

Dr and Mrs Richard and Marilyn Palmer

Pucklechurch

South Gloucestershire Council
ECS M4J18a Consultation
Council Offices
Badminton Road
Yate
Bristol
BS37 5AF

3 October 2017

Dear Sirs,

Will the proposed M4 Junction 18a meet the objectives?

The starting place should be with the conclusions of the previous independent assessment that no junction is needed. It is not a new idea – it has been looked at before and rejected (*Steer Davies Gleave 1999*).

As no new evidence has been provided that the proposed junction will meet its objectives, We believe that the question for consultation should be “if” there should be new M4 junction and not “where?” Highways England has always argued that the motorways around Bristol are strategic routes to and from South Wales and the South West, and that additional junctions and use of the motorway for local journeys would be to the detriment of the motorway’s strategic role.

We are firmly opposed to the building of a new M4 motorway junction anywhere between junctions 18 and 19 as we do not believe it will result in less congestion. On the contrary, research shows that within five years of building new roads, any initial benefits are cancelled by growth in traffic. The environmental effects are, however, permanent.

CPRE Report “The End of the Road?”

The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) commissioned a comprehensive independent study of the impact of new roads on traffic, the landscape and economic growth: “The End of the Road? Challenging the road-building consensus”.

It set out to test:

- whether road building delivers the congestion relief promised
- damages the landscape as much as feared
- will boost the economy as hoped.

From examining road-building over the past 20 years the researchers found clear evidence that road schemes:

- Induce traffic, often far above background trends over the longer term
- Lead to permanent and significant environmental and landscape damage
- Show little evidence of economic benefit to local economies.

There were also other damaging conclusions, including widespread damage to biodiversity and worse than expected increases in greenhouse gas emissions, as well as encouraging car-dependent housing and retail development. The official process for appraising road schemes before they are built – and evaluating them after they open – is also seriously flawed and in need of far-reaching reform.

Reasons for objection to the Eastern Options:

Our initial reaction on reading the proposal for the Eastern Options was complete disbelief – in particular Eastern Option B could not possibly be more disruptive. Options A and B both have an inexplicably long link road to the Ring Road that will have a major impact on Pucklechurch. The arguments put forward by Chris Skidmore MP were for a new junction to serve the Science Park, but the link road is five miles in the opposite direction! Adjacent to the Science Park, the M4 and the Ring Road are practically adjoining. The proposed Eastern routes options make no sense at all.

Loss of Green Belt – it will be entirely within the Green Belt and the visual impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the rural landscape will be significant. It is inevitable that this will lead to more land being opened up for development in the Green Belt. SGC officers at the Consultation drop-in session said that the Council was not promoting more development. This may well be the case at this stage, but no-one can deny that it is likely to be a consequence of building a new road through the Green Belt.

Impact on the designated Conservation Village of Pucklechurch. The legislation controlling Conservation Areas is found in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. It makes the important point that “Special care should be taken to ensure that views into and out of the Conservation Areas remain unspoilt. The Consultation document states that Eastern Route Option B is “mostly within the Green Belt”. Yes – except for where it goes through the Conservation Area!

Impact on Listed Buildings - The proposed route in the vicinity of Kings Lane would have a serious impact on several significant Listed Buildings eg the Grey House and the Moat House plus Dennisworth Farm (Shortwood Road) and the Tumulus and the Moat. The route is through the oldest, most historic part of the village.

Rights of Way – several footpaths cross this area, including Kings Lane which is a Green Lane. It will disturb ancient bridleways. Natural and peaceful zones should be preserved.

Parkfield - Parkfield would be cut off from Pucklechurch village. There would be significant loss of visual amenity for Parkfield residents who already suffer noise pollution from the M4. Residents at Parkfield benefit from a good view across the fields towards Pucklechurch and St Thomas a Becket Church. This would be ruined and they would in effect be cut off from the village. Children attending Pucklechurch School would no longer be able to walk the public footpath as there would be a busy road to cross with motorists rushing to get on the motorway.

Syston is also a Conservation village which will be impacted – why does the link road route unnecessarily ruin the important Green Belt countryside between Syston and Shortwood? Syston Court is another important Listed building that would suffer a detrimental impact.

Loss of three protected gypsy sites – Moor Paddock, Westerleigh Road; site at Parkfield Road; Meadow View, Shortwood Road. All are authorised sites and the residents would find it extremely difficult to find alternative sites. The Equality Impact Assessment incorrectly states that there would be no impact on gypsies and travellers.

Impact on houses close to the proposed junction - 200 Westerleigh Road (the Pet Crematorium and Garden of Rest) and numbers 160-166 Westerleigh Road and the site known as “Moor Paddock”.

Weight limit - There is currently a weight limit of 7.5 tonnes on Westerleigh Road.

Impact on the Westerleigh Crematorium – including access during construction. The crematorium was established in 1992 and with the addition of the new chapel there is the potential for 20 funerals per day. The funeral corteges drive slowly (20mph) and combined with the associated traffic visiting the crematorium would impact on the efficient flow of traffic approaching the new junction from both the Ring Road and Yate directions. Also the tranquillity of their setting would be spoilt.

Light pollution at night - into previously unlit areas of countryside.

Air quality – the effect of pollution on children’s health is a concern as the proposed junction is in close proximity to Pucklechurch School.

Noise pollution – this will particularly impact on Homefield Road residents.

Disruption during construction – there would be massive disruption on Westerleigh Road during the long construction period – this is a much used route between Pucklechurch and Yate/Sodbury. Similarly disruption on Shortwood Road at junction with Syston Lane. Whichever way parishioners tried to leave the village we would be delayed. The impact on the X49 bus service which uses both roads would be huge.

Eastern Option B is so damaging that we cannot understand why it was even included in the consultation. We are assuming that it will be rejected as it is impossible to justify it. However, to give a choice of two options can be a way to get local communities to inadvertently support the **principle** of a new junction by encouraging them to support one (the least damaging in their view) option. However, **many of the objections listed above apply equally to Eastern Option A.** We are equally opposed to both Eastern options A and B.

We are particularly concerned that the Final Report of the West of England Joint Transport Study has included costings for J18A and a 6km link road – that is the Eastern route. We very much hope that this does not mean that a decision has been taken before the end of the consultation period.

Yours faithfully,

Richard and Marilyn Palmer