

TEDDINGTON & ALSTONE VILLAGES - SUBMISSION TO GCC HIGHWAYS M5 JUNCTION 9 & A46 (ASHCHURCH) TRANSPORT SCHEME PROPOSAL

Summary

While we understand that a public consultation for this scheme with route options is expected to take place in early 2021, we have been invited by Councillor Vernon Smith to submit a document now which summarises the collective views of village residents covering the design and nature of this scheme.

We welcome the opportunity to share our thoughts while the detailed planning and design work is in progress and before route options are selected. The purpose of this paper is to highlight those factors which we believe should be taken into account during design in order to avoid any deterioration in our rural environment and disruption of our local community. Our residents have chosen to forego the richer amenities and relative convenience of town living to enjoy life in a peaceful rural community, something which would be unfairly eroded by injudicious routing of a new road together with an associated potential for future piecemeal secondary development.

Comments are grouped under two headings:

1. The location of the new road as this approaches the Teddington Hands roundabout.
2. The road classification in the context of local policies and strategy.

In short, we are resolute in our view that any new road development should take place to the west of both the A435 and the existing A46 Teddington Hands roundabout. It should not increase our current exposure to air, noise or light pollution. Finally, the choice of a single or dual carriageway standard should be based on local requirements, consideration of climate change imperatives and likely changes in commuting habits post pandemic. There appears no local justification to dual a short stretch from the M5 to the Teddington Hands roundabout.

Background

In April 2018, the Teddington & Alstone A46 Advisory Group (TAAG) was formed to represent residents' concerns with the implications of a proposed upgrade of the A46. TAAG's objective is "to prevent any expansion or redirection of the A46 which would have a negative impact on our villages". In pursuit of this, TAAG has kept up to date with public announcements and established a number of key relationships with relevant organisations.

It was agreed with the Teddington & Alstone Parish Council (TAPC) that TAAG should operate as an independent advisory group providing regular feedback to the Council and village residents. A joint working party of TAAG and members of the TAPC has produced this paper.

Comment 1: The location of the new road as this approaches the Teddington Hands roundabout.

These are the key local factors we wish to highlight:

- a) Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The AONB lies immediately to the south of Teddington & Alstone, extending to the line of the A435. We would not expect routing to cross into this area. However, as set out in Section 85 of the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000, it is equally important that any new road does not lead to any visual or other impairment being experienced from within the AONB (e.g. from Oxenton Hill or housing in Teddington).
- b) Special Landscape Area (SLA). The land to the west and north of Teddington as this meets with the A435 and B4077 roads respectively, is designated by Tewkesbury Borough Council (TBC) as a "Special Landscape Area". Originally introduced in 1982, an extract from the 2019 TBC Joint Strategy Document states that "*While SLAs are of a quality worthy of protection in their own right, they also play a role in protecting the foreground setting for the adjacent AONB.*". We highlight that this designation exists in contrast to land to the west of the A435

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and north of the A46, which carries no special status. We would expect the valued landscape of the SLA to be wholly protected in design decisions.

- c) Severance. The garage, local stores and public house at the Teddington Hands roundabout provide important local amenities for villagers, many of whom are elderly. This has been particularly highlighted during the covid-19 pandemic. It is essential for the quality of village life that safe walking and driving to these facilities continue without interruption from new road development. Severing the villages from these amenities would also adversely affect the businesses themselves, especially if access to them is limited or made more complicated.
- d) Environment. The potential adverse environmental impacts for our villages are a great concern whether this be from 1) a deterioration in air quality due to higher emissions from more traffic, more proximate traffic and prevailing westerly winds, 2) an increase in road noise due to proximity, road type, tyre noise at high speeds and prevailing westerly winds, 3) visual impairment caused by any elevation or bridging works or 4) additional light pollution from new road lighting, more roundabouts and volumes of traffic at night.

While we know that the new road proposal must satisfy all required environmental legislation, including recently adopted policies on tackling climate change, we do not want to experience a localised deterioration from any of these factors even if those legal requirements were met overall. The A46 Partnership Group has stated that "reducing noise and pollution levels for our communities" will be a significant benefit from any development.

