

30 January 2019

Response to the Norwich Western Link Consultation

Honingham is situated just west of Easton, off the A47. We are a small village in a very vulnerable position. We are being faced with great change including the dualling of the section of the A47 which passes through our parish, the development of the Food Enterprise Park to the east of our parish, site proposals as part of the Greater Norwich Local Plan which could see our village grow disproportionately and the Norwich Western Link. All these developments are encircling Honingham. It is becoming increasingly clear that there is no coordination between any of these projects and that small villages such as ours are being forgotten or ignored. As a Parish Council we wish to represent the residents in our parish and act in their best wishes, both for now and the future. We feel that currently we are unable to do this based on the lack of clarity on many of the issues we are facing. Specifically for this consultation we are concerned about the combined impact of the Norwich Western Link and the dualling of the A47 on Honingham. For this reason as a Parish Council we are unable to give any preference to any of the proposed routes for the Norwich Western Link until further information and clarity on the key issues for Honingham are made available.

The lack of detailed information, specifically the exact alignment of the proposed routes, the type of junctions which will be required where the Norwich Western Link will meet the A47, the amount of land which will be lost and if required which properties may be subject to compulsory purchase are key to Honingham Parish Council being able to consider and choose a preferred route. Therefore we will only be offering our feedback on each of the routes and state any advantages or disadvantages of each route for our Parish.

Further to all of these comments is our desire to emphasise that Honingham Parish Council wish for the existing A47 road to remain open once the dualling of the A47 is complete. We view this decision as being key to the future of Honingham and vital in enabling us to make an informed decision regarding what we view as being the most appropriate and suitable route of the Norwich Western Link for Honingham.

Honingham is in danger of becoming a major rat run, even more than it currently is, under routes A, B and C. Should the current A47 be left open this would be used as a local road enabling better access for road users around the area and allowing them to travel without having to pass through the centre of the village. It has been stated

that there are no plans to make any improvements to Berrys Lane. This road varies from a single track road to double at best; it is wholly unsuitable for the current levels of traffic. The verges are becoming damaged, traffic is being forced onto them to allow larger vehicles to pass and the road is becoming dangerous. Should routes A, B or C be chosen without the current A47 being left open this problem will continue to increase as traffic from the Wymondham area continue to use it to access the A47. At the very least weight restrictions should be enforced on both Berrys Lane and through the centre of the village on Dereham Road and The Street, regardless of the future of the current A47 or the Norwich Western Link. We strongly believe that the traffic situation in our parish is being completely ignored whilst focus is being given to large scale road building projects which could have dire consequences for the environment and the residents of our parish, and exacerbate the problems in Honingham further, rather than improve them as the consultation tries to imply.

For Honingham Parish Council the potential for a new junction where Wood Lane and Berrys Lane meet the A47, and potentially the Norwich Western Link, is of most interest and importance to us. We are deeply disappointed that there seems to be no joined up thinking between Norfolk County Council and the Highways Agency given the enormous amount of money which might be spent on both roads and specifically this junction. We are seeking reassurance and evidence that any future progress with both projects operates in conjunction with each other and that they recognise and identify the potential impact this will have on Honingham.

Option A

This route is the cheapest, therefore from a cost point of view more desirable. It follows the route of current roads and will therefore have the least amount of environmental impact and will not truncate any other roads. Honingham Parish Council fail to see any further advantages to this option and believe that there is no real evidence that this route will be considered equally to the other options and that it is simply a box ticking exercise.

This is the longest route and therefore we fail to see why motorists would choose this route over other more local routes. We are seriously concerned about the consequences of the Norwich Western Link joining the A47 at Wood Lane/Berrys Lane. Any additions to this junction will vastly increase the amount of traffic coming through Honingham, exacerbating rat running. This is demonstrated by the predicted number of vehicles using the route as being only 10,000 compared to the other routes predictions. Where are the other 20,000 cars predicted to be driving in this area by 2040 going to be travelling? We would expect a large proportion of these to pass through Honingham, a situation we as the Parish Council do not wish to see happen. We also fail to see why there is no recommendation to make this route a dual carriageway, perhaps another demonstration that this was never going to be a viable option.

For routes A, B and C there are also very strong links to the outcome of the dualling of the A47 and the future of the current A47. We believe that if the current A47 is to

be left open after the dualling it would significantly change the potential impact of these three routes. We would view routes A, B and C more favourably if we were able to receive some clarification on the type of junction to be built at the junction with the A47 along with confirmation the current A47 would be left open.

