

Dualling of the A47 between North Tuddenham and Easton
Highways England – Design Fix A Presentation to Honingham Parish Council
Monday 16th December 2019, 6pm, Honingham Village Hall

Highways England (HE) Attendees – James Powis (JP) (HE Project Manager), Barrie Arthur (BA) (Sweco Project Manager), David Lawton (DL) (HE)

Councillors present – David Bishop (DB), Roger Human (RH)

Members of the public – approx. 72, Cllr Greg Peck (GP)

Welcome

DB welcomed representatives of Highways England and members of the public. JP will give a short presentation (15-20 mins) followed by questions from the Parish Council. Questions will then be taken from the public, only one question per person will be allowed so that all those present who wish to speak have the opportunity.

Notes of Presentation

JP welcomed everyone and introduced his team. James Powis is the Highways England project manager for the scheme, Barrie Arthur from Sweco is a designer for the scheme, David Lawton is from Highways England and works with the property and compensation department.

As part of the plans for the new dual carriageway HE are proposing 2 new junctions, 1 at Wood Lane/Berrys Lane, and 1 at Blind Lane/Taverham Road. Previous plans were for roundabouts along the route, the strategy has now changed with new junctions and new side roads to give access to local roads.

There are 3 design fixes as part of the process. The current plans are design fix A which is the first iteration. The plans are evolving. HE are currently visiting parishes and affected land owners to discuss design fix A. An exercise will be conducted to find out if the design delivers the objectives of the scheme and can be achieved within budget.

Design fix B will go to statutory consultation before summer 2020. HE will engage with all those affected, Norfolk County Council and the District Councils to help inform design fix B. The aim is to present a scheme at design fix B which is fit for purpose. Once the final design is submitted to the Planning Inspectorate the process to obtain a Development Consent Order (DCO) should take approx. 16-18 month to complete.

Examples of how to engage in the initial consultation are through the Parish Council, members of the public can submit their own comments directly to the project team via a dedicated email address:

A47NorthTuddenhamtoEastonRIS@highwaysengland.co.uk

The public can also submit comments during the public consultation in the summer of 2020, however they are advised to engage as early as possible before design fix B is finalised.

Up to now HE have been doing ecological surveys in the area and monitoring animal species in area. Local residents may have received a letter regarding HE needing access to land to enable them to carry out further surveys. Residents were asked to respond to this request if they had received one.

Next year (2020) HE will be doing ground investigations which will include drilling. This will help HE with the design process, this is due to start in Jan 2020. HE will also conduct local roads surveys of

side roads, air quality and walking/non-motorised user surveys. Traffic modelling and further ecological surveys will also take place.

HE needs to ensure they are engaging with public. Under the new strategy HE have appointed Galliford Try who will oversee the construction. The next milestone is ground investigations and reviewing the schedule as to when activities will happen. HE are still working towards starting construction work by March 2022. HE are aware the scheme website requires updating. HE have also shared the plans with Norfolk County Council (NCC) highways department but they have not provided any feedback to date.

Councillor Questions

1. RH – We are concerned about the local church being cut off from village. The access will only be by vehicle, residents will no longer be able to walk there. I suggest an underpass would allow walking there.

A lot of vehicles using Berrys Lane to get to the A11. Previous concerns were about the proposed roundabouts causing traffic delays, that issue is now removed under the new plans and traffic will be free running. I am concerned about the level of upheaval to build the road, it looks like spaghetti junction.

Questions from the Public

2. Could the presentation be provided in writing?

JP – This can be shared with the Parish Council.

3. Please explain if the new road is going under or over junctions at each end?

JP – The new road will go over, the new link roads/roundabouts will go under.

4. Are you going to keep the old A47 open or closed?

JP – This is not decided, it could be used for walking/cycling/horse-riders. Whether it will only be used for this or if it will include local vehicle use is still to be ratified. Please share your views if you have a preference. Currently the plans suggest it will be left open for vehicle access.