- e) Flooding. The heavy rainfall in July 2007 identified a significant problem with run-off water arriving from the higher ground to the south and east of Teddington being unable to adequately drain to the north of the village resulting in flooding within the village itself, along the A435 and at the Teddington Hands roundabout. Storm drain works were enacted to resolve future problems and the integrity of these needs to be preserved as well as ensuring new development does not lead to additional local flooding risks.
- f) Gas pipelines. One of two major underground gas pipelines runs south-west to north-east, close to the Teddington Hands roundabout and through the SLA.
- g) Historic Monuments. There are two Grade II listed historic monuments located on either side of the A435 just before this joins the Teddington Hands roundabout - The Teddington Hands Sign Post and The Tibblestone. If the integrity of access to local services is retained, then so is the access to both of these.
- h) Existing A46 route. As there are no clear plans at the moment for the A46 beyond the Teddington Hands roundabout towards Evesham, any dualled route that finishes at the roundabout, will not only result in congestion due to 2 lanes reducing to 1 but will surely limit any future A46 design options. It would seem to make more sense to join the new road to the existing A46 between Aston Cross and the Teddington Hands roundabout. The location of this section of the A46 is capable of allowing a new road to join with it, together with associated new roundabouts, while avoiding existing commercial developments.
- i) A435 Cheltenham Road. Any route that utilises or causes increased traffic on the A435 between Bishops Cleeve and Teddington Hands, should be avoided. This would adversely affect the junction and access into and out of the villages onto the A435.

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Comment 2: The road classification in the context of local policies and strategy

We have identified a number of relevant considerations:

- a) Environment. Local Authority adoption of policies to deliver carbon neutral targets and the widespread declaration of climate emergencies reflect a growing public demand to take action on environmental issues. There is a major dependency on the use of electric vehicles while current take-up suggests this alone will be insufficient to counter the affects of a major new road build together with the associated development of the new Garden Town.

The environmental section of Western Gateway's draft strategic transport plan references the need for a modal shift away from the private car and supporting a greater use of rail, cycling and walking. These outcomes require a reduction rather than growth in future traffic volumes.

- b) Covid-19. Western Gateway have also acknowledged in their draft strategy the uncertainties in future travel patterns due to the ongoing pandemic. There certainly seems to be a move towards more home working which will result in a reduction in commuter journeys, including private car travel. This calls into doubt current assumptions on growth in future traffic volumes, in absolute terms and journey length.
- c) Ashchurch Garden Town Masterplan. It is not clear in the Masterplan whether the new southern development road is the same as a realigned A46. If so, the requirement to provide direct access to new employment and residential areas is at odds with this also serving as a congestion free route for through traffic, as exemplified by the Evesham bypass.
- d) The A46/M69 corridor. This is promoted as a 70 mile economic corridor, although seemingly based on industries located along rather than reliant on it (for example, we are advised 95% of the traffic going north from the M5 on the A46 is not going further than the M40). If a long term strategic route is required, it is unclear why the local A46 section is preferred over other credible and possibly cheaper options such as a more northerly route joining to J8 or J7. Furthermore, to build a three mile dual-carriageway which then joins with an 11 mile single carriageway road running to and beyond Evesham is incongruous and creates additional concerns of induced congestion.
- e) Business Case. To date there has been an absence of a supporting business case with an estimate of economic growth values. However, historical analysis by the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) suggests many growth benefits cannot be evidenced, particularly where these relate to reduced journey times which are then negated by induced traffic*. Local economic growth enabled by development of the Ashchurch Garden Town is unlikely to require a dualled solution.

**Independent research commissioned by CPRE published in 2017 concluded that new road schemes increase traffic beyond normal growth due to encouraging longer commutes and adding route choice.*

- f) Traffic Volumes & Mix. Dept. for Transport (DfT) count points along the path of the A46 eastwards to the Teddington Hands roundabout, indicate daily volumes of between 18-20,000 [this is 2018 data, 2019 available shortly] which suggest this section could be adequately served by a wide single carriageway rather than an all-purpose dual carriageway providing a capacity of double this volume.

With a new southern road, current traffic volumes will divide between two routes. A sizeable proportion of local traffic, including HGV's accessing existing retail and industrial units, will continue to use the old route. Therefore, a new dualled route for through traffic will add unnecessary capacity.