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Subject: Response to A12/A120 Widening Project - Department for Transport Letter and Request - 27.10.2023
Date: 01 November 2023 11:50:33

Ms Priti Patel, MP, reference ZA77794

Unique Reference; 20032843

Response to Department For Transport request dated 27th October, 2023.
National Highways seeking consent for the Proposed A12 to A120 Widening Scheme.

31st October, 2023

Sir/Madam

We write in response to the above referenced letter.

We are bracketed amongst 'all Interested Parties', and for ease of reference represent well over 180 concerned residents of the Messing and Inworth villages, who will be severely and adversely impacted if the plans for Junction 24 if this proposal is granted permission to proceed unamended.

1. The letter refers to 'New Requirement 22' and allows for 'all interested parties' to make comment. As has been the case in several of these exchanges, it is virtually impossible for the 'lay person' to follow and fathom exactly where that new matter is, and to follow and fathom exactly what is being changed and how this impacts the position. It is our considered view that National Highways, (and its legal representatives), have consistently made all 3rd Party and Interested Party review extremely difficult and frustrating. This is an attempt, we believe, to stifle genuine and real concerns.

It would appear that the matter raised in this elusive paragraph *may* be at page 186 of nearly 200 pages. We are aware that the Secretary of State will have reviewed the findings and analysed the proceedings that came before the Inspectors. We are convinced that the National Highways tactic of creating difficulty and then concealment, avoidance and evasion, will be exposed by the full Secretary of State independent review.

We would seek immediate clarification of the impact of this proposed new insertion in regards to reasonable consultation with **ALL** affected parties, not just 'authority or statutory body'. We are adamant that decisions which might have such devastating consequences for the outcome and future of the villages of Messing and Inworth must not be made without our full input and knowledge. These decisions about Junction 24 have the continuing potential to be devastating to the two villages, and we must have an opportunity to review, critique and challenge any and all attempts by National Highways to push their ill-starred proposal for this Junction through to grant of consent. National Highways have denigrated all counter views and proposals, even though in several instances they have been forced to alter their errors and failures of design and make substantial changes. They did this without acknowledging those errors or the source of correction.

2. As spokesperson for MIAG, I sought a 'special access request' (SAR), for any and all documentation related to myself and this proposal from both National Highways and Womble Bond Dickinson. I was astonished to find that National Highways had a draft letter addressed to me but from the Department for Transport (DfT). This letter was to be ostensibly 'signed' by Mr G Shapps, the then Secretary of State, and was seeking approval and drafting guidance from National Highways (NH). I never received this letter, nor any other from the DfT.
 - a. If the DfT is 'upstream' and in an independent and governing role for NH, why was such a letter in NH possession?
 - b. If NH is answerable and must justify its actions to the DfT, why is this procedure in operation?
 - c. Why was the letter never sent?
 - d. How can any relationship be considered as impartial if the two parties involved are seeking advice, counsel and drafting assistance from each other?
 - e. What, therefore, is the relationship between DfT and NH, and how can this be trusted to deliver a fully balanced judgement?
 - f. In response to the SAR, Mr G Woodhouse, (National Highways Deputy Data Protection Officer), copied here, confirms that 'National Highways were asked for any contributions' in specific relation to this draft letter. This is an egregious abuse of political power and is deliberately designed to obfuscate the truth and the reality of this entire Consent Procedure.

Whilst we believe the Inspectors performed their duties with care and diligence, this subterfuge on the part of both NH and DfT would not have been apparent or visible to them, and we believe their integrity has been seriously undermined by these actions. We further believe that the Inspectors should have been given the opportunity to rigorously question both NH, and their legal representatives about the relationship between them and DfT. Womble Bond Dickinson have not released any documents, drafts or copies of this exchange. This could mean that they too, were unaware of the transactional

relationship between NH and DfT and the breaches of arms length and independent dealings. This further amplifies the situation the Inspectors were placed in, as answers from legal representatives must be assumed as being given in full knowledge and understanding.

This email has been copied to all 'Interested Parties', including both our local MP and members of the press.

We await your response accordingly.

Andrew Harding

for

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*'To successfully campaign for the Secretary of State, through the Planning Inspectorate, to accept and adopt **The Main Alternative** proposed by the Messing-cum-Inworth Parish Council'.*

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