

# A12 Chelmsford to A120 Widening Project

Deadline 7 – Written Representation  
from Cllr Lesley Wagland

3 July 2023

## Introduction

On behalf of Essex County Council as the Council's lead member for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, I'd like to thank the Examining Authority for conducting the examination in an open and impartial manner over the last six months. The proposed widening of the A12 between junctions 19 and 25 is an important project that will have a significant impact on Essex residents, businesses and visitors alike, and it is important to the Council as host authority that the benefits of the project are maximised and any potential adverse effects are avoided and/or mitigated as far as possible.

I would like to take the opportunity at Deadline 7 of the examination to highlight some of the key outstanding issues for the Council, building on the representations made by Council officers and representatives throughout the examination process.

## Key Issues

1. The Council remains supportive of the A12 widening given the strategic need and to encourage and stimulate economic growth in this important part of the County and East of England. However, the Council remains concerned and has consistently stated that the impacts on local roads, for which we, as local highway authority are responsible, need to be addressed in order for the NSIP proposals to be deemed acceptable
2. The Council has consistently demonstrated its commitment to the maintenance and management of our local road networks. We have diligently fulfilled our duties in ensuring the safe and efficient flow of traffic across our county. Given that the Applicant is proposing that two large sections of the A12 will be de-trunked it is vitally important that these assets be handed over to ECC in such a state that it does not represent an immediate and significant additional burden for which the Council is not budgeted to maintain.
3. Therefore, our biggest concern is the proposed treatment of the de-trunked sections, which will be handed over to the Council as part of the implementation of the DCO. The main issues are briefly summarised below:
  - a. Maintenance burden. As noted above passing over the old de-trunked sections of the A12 in their current form would represent an unfair and unreasonable burden on the Council. Quite simply the considerable ongoing maintenance required for an asset of this nature would have a material detrimental impact on the Council's ability to maintain our highway network. It is my firm belief that this responsibility should not rest solely on the shoulders of the Council, and as the scheme promoter the onus should be on National Highways to develop a solution that works for both parties.
  - b. Over provision: The de-trunked sections represent complete overprovision when you compare the capacity of the road with the likely flows that will use it.
  - c. Due to the de-trunked sections being very lightly trafficked it will give rise to opportunities for speeding and antisocial driving behaviour, as has been seen elsewhere for example the stretch of the former A12 through Copdock which was de-trunked previously. We support the concerns raised by Essex Police regarding road safety on these stretches.

- d. Place making and environmental impact are key priorities for the Council. Consequently, the Council completed its own study to provide a solution to the de-trunked sections, as little detail was available from the Applicant. This solution offers a much better outcome for the environment and will enhance the sense of place compared to a dual carriageway road with minimal traffic.
  - e. Active and sustainable travel provision is another key priority for the Council. In conjunction with the previously raised issues, the provision on the de-trunked sections falls short of meeting the standards set out in national guidance in the form of LTN 1/20.
4. Aside from de-trunking, the Council retains a number of other areas of concern, and these represent the areas which the Council wishes to see changed in the DCO:
- a. It is widely recognised that there are multiple topics requiring further discussions during detailed design. Therefore, we consider it fundamental for the Applicant to openly consult with us and give due regard to any comments made during this process.
  - b. While progress has been made regarding Article 16 on speed limits, there are still six locations where we disagree, and this is a concern for us because we will have the ultimate responsibility for the operation of these local roads.
  - c. Adherence to the LTN 1/20 guidance is one of the Council's priorities. There are still a number of WCH (Walking, Cycling, and Horse-Riding) locations where we believe more should be done to ensure that the DCO aligns with the guidelines.
  - d. The Council remains concerned about the potential impacts of the new junction 24 arrangement on the villages of Messing, Inworth and Tiptree, and continues to believe that further mitigation measures in addition to those to which the Applicant has agreed to date are required. This is an important issue for local people who are understandably concerned about the impacts of this junction and the mitigation currently proposed simply doesn't go far enough.
  - e. A mechanism for agreeing on future mitigation is an essential part of any monitoring and evaluation plan and the two must therefore be considered together.
  - f. On a more general point, more should be done by the Applicant to promote the switch to electric vehicles, and this scheme presents a good opportunity to increase charging infrastructure near the A12. I would urge National Highways to give this some thought as part of the next stage of design development.
5. Notwithstanding the above the Council acknowledges that positive progress has been made in addressing a number of concerns expressed by the Council and would like to thank the Applicant for their hard work and collaborative approach in these areas of concern which include:
- a. Introduction of B1137 Main Road Boreham mitigation measures in the form of average speed safety cameras (however we have yet to agree the inclusion of minor road narrowing at specific locations).
  - b. Inclusion of a two-lane exit from both the junction 21 northern roundabout to the A12 northbound slip road and from the junction 21 southern roundabout to the A12 southern slip
  - c. Developing a Walking Cycling Horse-riding Infrastructure Specification Matrix (WCHISM).
  - d. Agreeing to entering into a Detailed Local Operating Agreement with the Council in respect of the scheme's construction.
  - e. Agreeing to the Council's participation in the Road Safety Audit process.

## Summary

In summary, the proposal for the de-trunked sections continues to represent the biggest area of disagreement, as highlighted throughout the examination. The Council strongly believes that the Applicant's de-trunking proposals are not appropriate and do not align with the principles of the existing and emerging National Policy Statement for National Networks (NPSNN), which a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project must comply with.

Moving forward, the Council would like to see much more detail in the DCO regarding the provision of a more suitable scheme for the de-trunked sections, along the lines of what has been proposed by our officers in various representations. Our proposed wording of Requirement 19 would go a significant way towards addressing our outstanding concerns on de-trunking as it will help us to ensure an acceptable arrangement is delivered.

The Council looks forward to continued collaboration with National Highways on this and other outstanding issues, and is committed to providing the Examining Authority with any further information that they may require from us.

### **Councillor Lesley Wagland OBE**

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Deputy to the Cabinet

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