


Pucklechurch

E mail 

Ms Amanda Deeks
Chief Executive Officer
South Gloucestershire Council
E&CS M4J18a Consultation
Council Offices
Badminton Road
Yate
Bristol
BS37 5AF

10 October 2017

Dear Ms Deeks,

Re: M4 Junction 18A and A4174 Link Road Consultation

I write to submit my objections to the construction of the M4 Junction 18a

Although I'm a resident of Pucklechurch who would be affected by the Eastern Option, my concerns and objections expand beyond those which would be deemed solely personal. I am of the opinion that the consultation survey has been designed to elicit a range of limited responses to questions generated by SGC. This may aid data inputting and output analysis but it will not reveal nor aid an understanding of the real feelings of the community, hence this written submission.

I moved to Pucklechurch 6 years ago; primary reasons for my move here were the rural location and village environment. I'm certain that my reasons for moving here align with many other residents in and around the village. It is important to note that when I moved to the community I wasn't fleeing city life and seeking a country retreat. For the 26 years preceding my move I was living in a semi-rural location, one not dissimilar to the village of Pucklechurch.

My primary concerns and objections are summarised below.

- The study's failure to fully explore public transport as an alternative to a new M4 junction.
- Destruction of habitat, environment and local heritage.
- Erosion of the Green Belt leading to a high risk of urban sprawl.

- Division of a community that has evolved and established itself over centuries.
- Creation of induced traffic, related noise and light pollution.
- Violation of a conservation area.

I expand as follows:

The public transport alternative

The feasibility study concentrates on an additional junction to the M4 and too little on the development of a public transport service that meets the needs of the 21st century. The millions of pounds of taxpayers money required for a junction could be used to great effect if a robust public transport system was developed. It's time to put more buses on the road rather than take them off. Incentivise passengers with low cost fares, comprehensive routes and timetables, more park and ride sites and congestion will ease. A competing public transport study should be implemented without delay.

A failed objective

A scheme objective is to minimise the impact of traffic/infrastructure on the environment and, where possible, deliver environmental improvements. The concept of laying a four lane carriageway carved out from the southern end of the Cotswold Ridge, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and land designated to be of major importance within the Green Belt, does not satisfy this objective. In fact the contrary applies: destruction and erosion of an environment; an environment used and enjoyed by those who live in nearby urban areas and who want to share and enjoy the countryside which is protected by the Green Belt.

The back door to urban sprawl

SGC Core Strategy provides for tens of thousands of new homes to be built during the next ten years, subject to the availability of essential infrastructure. Eroding Green Belt by sanctioning development of a 4 lane carriageway lends a back door for the local authority to permit urban sprawl and further saturation of our roads: Government's forecast for traffic growth excludes traffic generated by new developments.

The development plans from a local land owner gives clear evidence of pressure for urban sprawl. Would a developer's offer to finance the Eastern Option carriageway, and thereby substantially reduce compulsory purchase costs, persuade the decision makers? It's rumoured that lobbying groups may be playing their part.

Dividing communities

The Eastern Option would isolate the Parkfield community from Pucklechurch and position a dual carriageway in very close proximity to their homes. Children that walk along the footpath leading from Parkfield to Pucklechurch village school would no longer be able to do

so; they would face the challenge of crossing an M4/A4174 link road and be constantly exposed to deteriorating air quality as a consequence of heavy traffic pollution.

An immediate effect of the Eastern Option would be a massive surge in traffic flow along the B4465, impacting on the Westerleigh Crematorium and funeral corteges that are numerous throughout the day. The surge would compound the current traffic burden that the village of Westerleigh has to bear and add to current delays that occur when entering the village from the traffic lights at the junction of the B4465.

Pollution

The effects of air pollution caused by traffic is well documented. The recent Volkswagen emission scandal and the aims of some cities to limit the type of vehicles travelling within certain areas is hard evidence of the problem we face. The creation of a link road to the A4174 will, as stated by CH2M, generate a large increase in the daily flow of traffic. The Eastern Option will induce more traffic and produce emissions that will damage the health of children at the village school and impact on the health and wellbeing of those who live nearby. It is a known fact that harmful emissions are regularly above acceptable levels; why should the residents of Pucklechurch have to suffer the risk of deteriorating health to achieve 72 seconds time saving in every hour of travelling, should the proposed road construction be completed.

The development of such a road doesn't only impact on people, it will have a detrimental effect on all types of wildlife and the biodiversity that contributes to our Green Belt rural landscape. In August I was delighted to spot a wild otter near to the crematorium, the first I've seen in this area. Would the Eastern Option junction and link road encourage and provide a safe haven for this species?

