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WITHAM

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Mr Andrew Harding

Messing and Inworth Action Group Limited

Our Ref: ZA77794

21 June 2023

Dear Mr Harding,

Thank you for the invitation to attend the meeting on 1 July 2023. Due to an existing longstanding commitment I am not able to attend. However, attendees of the meeting and the community in Messing and Inworth can be assured of my ongoing support for their aims to address the adverse impacts of the proposals for junction 24 of the A12 Widening Scheme with a community proposed alternative bypass.

Since the designs for junction 24 came forward, I have been making representations to National Highways and the Government to convey to them in the strongest terms the concerns that the local community has. I have also raised this matter in Parliament.

The pressures on these villages and along the Inworth Road are already significant and I have been clear in my views that the A12 Widening Scheme should be designed in a way to alleviate local pressures. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to not only upgrade the strategic highways network in Essex, but to also address some of the traffic and congestion challenges on local roads that are key connections to the A12.

That is why I have been working closely with Essex County Council, including Council Leader Cllr Kevin Bentley, and local communities along and in the vicinity of the A12 to engage with National Highways and the Department for Transport on these plans.

I welcome the actions that the local community in Messing and Inworth have taken and the innovative and practical solution found with the community bypass proposal. This plan will assist in alleviating congestion on Inworth Road and having a new bypass as proposed will be a safer road to connect Tiptree and other areas to the A12 than relying on the Inworth Road. The community bypass has clear and demonstrable benefits.

The costs of the bypass also seem reasonable and these costs are small in the context of the estimated £1.2 billion overall cost of the A12 Widening Scheme.

I have put forward the case for the community bypass to the Secretary of State for Transport and to National Highways and I share the frustration felt that National Highways have not revised their proposals to reflect local concerns and have decided not to adopt the community bypass alternative. They have instead put forward their plans to the Planning Inspector to consider as part of the Development Consent Order process to make recommendations to the Secretary of State for Transport. We know that these plans do not fully mitigate or address the traffic pressures that could be caused and the ability to

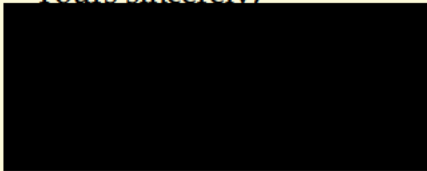
find design solutions on the existing local highways network are limited, especially compared to the benefits of a new purpose built bypass being constructed.

I have followed the examination and inquiry process and I know that a strong and robust case has been put forward in favour of the community bypass and criticising the current designs for junction 24 that National Highways put forward to them. The Planning Inspector will consider these points and forward a report and recommendations to the Secretary of State for Transport to consider before he will make a final decision.

I will continue to support the local community and the bypass proposal by pressing the Secretary of State to consider it. I will carry on highlighting to the Secretary of State the benefits of the community bypass and take opportunities to raise this in Parliament.

The A12 Widening Scheme should be a successful project to improve our infrastructure and we need the community bypass to maximise those benefits and address congestion and safety concerns on local roads.

Yours sincerely,



Rt Hon Priti Patel MP
Member of Parliament for Witham