

The Planning Inspectorate  
Temple Quay House  
Temple Quay  
Bristol  
BS1 6PN

20th March 2023

**TR010060 - A12 Chelmsford to A120 Widening Scheme - Gershwin Boulevard Bridge**

Dear Sirs,

Firstly, thank you for including my submissions so far on the project documents library so that they can be considered by the inspectorate, in particular those relating to the Deadline 3 submissions.

In reviewing the numerous documents released in relation to Deadline 3, one of these is document reference **TR010060/EXAM/9.26 - TECHNICAL NOTE GERSHWIN BOULEVARD BRIDGE**. It is clear that National Highways and/or their contractors have had the opportunity to review my submissions and those of several of my neighbours in relation to the proposed bridge located adjacent to Olivers Drive and Halfacres in Witham, in order to produce this extensive document. It is only fair that I, and others if they wish to do so, have the opportunity to respond to this technical note, which I believe to be significantly flawed.

Section 1.2 - Context.

Clause 1.2.1 refers to the existing Public Right of Way footpath 121\_95 which crosses the A12 in the vicinity of Olivers Drive. Whilst this footpath exists, for the past approximately sixty years use of this footpath has involved crossing a busy two lanes each way dual carriageway so in reality has not been useable. The houses on Olivers Drive and the surrounding residential roads were constructed some fifteen to twenty years after the dual carriageway and as such the historic context is not relevant.

Clause 1.2.4 states that footpath 121\_95 links with footpath 268\_4. In fact this link is via 121\_96. However, this requires the user to walk alongside, and at some point cross, a 220 metres\* long section of Maldon Road (B1018) which is a single carriageway National Speed Limit road linking Witham with Maldon and onward to the villages on the Dengie peninsula. It has narrow verges bounded with mature trees and fencing for the whole length.



*Image 1 - captured from Google Streetview close to the Southern End of footpath 121\_95*

Section 3. Consideration of alternative suggested location for the new footbridge.

Clause 3.2.2 - This states "The suggested route west of the bridge would ultimately connect to a section of Maldon Road remote from any built-up area, and no clear onward facility". Although it is remote from built up area, it is a similar distance (around 290 metres\*) and with better visibility from the end point for footpath 121\_96, which is adjacent to the car park gate of Olivers Nursery.

*Image 1 - captured from Google Streetview close to the junction of Howbridge Hall Road and Maldon Road*



