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A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening scheme (“the Project”)
Public consultation June 2021

Hatfield Peverel Parish Council (“HPPC”) has been represented at all engagement sessions, community forums and consultations since early 2017 in respect of the Project. There are numerous concerns relating to the design and subsequent traffic flows arising from the closure of J20A and J20B and the creation of the new J21. These may be summarised as:

- Traffic flows in B1019 Maldon Road and B1137 The Street
- Traffic flows between J21 and Hatfield Peverel and egress from Gleneagles Way
- Lack of provision for a future Hatfield Peverel bypass/link road to Maldon
- Air quality and noise
- The Street/Maldon Road/Church Road triangle (including New Road/Remembrance Avenue)

Traffic flows in B1019 Maldon Road and B1137 The Street

The current design fails to recognise the huge expansion in Maldon, both residential and commercial. The response from Maldon District Council (“MDC”), as approved for submission at the Council Meeting on 15 July 2021, fully details the extent to which traffic from the Maldon and Dengie areas will route via Hatfield Peverel, rather than Danbury, particularly if subsequently heading north on the A12, the prime link to the A14/M11/A1 and routes to major east coast ports. HPPC fully endorses the comments, views and statements made in MDC’s response. The Traffic Modelling Report (Appendices A1/A2/A3) recognises that some 2500 new residential properties will be built in the MDC area by 2027. The PEIR at 13.7.7 notes that the projected increase in household numbers in the MDC area between 2018/2043, at 20.2%, is significantly above the averages for both Essex (17.6%) and England (16.2%). The traffic that this will generate makes the predicted two-way traffic flow data for 2027 (P37 – Public Consultation document) very questionable. Further, whilst there are forecast increases of 140/169% for am/pm volumes on the new A12 link to Hatfield Peverel there are only minimal increases/reductions at Maldon Road and The Street. Given there are no other routes from the new link road, other than access to Gleneagles Way, where does this additional traffic go?

One of the “decisions made in response to past comments” (P17 – Public Consultation document) is stated to be to reduce traffic volumes in The Street. However, there is nothing to prevent any

vehicle using The Street as an alternative to the new J21. There needs to be much more research undertaken into ways of preventing heavy goods vehicles, in particular using this alternative route. This needs to include the “rat run triangle” bounded by Maldon Road, Church Road and The Street but including New Road/Remembrance Avenue - see separate comments on this issue below.

The proposed “signed” route to/from the new link road will present significant issues for the Maldon Road/The Street junction. At present, traffic in all directions is slowed by the existence of the mini-roundabout at this location. However, its removal, as part of the primary routing of traffic to/from the A12, will lead to traffic approaching the junction at speed (even assuming that the 30mph limit is respected) and then being faced by a 90 degree turn which is, effectively, a blind corner if approaching from J21). It is highly likely that heavy goods vehicles will meet each other on this bend – whilst at present it is probable that their speed will be relatively low, under the Project they are likely to be moving at a faster speed, particularly from J21. It also has to be understood that a high proportion of such vehicles are of European origin, adding to the difficulty in negotiating this corner.

P29 of the June 2021 document states that “a new junction is likely to be popular with drivers and so more motorists will use the roads which lead to that new junction”.

Section 6.3.10 of the Traffic Modelling Report states “due to projected growth in the area, the junction with The Street and Maldon Road may struggle to work adequately in the future.....while at this stage it is not intended to include works to the local road junction within the proposed scheme, we will continue to work with Essex County Council, the local planning authorities and the parish council on possible changes”. Section 7.2.1 states “a small number of local roads would experience increases in traffic, **especially those which would be used to access newly improved A12 junctions**”.

HPPC firmly believes that the volume of traffic likely to use this junction has been significantly underestimated and wishes to see extensive work to improve safety at this point included within the Project and not left to be dealt with by ECC/BDC as a subsequent, and separate, highways issue.

Traffic flows between J21 and Hatfield Peverel and egress from Gleneagles Way

Whilst some of the issues mentioned above also apply to this traffic flow, an additional aspect, albeit not for the full duration of the Project, is the use of the new link road as part of the dedicated access route to the main construction site compound. This will inevitably result in a very large number of additional vehicle movements each working day, primarily of heavy goods vehicles, the exact number of which will – we understand – be published in the Environment Statement due to be published in late March 2022. Each of these vehicles will be required to make a sharp right-hand turn at the point where the link road joins The Street, prior to crossing the Wellington Bridge. It is not clear that any provision has been made to ensure that these vehicles will be able to safely make this turn – the volume of traffic which will already be on this stretch of road, having turned right at the top of Maldon Road, is a significant factor for which no allowance appears to have been made.