5. It seems that there will be faster speeds on the new road so more noise, and from lifting the main carriageway. Is the noise going to get worse than it is now?

JP - We are required to take noise readings pre and post build. As part of design fix B, we will look at mitigation such as planting. If we need to put in noise mitigation, we will do so but this will be developed as the design progresses.

6. Where will the Norwich Western Link (NWL) join up with the A47 carriageway?

JP - On the plans there is a spur road on the Wood Lane junction (northern roundabout). We are in engagement with Norfolk County Council about the NWL.

7. The new junction will come out opposite Berrys Lane which has a narrow bridge and has a home for elderly people and a school with children with additional needs along its route as well as a dangerous crossroads, you are proposing bringing more traffic through this route. What will you be doing to make Berrys Lane safer?

JP - HE are only responsible for strategic roads, NCC are responsible for the local roads. We would look at the access to these roads but not these roads in their entirety. NCC are aware

of Berrys Lane, there has been some conversation about either shutting Berrys Lane or keeping it open. The decision is not a HE decision but it is being looked at.

8. Could you explain why there is a spur road going up into Dereham Road if you are only responsible for A47? Is it not making it easier for traffic to get access to the food hub?
JP – The spur road will help give access to the junction. It is not specifically for the food hub.
9. There are 8 lanes coming from Easton to the Blind Lane roundabout, are people going to get confused as to which direction they need to go? Assuming the main A47 won't be illuminated but that you will light the junctions, do you think this is out of keeping with the rural area?
JP - The main A47 will not be lit, the intention is the junctions will be lit for safety. Lighting arrangements will be firmed up towards design fix B. HE need to consider safety so the junctions are likely to be lit.
10. It would be helpful if at the early stages there was some indication of the extent of the tree planting. There is a lot of woodland around here which could be used to mask the A47.
JP - The development of the design is iterative, we are early in the design stage, so this type of detail is not available yet.
11. Berry Hall estate is recognised and designated as having outstanding historical importance. The current plans will drive a wedge through the estate, this is unacceptable. I would like the road moved further North so the estate is not affected.
No response was provided to this question.
12. There is a box in middle of the plans proposing a river structure. What is this?
JP – The new route has to cross the river Tud so a new crossing will be built.
13. Where will the underpasses go? Will it be 2 or just one for the church? I understand there was going to be one where the current public footpath crosses the A47. There is a low water table in this area with regular flooding. What will you do to address this?
JP - The only underpass is for Church Lane/Sandy Lane and will be pedestrian only.
14. There is a problem with water coming off the current A47 during heavy rainfall into the village. If you keep the current A47 open where will the water go?
JP - We have to design to the 1 in 100 flood therefore we will design suitable and efficient drainage including a number of ponds to help facilitate this situation.
15. Can you explain the retaining wall for the church? Will it overshadow the church?
BA - Based on the geometry there is a slightly odd embankment by the church. We need to do new topographical surveys before we can finalise the plans and inform if the wall is required. It is on the plans as a possible requirement. It would be visually mitigated. It wouldn't be a concrete wall.
16. There are 2 historical buildings on the plan, Berrys Hall and the church. I am worried about the road going close to them. Have you got experts who know about protecting historical buildings and land around them? I want reassurance you have someone who knows about ancient buildings?
JP - I would have liked to have been able to engage earlier, but due to the election engagement was restricted. Into the new year we will be engaging with other bodies (e.g.

Natural England). We are applying for a DCO therefore we have an obligation to consult and engage with bodies which we will do.

17. Does that include consulting on historical trees?

JP - If there is some yes, we will.

18. Can you give us any information about the elevation compared to the current elevation?

Will we experience twice the noise because of the elevation? With the combination of the A47 and the NWL will the Wood Lane/Berrys Lane junction become a big bottleneck?

Anyone who walks or bikes and wants to get to Ringland will have to cross a dangerous road. It is shocking there is only 1 underpass to access the north side.