\* distances measured using Google Pedometer

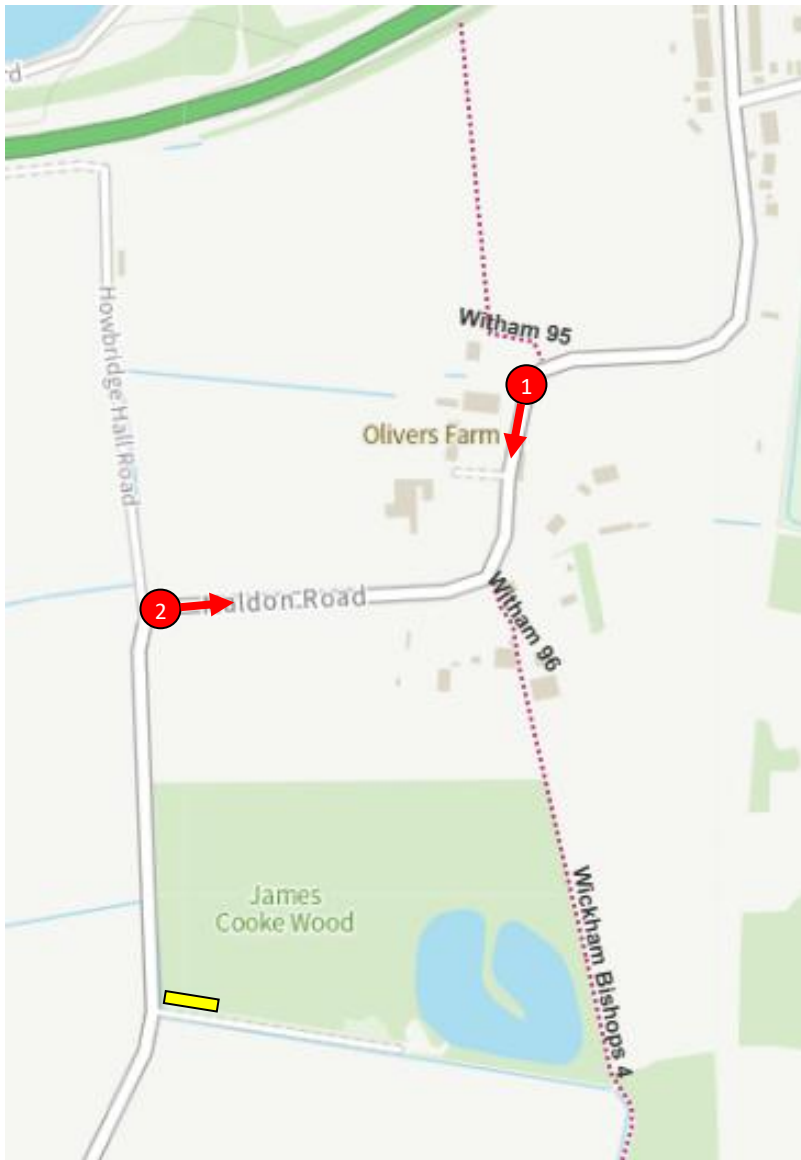


Image 3 - captured from Essex County Council Interactive PROW map. Added indicators show approximate position and direction of images 1 and 2.

James Cooke Wood is a publicly owned space managed by Witham Town Council for the benefit of the people of Witham. Although footpath 268\_4 bounds this, there is no current access. The only practical means to access this is by car, parking on a parking area on the track to the South of the wood (indicated by a yellow rectangle). The lake indicated is a privately owned fishing lake and not part of the wood.

The land between the wood and Maldon Road is part of the Olivers Nursery complex. Footpath 121\_96 crosses this land.

**A new piece of information is that the owner of Olivers Nursery has agreed that if footpath 121\_95 is diverted onto Howbridge Hall Road, he would be prepared to grant Permissive Access along the Western Boundary of his land to provide access to James Cooke Wood.**

As well as allowing increased use of the wood, this would enable an alternative link to footpath 268\_4.

### 3.4 Landscape and visual.

Clause 3.4.1 - The residents that would be visually impacted by the proposed alternative location are at least double the distance from the location than those who would be impacted by the original proposed location. That distance is characterised by a drainage lake and a busy spine road (Gershwin Boulevard) - Viewpoint B in the Technical Note.



Image 4 - captured from Google Streetview on Gershwin Boulevard adjacent to the closest residence to the proposed alternative location - red arrow indicates where Howbridge Hall Road is closest to the A12



*Image 5 - Viewpoint B from the Technical Note - showing the approximate location of Howbridge Hall Road beyond the A12 which is the proposed alternative location and not where indicated by National Highways' blue arrow.*

Clause 3.4.2 - The Technical Note states that a similar amount of vegetation would need to be removed for the two proposed locations. What it fails to mention is that the vegetation to be removed by the original proposed location are mature trees established over fifty or more years, whilst that which would need to be removed at the proposed alternative location is less than fifteen years old so barely mature.

Although images are included in the document (Viewpoints 2 and 4), these clauses only consider the impact on properties to the North of the A12. Under National Highways' proposed location there would also be a detrimental impact on approximately twenty properties on the Western side of Maldon Road to the South of the A12. However the proposed alternative location is adjacent to a minor road (Viewpoint A) that provides access to an electricity sub-station, and to one commercial and one residential premises that both lie around 400 metres west of the location and less than 50 metres from the A12 so much less of an overall impact than the original proposed location.

#### Appendix A.5 - Visual effects.

The appendix takes 16 pages to describe in detail that the impact of the construction at viewpoints 1 to 4 will be severely impacted at construction and year 1 reducing to moderate adverse at year 15. However, a bridge at the proposed location would be prominently located at the top of a sloping grass field (Viewpoints 1 and 3) so the long term impact has to be more than "moderate".

There is no equivalent analysis for viewpoints A and B. If there were to be such an analysis conducted, the impact at Viewpoint A would be considerably less than at viewpoints 2 and 4 due to the functional location of Howbridge Hall Road and this location not being a public amenity.

Similarly, at Viewpoint B, the proposed alternative location is separated from the Viewpoint by a drainage lake surrounded by a metal railing fence, a busy 40mph road, and a much greater distance. This could be further mitigated by the design of the access ramp, which could potentially be aligned as a continuation of the bridge line rather than parallel with the A12 and run alongside the retained vegetation at this point. This would also address the concern submitted by Braintree District Council in their response also release with the Deadline 3 submissions.

#### Loss of Amenity

Another aspect that should come under the heading of "Landscape and Visual" is that fact that the green area between the A12 and Olivers Drive, Halfacres and Ashby Road is designated "Amenity Space". Not only will this be significantly affected (virtually no access at all) during the construction phase, the overall area of the space will be reduced not only by the bridge itself, but also by whatever screening trees are planted to mitigate the visual impact.

#### Conclusion

The Technical Note is an incomplete and in some cases incorrect document that does not make a persuasive case for retaining the proposed location of the Gershwin Boulevard Bridge.

Yours faithfully

Keith Lomax