The Eastern Option could be lit, it's possible that it could be all lit or just in part. Whether it be in whole or in part, it will be light pollution. As for an assessment of carriageway noise, that's easy for anyone to assess; stand 500 metres from the M4 when the wind is from the north and it's raining. A similar effect can be heard from the ring road when the prevailing wind is blowing. The proximity of the suggested eastern route to peoples' homes would create an environment constantly subject to noise.

New homes = more cars

Various studies show the potential for induced traffic that follows when a new road is developed. The history of the A4174 is a good example. The Joint Spatial Plan projects a 15% traffic increase by 2036 as a consequence of meeting the new homes target. It also places an emphasis on the need for investment in a modern cost effective public transport system. This clearly supports the need to conduct a competing public transport study prior to making decisions about a new motorway junction and link road.

How much value do we place on our natural environment?

The countryside surrounding Pucklechurch and Siston is supported by a network of footpaths and bridleways and is freely available to both rural and urban residents. I observe these countryside assets being used regularly, by many. There are numerous studies produced by various bodies which evidence that our natural environment contributes to a healthy lifestyle and our general wellbeing. The pathways of our surrounding countryside are a recreational resource, they encourage our children and our grandchildren to explore and become better informed; they make contact with nature and it aids their education.

I, like many, walk and enjoy the 14 footpaths that would be negatively affected by the eastern route. The route would also have a damaging effect on those, who as part of their way of life, keep and ride horses. A consultation document states that where a route crosses a right of way then a convenient crossing would be provided. Would the crossing point maintain the peaceful visual amenity and exposure to farmland and countryside that so many seek? I suggest not, the predicated traffic flow would destroy that. This is a rural environment not a city suburb, hence its Green Belt status.

It must not be forgotten that the Green Belt threatened by the Eastern Option is mainly agricultural land. The land is currently used to rear both cattle and sheep. It's also deployed on a rotation cycle for growing cereals and crops. Is there an objective to remove agricultural land from our landscape, destroy the livelihood of our farmers and threaten our food security?

A further question: is this countryside asset worth more or less than the cost of a motorway junction and link road? When comparing their values it must be remembered that the countryside asset, once destroyed cannot be replaced, it will be lost forever. Eastern Option A is estimated to consume 52% more Green Belt than the Western Option.

Conservation

In the Pucklechurch Conservation Area document, which was adopted in 2010, and under the section headed, The Character Areas (pages 9/10), it states:

The area is distinctly rural, merging into the surrounding countryside with the 'road' becoming a peaceful, tree-lined footpath between fields, linking to surrounding public rights of way and forming part of a wider network of open spaces and assets that enhance quality of life (Green Infrastructure).

Protect and enhance the public right of way along Kings Lane as an important Green Infrastructure asset and recreational resource.

CH2M appear to have a blatant disregard for such matters. Their eastern route option is shown to carve right through the Kings Lane public right of way. This route option would not only destroy an ancient green lane but it would sever access to the footpath network that continues to the west.

Beyond Pucklechurch the eastern route crosses into the Siston Conservation Area, an area that is clearly shown in a similar planning document, which was also adopted in 2010. The

suggested 4 lane carriageway not only comes within 400 metres of Siston Court, which is a 16th century Grade 1 listed property, but continues to carve up farm land that to this day is actively farmed by a family that has managed their land in that area for several generations. The carriageway threatens to end this family's livelihood.

I recommend CHM2 obtain and study copies of the conservation documents referred to above. In the meantime they may wish to note the content of the following statement, which is common to and stated in both documents.

A Conservation Area is an area of “special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”. Designation provides recognition of the group value of buildings and their surroundings and the need to protect, not just the individual buildings, but the distinctive character of the area as a whole. Many features contribute to this special character including trees, hedges, boundaries, walls, open spaces, groups of buildings, the degree of enclosure and coherence as well as the size, scale, and detailing of the buildings. Each conservation area is unique.

Economic Potential

CH2M findings note that the objective to unlock economic potential, particularly within science technology and innovation in the Emersons Green area, is less attractive using an eastern route junction than it would be with the Western Option. This fact was evidenced in the consultation's public presentation and supported verbally by a representative of SGC. Recent assessments project job growth within the Emersons Green Enterprise area as 4–7k by 2030. There are clear downsides for making the wrong decision and not having an integrated flexible public transport system up and running in the near term.

A final question

Has an objective been missed or is one hidden? Is the aim for the consultation outcome to dovetail neatly with the Joint Transport Study, in particular the provision for a future link from the M4 to Yate?

In conclusion I ask that my concerns and objections are registered and considered carefully. I await your acknowledgement of receipt and your responses.

Yours sincerely,

Malcolm Greenaway

cc Luke Hall MP and Steve Reade SG Councillor