

## **Notes From the Public Meeting Held on 7th August 2019 at Witnesham Village Hall**

Meeting opened by Chair – Chris Rush (CR) at 7:30pm

Swilland and Witnesham are the only Parishes to be affected by any one of the three proposed routes

Handed over to local MP, Dr Dan Poulter (DP)

DP spoke of his concerns about the INR proposals, paying particular mention to the fact that Witnesham is unique in that it would be affected by all 3 of the routes. He indicated that he was opposed to a road being built under any circumstances.

Other main points made included:

1. Fynn Valley Special Landscape Area and surrounding countryside would be impacted such that the environmental damage could never be repaired. There would be a knock on effect for “rat runs” and the building of 20,000 houses to the North of Ipswich to fund the road building.
2. DP stated that he is proud of Suffolk because it is so rural and views this as road building for the sake of it. The reasoning behind the proposal is not evidence based and made the following further comments.
  - i. The A14 Orwell Bridge closes on average twice a year, so to argue the building of a new road for this reason was nonsensical.
  - ii. The proposal claims it will reduce traffic congestion in Ipswich, but so far the data shows it will not and that 46% of peak time traffic are journeys of less than three miles.
  - iii. House building: MSDC and ESC Local Plans evidence shows an adequate land supply for the next five years, so the 20,000 plus homes requirement is not evidence based.
3. The arguments from SCC and IBC do not stack up and he asked those present to back The Stop! Campaign.

Clopton resident – thanked DP for his letter. Concerned about the INR proposals in their entirety and asked what is behind them? Where has the idea come from and expressed concern and disdain for Suffolk County Council’s (SCC) Strategic Housing Report, produced by ResPublica. Described the report as a “repulsive document”, demanding 25,000 houses – embarrassing for any Head of SCC to be associated with this report and simply a vehicle for a vanity project for the Leader of SCC, who should be held accountable for this shocking waste of tax-payers’ money.

DP responded – Important to bear in mind that SCC is not the planning authority, which brings further into question why they felt the need to commission this report at all. Over the last 18 months there have been a series

of failed projects by SCC – the Sudbury Bypass, the Four Villages Bypass and the Ipswich Wet Dock Crossing – which incidentally, was designed to improve traffic flow and reduce congestion in Ipswich town centre, and to deal with additional congestion when the Orwell Bridge is closed. The Wet Dock Crossing was scrapped because of poor financial planning by SCC. The reality is that they should choose projects well and ensure that they are deliverable and this is not the case for an Ipswich Northern Route.

A Swilland resident raised the issue of “software issues” being a common excuse at SCC – in reference to DP’s explanation that software issues are to blame for the fact that the traffic modelling data has not been forthcoming, despite 4 separate requests from DP to SCC for the information.

A resident raised the issue of the effect of the INR on strategic farming land and the importance of retaining it.

DP response – It is also important to recognise the importance of food sustainability – reducing food miles and capitalising on Suffolk’s own fantastic farming and agricultural offering. He is proud of rural heritage and backing Suffolk’s farmers. We must protect our high quality agricultural land.

Cllr Jerry Hindle – agreed with DP and others about the lack of evidence underpinning the INR proposals, but reminded that they are proposals at this stage.

DP – mustn’t be complacent and make every effort to stop the INR once and for all by stopping it at the proposal stage. Once it goes beyond proposal stage, it will become much harder to stop. Need to engage with District Councillors to their support.

Resident raised the issue of carbon accounting claims within the consultation document and that this is an issue which should be brought under close scrutiny. For example, SCC claim that 160 metric tonnes of carbon will be saved over 60 years – sounds like a grand figure, but in actual fact, this equates to taking just 25 lorries off the road over the same period of time.

DP responded by citing obfuscation by SCC in providing in of the data which they claim underpins the consultation, blaming software issues. There isn’t the data – traffic modelling or carbon accounting, to justifiably underpin the proposals. There is no strong evidence base – SCC is not being open and transparent with its evidence and this lack of evidence must be exposed.

Former Parish Councillor commented on INR proposals and need to fight them robustly. Anecdotally described them as being like Snake Oil – some beneficial claims, but undoubtedly poisonous.

Witnesham resident – donated x2 local history books to DP. These covered over 2000 years of history in Swilland and Witnesham, which will be destroyed forever if these proposals go ahead. Indeed, one of the routes will rip straight through where the Witnesham Treasures were discovered – now in the British Museum.

Resident – at recent consultation event, asked Matthew Hicks directly about what the INR will do to decongest Ipswich. His response was that the INR isn't about decongesting Ipswich, but it is about improving connectivity to Lowestoft.

DP responded by saying that more investment needs to go into improving rail links between Ipswich and Lowestoft, and that investment into the A12 is the best way to improve connectivity between Ipswich and Lowestoft.

Barbara Robinson (Save our Countryside Spaces – SOCS) said this is the 4<sup>th</sup> time that proposals have come forward for a Northern Bypass. There were attempts in 1978 – in 1995, they came forward again and properties were blighted for 10 years. In 2016 she submitted an FOI to SCC, responded to by Highways Manager and then Project Lead, Dave Watson. On 20/08 and 03/04 September there are discussions scheduled with the Planning Inspectorate and Barbara called for residents to “storm” the Planning Inspectorate Local Plan Inquiry to Save our Countryside Spaces.

DP thanked everyone for attending and asked for their help in opposing the proposals, and to volunteer for the Stop! Campaign. There would be a protest march in September.

CR read out a list of resolutions, opposing the Ipswich Northern Bypass which the Parish Council planned to take forward. On a show of hands, those present (300 plus), backed the Parish Council to take that mandate forward.

Meeting closed at 8:40 pm