

10th May 2022

Planning Policy  
Causeway House Braintree  
Essex CM7 9HB  
Tel: 01376 552525  
Fax 01376 557787  
[www.braintree.gov.uk](http://www.braintree.gov.uk)

Dear Sirs,

Thank you for allowing the district Council to submit it in response to accompany the oral response made at **Issue Specific Hearing (ISH3) on Environmental Matters** on 26th April 2023.

This response covers two topics:

- 1) Gershwin Boulevard Bridge, and
- 2) Detrunking existing sections of the A12

First Gershwin Boulevard bridge which would reconnect footpath 121\_95. The link in this location is supported by the Council as it would allow post construction increased opportunities for residents to access the open countryside and undertake circular walks with related health and green infrastructure benefits for the local population. We identified in our local impact report that there is a missed opportunity here to reduce the number of successful foldbacks to improve route attractiveness to cyclists, but we understand that remediation of these feedbacks would result in a slightly more adverse landscape impact. A bridge here would also help mitigate the negative operational disincentives of an unattractive 200m diversion following the removal of Latney's bridge.

In our local impact report, we have identified that large areas of trees will need to be removed to facilitate widening and that the removal of large tree groups in quick succession will cause a significant change in the perception of the landscape adjacent to the road. Remove of large tree groups will lead to significant visual change despite the trees not being recognised as trees of status. This is also true for the construction of new pedestrian bridges.

We have also identified that the assessments of effects by year 15 within some landscape character areas such as the Blackwater River Valley is likely to experience some of the greatest change due to the installation of new physical structures. Gershwin Boulevard bridge is such a new piece of physical infrastructure that would be difficult to fully mitigate the visual impact of.

It is our opinion that by year 15 there is not enough time for landscape mitigation to have established sufficiently in these areas, such that the significance of landscape

effect will remain at large adverse rather than moderate adverse. We believe establishment is more likely to be a 15 to 20 year time period however, even this is heavily dependent on the successful management and maintenance of proposed mitigation planting. Overall, there is likely to be large adverse impact for a long period up to 2050.

National highway's submitted document 9.26 TECHNICAL NOTE GERSHWIN BOULEVARD BRIDGE states that: *At year 15 when mitigation planting has established this would reduce to a moderate adverse visual effect.* And for the reasons outlined above, we disagree with both the timescale and the significance of effect.

The proposal submitted to relocate this bridge west by 300m. On this issue, the we can confirm our position is neutral. Any proposals to relocate the bridge should be accompanied with a public consultation.

Our second topic concerns detrunking, and in particular, the sections between Witham and Rivenhall End, and north of Feering. DCO plans currently shows that a dual carriageway as currently exists in situ will remain, post construction.

The Council agrees with ECC and Colchester City Council, and is a co-signatory of a letter dated March 21st which highlights our significant concerns. It would not represent good placemaking and it would be a missed opportunity to improve walking and cycling facilities, green infrastructure and support biodiversity, net zero or reduce flooding.

These proposals are unacceptable as it would leave a poor legacy for Rivenhall End, it would be incompatible with the character of a small rural hamlet of just 177 people. There would be ongoing road safety and enforcement concerns related to speeding at both detrunked sections with little hope of redress without further funding.

There has been a lack of progress on this issue, and it would seem that National Highways have sought to 'go slow' on detrunking until it is too late so that we are stuck with dual carriageway as it currently exists.

The District Council first formally raised a problem with a lack of detailed proposals to tackle detrunking in the PIERS consultation of October 2021. Only a handful of meetings and workshops held with National Highways in the intervening 2 years have covered detrunking - presumably there have been more meetings between NH and ECC but the District Council has not been involved. There is little in terms of firm alternative proposals to comment on and the whole approach so far has been quite unsatisfactory.

Yours Sincerely,

Mr Gary Sung

On behalf of Braintree District Council