposed bridge could cut time for cyclists who would be using the road anyway, but they already have a route option. Residents who want to cross the A12 do so by going under the

dual carriageway at Maldon Road, a little over 0.3 miles away. Footpaths can then be found around Benton Hall and the golf course. As a cyclist and a pedestrian/rambler, we have used these pathways many times without issue.

3. A Lack of Horses in the Area:

In the local area of South Witham, there are no farms or horse-riding schools. The idea that a multi-use bridge connecting to the green at the end of Olivers Drive would be used for horse riding is dubious at best.

Taking a horse across one of the busiest dual carriageways in Essex would likewise be a risk for riders, meaning the bridge would have to be caged like the one going over the mainline railway at Motts Lane. This would make the bridge an eyesore on what is otherwise a nice plot of land.

4. An Increase in Pollution & Removal of Carbon Reducing Mature Trees:

Most importantly for us, the proposed bridge would mean the felling of several well established trees along the side of the A12.

Not only would this remove necessary carbon reducing trees from the area, which are doubtless helping to remove pollutants before they reach the residential area and therefore protecting health, it would also impact the UK's ability to reach its net zero target.

Mature trees can absorb 22 kilograms of carbon dioxide per year, but the saplings that may replace these trees will be planted in an artificial way and will not absorb similar volumes of pollutants for decades. Similarly, mature trees provide habitats for birds, insects and small mammals – all of which will be effectively removed from the area. Rewilding has been proven to have immense carbon reducing abilities, it therefore makes little sense to remove what little wildlife there is from the area. We should instead be aiming to increase wildlife, not take action to harm wildlife, even if it would be in the short term (which is still a term that would take decades for wildlife to recover from).

5. An Increase in Noise Pollution:

The organic barrier of trees along the A12 currently helps to block noise pollution as well as limit gaseous pollution to the residential area. By removing these trees, local streets will have less protection against noise.

You only need to compare the noise in winter to that in summer to truly understand how much impact this barrier has. With full leaf coverage, the noise from the A12 is greatly reduced, while in winter it is noticeably louder. But without even the bare trees to line the dual carriageway, noise in the residential area will beggar belief.

Given that the entire A12 widening scheme is intended to increase traffic on the dual carriageway, this will compound the increase in noise levels affecting the residential area around the proposed footbridge.

An impact on mental health, sleeping patterns and physical health would follow. Financially, it would also make nearby homes more difficult to sell and could lock residents into homes that their families aren't fit for.

Proposed Action

All of these points contribute to a clear picture that the proposed bridge at the end of Olivers Drive would be a non-starter. It is in our opinion that the residential and green area surrounding the streets outlined in the opening paragraphs should remain untouched.

However, we understand that some residents may feel differently. In this instance, our proposed compromise would be to move the planned multi-use bridge to the corner of Gershwin Boulevard, crossing the A12 at the shortest point to link up with Howbridge Hall Road to the south of the A12.

This would provide a straight, short crossing that would minimise the impact to established trees, preserve the green area and air ambulance landing zone near Olivers Drive, maintain as much of a barrier to noise and gaseous pollution as possible, and make use of an existing road rather than trying to re-establish lost pathways.

Even still, we do not believe that this footbridge would be much used by local residents and it is our primary opinion that this footbridge should not be constructed.

We appreciate your time in considering this letter and opinion, and hope that our opinions will be taken into consideration for the next steps of the development.

Yours faithfully,

Jordan Hallam and Rosalind Bay