Option B

We acknowledge the fact that this route will not require any additional river crossings over the river Tud, and therefore by comparison to route D have a lesser environmental impact. The value for money is better although still an extremely large amount of money compared to option A.

We are very concerned about the future of any properties along this route, although few in number they are still very important to the parish of Honingham. Our overall response to option B is in line with option A, in that we do not currently support this route but would view it more favourably if we were able to have further clarification on the future of the current A47 and the junction of the A47 and Wood Lane/Berrys Lane.

Option C

Honingham Parish Council have serious concerns about route C. Many of our concerns are as with route B, we require more clarity on the impact this will have on our residents living along this route and the options for the junction between the Norwich Western Link and the A47.

In addition to this we are gravely concerned for the affects this route and the proposed viaduct will have on the environment. Whilst your consultation documents state 'this will not affect the integrity of the River Wensum Special Area of Conservation' we fail to see how a huge concrete structure can do anything but destroy it. It will be a blight on the countryside, ruining the view, creating noise, light and other pollution. The consultation documents provide little detail on how any impact will be mitigated.

Flooding is also a major concern of the Parish Council. The proposal to de-main the River Tud and downgrade it from a river to a stream by the Environment Agency leaves us with little reassurance that there will be any support or assistance during a period of flood. With the proposal to dual the A47, build the Norwich Western Link and the proposals for up to 3900 new homes in our parish and the development of the Food Enterprise Park we are at great risk of flooding from the huge increase of surface run off which will be created by all the building. Whilst this is an issue which has been assessed as low risk in many reports those who live in the village in close proximity to the river would challenge that assessment. We already experience periods of flood during high rainfall when the current management of surface run off from the A47 is insufficient to deal with the volume of water. The response by the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) to the Norwich Western Link consultation summarises all the concerns aired by Honingham Parish Council, both

in terms of potential flooding and damage to the environment, reflecting that this concern is a valid and qualified response.

Option D

Honingham Parish Council recognise that this is the shortest proposed route and therefore more likely to be used and reduce rat running through our parish. The route appears to meet the objectives of the project. However Honingham Parish Council does not consider that there are any other advantages to this route.

The huge cost of this route, in our view, does not outweigh the enormous environmental impact this will have on the Wensum valley. An additional crossing over the river Tud is also required, adding further destruction to the environment. The artist's impression of the proposed viaducts does nothing to indicate the true impact on the valley, the amount of land and habitat that will be lost and the blight on this beautiful and relatively untouched area of countryside. We would like to reiterate that we do not feel that this consultation provides enough information or evidence to allow either the public or Honingham Parish Council to make an informed decision on what if any route may be most suitable and have the least impact on our parish.

We have a number of residents living along route D and there has been no communication as to how they will be impacted, either by a huge road being built directly outside their house or by the compulsory purchase of their property. We are very disappointed that our residents are being put through the stress and upset of not knowing the future of their properties and seek immediate clarification of their future. We will not support a route which will potentially see our residents having to sacrifice their properties and having their lives changed to such a degree.

Whilst route D may be the most direct route we cannot see how either the loss of people's homes or the irreversible damage to the environment can be viewed as an appropriate sacrifice.

In summary, Honingham Parish Council do not support or give preference to any of the proposed 4 routes for the Norwich Western Link until the resolution of the issues we have raised and until we believe that the decisions and feedback from Honingham Parish Council are given the weight they deserve given the extraordinary impact this will have on our parish and its future. We feel the Council are being asked to choose between the potential implications on rat running and the character and integrity of Honingham by having routes A, B or C and the potentially life changing implications of route D which will severely impact on residents of Honingham living along the proposed route and the Wensum valley. We are not currently prepared to express a preference without further clarity, as detailed in this letter.

We understand that Highways England have been invited to join meetings held between Norfolk County Council and representatives from local parishes being affected by the Norwich Western Link and we urge you to ensure that their

attendance does take place and that moving forward every party involved work together to formulate a joined up solution, rather than individual projects working separately and leading to more destruction of the environment, disruption to those living in the area and unnecessary spending of tax payers money.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Bishop', with a horizontal line underneath.

David Bishop
Chairman of Honingham Parish Council