The PEIR Non-Technical Summary, P31, states “the preliminary noise assessment has concluded that there could be significant adverse effects for about 63 residential dwellings [post completion of the Project]”. The PEIR (Chapter 12 figures, 12.5 – noise and vibration) indicates that an unspecified number of these properties is located in the vicinity of the junction of Gleneagles Way/The Street, where residents will also have experienced a considerable period of construction traffic passing their doors. HPPC would like to see some temporary noise barriers erected in this area in order to alleviate this disruption, with a longer-term solution also built into the Project.

A significant unaddressed issue is the egress from Gleneagles Way where it joins the new link road. Currently, this is not a problem given that it is only possible to make a left-hand turn. However, once the link road is built, it will be necessary to turn either left or right depending on the destination. No provision has been made to enable traffic from Gleneagles Way to safely join what will be a two-way road carrying relatively heavy traffic flows in both directions. It must be borne in mind that this junction will also form the sole egress for the 100 houses currently being built by BDWH - this development does not appear in the Traffic Modelling Report (Appendices A1/A2/A3).

As a related issue, there appears to be no mention of extending the current 30mph speed limit on the new link road. This is essential to provide some element of safety for the Gleneagles Way junction, and to ensure that traffic approaching the Maldon Road junction is given adequate time to reduce speed before the left-hand bend. HPPC wishes to see this speed limit extended to the start of the new link road at J21.

Lack of provision for a future Hatfield Peverel bypass/link road to Maldon

The two previous sections offer more than adequate evidence that it is vital that the Project includes provision for a bypass/link road linking the Project to Maldon Road to the south-east of Hatfield Peverel. Ideally, this would be direct from the southern roundabout at J21, although we believe that at least one other option could be considered. We are aware that this debate is being taken forward through representatives at Westminster and the Department for Transport, but HPPC firmly believes that this provision has to be included in the Project to avoid unnecessary delay – including in the acquisition of land - in the construction of this road once all formalities have been dealt with. It is the recollection of several senior residents, including former members of the District and Parish Councils, that the proposal for a “spur” to facilitate a new bypass – not initially rejected by Highways England – was first raised in discussions dating back many years but in recent times this suggestion has been completely rejected.

The arguments on this topic have been well-aired on both sides. HPPC will continue to press for a solution which effectively commits to the construction of this essential bypass.

Air Quality and Noise

There can be no doubt that the impact of both deteriorating air quality and increased noise will severely affect the residents of Hatfield Peverel, as a result of both the project itself and the resultant traffic congestion. The PEIR at 13.10.2 states “the community most affected in terms of

construction impacts on residential land use is Hatfield Peverel.” That being so, it has to be recognised that additional measures need to be taken to mitigate those impacts, given that 170 existing and 245 existing/under construction properties will be affected. Equally, at 13.10.30, it is stated “in terms of effects on air pollutant levels (NO₂ and PM₁₀) during construction.....results show that changes in both NO₂ and PM₁₀ levels would largely be imperceptible except for a limited number of existing or proposed residential properties which are located very close to the existing A12. Given the low number of residential dwellings affected and impermanent nature of these effects, no measurable population health impact is likely.” Many of these properties are the same 415 as mentioned in 13.10.2. Whether it is a low, or high, number of properties affected and whether those affects are impermanent or not, HPPC wishes to protect the health and wellbeing of its residents and expects to receive updated air pollutant level reports on a regular basis throughout the period of construction in the immediate vicinity of the village. It is noted, PEIR Table 13.7, that Hatfield Peverel/Terling have the third highest level of deaths from respiratory diseases (2013-17) in Wards covered by the Project.

P51 of the Public consultation document (June 2021) refers to “anticipation” that the compound near J21 will be accessed via the route described. HPPC is concerned that other routes, including The Street, are available to construction traffic and needs to be assured that there will be fully effective monitoring systems in place to prevent any breaches of the “authorised” route. It is understood that there may be some use of contractors in the local area, including those located in Maldon and the surrounding area, and from locations such as Waltham Road, Boreham. HPPC wishes to have an assurance that the former are not of such a volume as to further exacerbate the problems in Maldon Road, and that the latter are specifically instructed to travel via Boreham Interchange and the A12.

Reference is made to discussions with local authorities on the details of construction working hours. Given that a significant element of the construction work will impact the village, HPPC expects to be consulted on this aspect prior to the issue of the Construction Environmental Management Plan.

HPPC is further concerned about the additional noise and pollution arising from full closures of the A12 during the Project (PEIR, Table 2.7 – Traffic Management). The village has long been seen as the automatic alternative route when the A12 becomes congested or is closed. Whilst it is acknowledged that many of the closures under the Project will be at weekends, the village is not designed to absorb even those volumes if vehicles are diverted from the A12. HPPC therefore wishes to be assured that very specific, well signposted diversions are put in place as described in the PEIR at 12.8.25, avoiding the village and – if necessary – restricting access to the B1137 to “local traffic only”. HPPC requests that Highways England initiates early discussions with ECC Highways on this issue.