JP - Noise – We have requirements to monitor the noise pre and post construction. We don't have all the answers at design fix A but will mitigate where necessary.

Issue of bottleneck - The 2 roundabouts currently planned are substantial and should facilitate expected traffic. Modelling shows a single carriageway under the A47 at this junction will be sufficient. HE have asked NCC to do some assessments against their modelling for traffic in that area. By the time we get to statutory consultation we will have their results and know if the road is sufficient.

Underpass - We could potentially have another one near Hall Drive, and possibly one near the River Tud. There are other potential alternatives for non-motorised users. The current design fix is not final until we submit it to the Planning Inspectorate. We will do more surveys next year to look at the existing use of public footpaths.

19. Has anyone done any pollution checks? Pollution hangs over the village due to the topography. There are too many unanswered questions.

BA - Air quality has been monitored since September. There are stations mounted on lamp posts and I can share the locations with Council. We are taking 6 months of data (usually need 3 months). It will be provided to the Planning Inspectorate, as required under law, in the environmental statement at the DCO stage.

JP - In relation to having definitive answers, by the time we get to design fix B (statutory consultation) all queries should be answered and this will be the best solution for the scheme. I believe the best way to develop the scheme is to work with local Councils to provide information as I have it. We need to go through iterations of the design, I ask you to engage with the project.

20. You said you are negotiating with NCC. Are there any negotiations about side roads and whether you are likely to put weight limits on them to keep HGVs off the small roads? I suggest you bring someone with you to future presentations to answer questions alongside HE.

JP - I am happy to provide suggestions on side roads to NCC on your behalf, it is up to them to decide on any changes. I can ask NCC to attend future meetings. I have attended a number of their NWL meetings.

21. By removing the roundabout at Easton and creating new link roads you are effectively moving a rat run to Taverham Road which is a narrower and unsuitable road. Are you consulting with NCC about the impacts of this?

JP – HE will liaise with NCC and gain their views on side roads. They are not under HE authority but we should work together to consider solutions to problems raised.

22. Will there be a lot of traffic at the Wood Lane junction which is coming from the NWL which wants to take the single carriageway under the A47 to head towards Dereham?
JP – HE would have to look at the traffic modelling. HE don't have a say on the route of the NWL. It is not a HE scheme, all HE can do is try and ascertain what that the junctions between these roads will look like.
23. If the NWL is joining at Wood Lane, Berrys Lane is already overused as a north south route, I understand this is not your remit, but somebody needs to at least put a weight restriction on Berrys Lane.
DB - NCC are currently looking at it. The Parish Council have approached NCC and had a meeting requesting a weight restriction on Berrys Lane, the Council are trying to help.
24. Is there a reason why the Blind Lane/Taverham Road junction cannot be situated closer to Easton? The link road would be closer to Easton and wouldn't require as much land for all the link roads.
JP – HE would need to look at whether it could be moved. We have a red line boundary (scoping boundary - see plans) which is the land we have advised the Planning Inspectorate of where we will be intending to build, which is a constraint on making further changes.
25. A resident read out a written statement in response to the plans.
Concerns were expressed over the grossly oversized junctions, destruction of the river valley, that the plans would lead to further rat running on Taverham Road, whether 2 junctions so close together are necessary and justify the loss of large amounts of land and why it appears that Blind Lane is remaining open when it should be closed under the conditions of the LDO for the Food Enterprise Park.
JP – The mandate is to dual this section of the A47, HE can't sever communities from access roads. I am aware that Blind Lane should be closed, I understand that that closure is not going to be carried through. I will seek confirmation from NCC regarding this and share it with the Parish Council. If Blind Lane was closed our current plans would need redesigning.
26. There is no information on the level of disruption during the construction of the road. Where will the traffic from the old A47 go during this stage?
JP - The advantage of the design is that we can construct most of the new road offline so this will minimise impacts, there will only be disruption where roads connect to local roads.

DB thanked everyone for attending and wished everyone a good Christmas.

The meeting closed at 7.10pm