One of the key impacts of the Project on residents of Hatfield Peverel will be the widening of the road between Bury Lane Bridge and the Wellington Bridge (“the cutting”). Residents of properties bounding this area have tolerated increased traffic noise for over 30 years. However, it is stated in the PEIR at 12.9.15/Table 9 that only properties on the south side of the cutting will benefit from a

noise barrier “to reduce increases in noise and to provide enhancement”. A noise barrier on the north side is “not included due to not proving value for money”. HPPC believes this decision to be discriminatory, particularly given that many properties on the north side are closer to the new profile of the cutting than those on the south side, and wishes to see a noise barrier erected on both sides of the cutting.

It is further noted that on P25 of the Public consultation June 2021 document, reference is made to consideration of low noise road surfaces “in some areas”. The PEIR at 12.9.9 states that “the potential use of low-noise surfacing as a mitigation measure for online sections will be considered within the Environmental Statement.” Given that the upgrade work affecting Hatfield Peverel is all online HPPC wishes to see consideration also given to the use of low-noise surfacing on the entire section between the existing junctions 20A and 20B. This argument is given more emphasis by the fact that the PEIR (Chapter 12 figures; 12.5 – noise and vibration) reveals that, post completion of the Project, no properties bordering the A12 between the current J20A and J20B, will experience a lower level of noise pollution than at present. At best, the noise levels will be as now.

The Street/Maldon Road/Church Road triangle (including New Road/Remembrance Avenue

In addition to the issues relating to the Maldon Road/The Street junction, HPPC is concerned that Church Road/New Road/Remembrance Avenue will become more of a “rat run” than it already is. With the construction of 120 houses currently in progress at Stonepath Drive (Bellway) and almost 250 at Hatfield Grove and Bury Lane (Bellway) and Mulberry Green (Countryside), the junctions of Station Road and Church Road with The Street will become hugely congested. Although the Public consultation document June 2021, P42, suggests that “most” traffic will use J21, local knowledge evidences that there is every likelihood that motorists will seek alternative routes to avoid both the Maldon Road/The Street junction and the need to drive north to J21 before heading south.

The use of the B1137 through Boreham, combined with the further “short cut” through Waltham Road/Cranham Road will remain an attractive proposition for many despite the signposted route via J21.

HPPC believes that, as part of the Project, a full traffic management scheme needs to be developed incorporating all of the above-mentioned roads, a 7.5 tonne weight limit in The Street from its junction with Bury Lane to Maldon Road, a similar limit on Cranham Road/Waltham Road, traffic calming measures in Church Road and mini roundabouts or traffic lights at the junctions of The Street with Station Road and Church Road, accepting that some agricultural and goods vehicles need access to Station Road or for local deliveries. Given that restrictive movements are to be explained in the application for a Development Consent Order (Public consultation document June 2021, P44), there seems to be no reason why a traffic management scheme for the area outlined cannot also be included. Only in this way can the Planning Inspectorate be made aware, and take account, of all the local issues to which the Project will give rise.

The above-mentioned roads and those within the “triangle” are already subject to extensive parking by commuters using the railway station. This causes disruption, congestion and delays in many local roads, including to emergency services and council waste collection vehicles. The

closure of Station Road for an unspecified period for replacement of the overbridge, and provision of a temporary footway through the Mulberry Green and Hatfield Grove developments, will encourage an increase in indiscriminate parking in roads on the south side of the village, even if by only a small percentage of the 280+ cars involved (266 at the station plus many others in “rented” driveways). As the likely diversion will be via Witham/Terling Road/Hatfield Road, HPPC would suggest that Highways England engage with Network Rail/Abellio Greater Anglia to enable rail and car park season ticket holders from Hatfield Peverel to use the station and car park at Witham (the latter subject to space being available) at no additional cost. This will also relieve the pressure on Terling Road/Hatfield Road, both of which are narrow and unsuitable for a big increase in traffic.

Appendix 1 – attached

The copy letter dated 28 April 2021, addressed to ECC Cllr Kevin Bentley (at that time the Cabinet Member for Highways) from Ron and Marel Elliston – respected residents who have long campaigned for a bypass for the village – is included in this response as it serves to demonstrate the depth and strength of feeling within the community and is representative of widely held concerns about the impact of the Project. The letter has been distributed to all members of the Parish Council and noted at a meeting of HPPC.

Closing comments

The PEIR at 12.9.5 indicates that community liaison will play a key role in the Project. Given the significant impact on the village, HPPC would expect to have 24/7 access to key personnel and a regular dialogue with the Project’s community liaison team, in order to manage the expectations of residents and deal with issues arising.

There remains significant traffic, air quality and noise issues which give rise to concerns. HPPC stands ready to discuss these with senior members of the project team, if appropriate in conjunction with other local Councils. HPPC remains committed to protecting the interests of its residents, and to ensuring the best possible outcome of the Project in terms of their future quality of life.

Hatfield Peverel Parish Council

13th August 2021