

18 September 2020

Response to the Norwich Western Link Local Access Consultation

Honingham is situated just west of Easton, off the A47. Honingham is a small village in a very vulnerable position and will be significantly impacted by the combination of the dualling of the A47 and the Norwich Western Link (NWL). The parish of Honingham is split in 2 by the current A47. The main village centre is south of the A47, but there are nearly as many residents living north of the A47 and the Parish Council are acting to ensure that all residents, regardless of their location, are represented and the impact on them by the construction of the A47 and the NWL is considered equally.

A key concern of the Council is the expected 6-month delay between the completion of the new A47 and the NWL. The impacts of this delay will cause significant problems with many local roads, funnelling additional traffic along inappropriate narrow single-track country lanes and causing noise, pollution and inevitable traffic jams. There have been no significant attempts to address this issue and provide detail on how this will be mitigated. This will have a great impact on the residents living north of the A47.

In addition to that there is currently a planning appeal in process from the operators of Merryhill Country Park seeking to change the use of the site from holiday to permanent residence. Should this be approved there could be another significant increase in the number of vehicles needing to use Taverham Road as their key access route, further exacerbating the traffic problems in the area.

The Council request that Norfolk County Council need to hold a public meeting with the Parish Council and residents who live north of the A47 to explain and demonstrate how they will mitigate the expected traffic issues during construction. This will also give residents the opportunity to provide direct feedback on the issues they face and to understand their concerns. This cannot solely be understood through an online consultation process.

Proposals for Breck Road and The Broadway

Traffic that currently travels through lower Easton to access the A47 at the Easton roundabout is expected to find alternative routes to the A47 which will include

travelling down Taverham Road. The additional impact of the proposed closure of the local roads crossing the NWL route including Telegraph Hill, Church Hill Lane and Ringland Road will concentrate further traffic towards Taverham Road and the new A47 Norwich Road junction. This rat running is a very significant concern of the Council which needs to be addressed.

An implication of closing the local roads which will effectively be cut in half by the NWL are increased incidences of fly tipping and illegal encampments, as well as an increase in rat running already referred to in this letter. The current consultation provides no evidence of what mitigations will be put in place to prevent this. By severing potentially 4 local roads the NWL will be creating a series of dead-end routes which will create knock on affects.

Proposed cycle path from Honingham Village Hall

The Council are deeply concerned about the proposed cycle path starting from Honingham Village Hall. The village hall and associated car park are private property. Using the car park as an access route to the new cycle path could encourage unsolicited use of the car park for non village hall users. Access to the village hall car park is via a single width track with a sharp bend which also provides access to the village play area. Increasing activity around this area will increase risks to pedestrians. The Council urge you to read and consider all concerns raised by the village hall committee (dated 7th September 2020 from the Chairman of the committee) who have replied directly to the consultation addressing their concerns. The Council support and endorse all these concerns and will continue to seek a solution in conjunction with Norfolk County Council which does not have a negative impact on the village hall, a highly valued asset to the village.

In recognition of these concerns the Council proposes that the cycle/footpath is re-routed away from the village hall. The proposal is to move the route west so that it passes to the west of the village hall (behind the building, away from the car park), following the boundary of the neighbouring field behind the village hall and connecting to the village opposite the Quarry Works at the point where Dereham Road becomes The Street. This would avoid passing over the village hall land and still provide direct access to the centre of the village. There is also a layby on the current A47 which could be utilised for parking should there be a need to create additional access to this footpath. There appears to be no justifiable reason why the footpath needs to be routed through this village asset when a reasonable alternative could easily be created. This would also create a straight-line route which would be cheaper and easier to construct.

Further to this Highways England have advised the Council that it would not be safe to create a walking route which crosses the current A47 between Berrys Lane and the Mattishall Road roundabout yet this proposed cycle route appears to do just that before entering the proposed underpass under the new A47.

Sustainable transport measures across the wider area

There is a proposal to create a cycle friendly on-road link from Mattishall to the hospital (measure 7), passing along Mattishall Road and Grange Lane towards Easton. Whilst details on this proposal are lacking, it is unclear how this route might be suitable. Grange Lane is designated as a green lane. It is barely accessible to pedestrians in parts. The Council supports improvements to cycleways provided they are created in such a way as to be safe for the user and following a practical route. Mattishall Road is a 60mph road, this is not safe for cyclists or pedestrians. Mitigations such as reducing the speed limit on Mattishall Road would improve this. The Council would support a reduction in the speed limit as this would have a beneficial impact on those wishing to use the Honingham bus stop. Overall, the Council would support better cycling routes from Honingham towards Mattishall and the hospital and city centre however there is a question about whether the proposed route is the most suitable.

Bus strategy

The consultation includes details of a bus strategy with a new potential route. This new bus services is purely focused on the area north-east of the current A47 and does nothing to serve those living south of the A47 in Honingham. Honingham has one bus service which is accessed from Mattishall Road. Access to the bus stop from the centre of the village is via Colton Road, a single track country road with no footpath. It is dangerous to access for pedestrians and particularly dangerous in the winter as it is up hill and is susceptible to flooding, black ice and mud on the road. The bus service is an essential service to the residents of Honingham, for many providing their only access to services such as the doctors in Mattishall. The consultation focuses on improving walking and cycling routes in the area of the NWL but does not address any improvements to a vital bus service for a village where a significant amount of the population is elderly and unable to access and make use of these new footpath and cycleways.

The Council want safer access to the village bus stop, and a bus service which passes through the centre of the village, not on a 60-mph road.

Other concerns

The Council continue to be concerned about the suggested access from Highways England to the parish church which will be cut off from the main village by the new A47. This will also cut off residents living north of the A47 from having easy access to the main village and its services. The proposed footpath from Highways England does little to solve the issue, creating a footpath which will increase the distance needed to walk to the church and Taverham Road via an unnecessary diversion to the north of the new A47. There is no need for this complicated access when the

current A47 could provide the necessary access for cars and pedestrians via an underpass where it intersects with the new A47 just south of the church.

The Council urge Norfolk County Council to look at this area of concern and to work with Highways England to find a more suitable solution, which in turn will also improve local access for all those living north of the A47. This will also remove another dead-end road which could become liable to fly tipping and illegal encampments. It seems unacceptable that residents of Lower Easton can get a footbridge over the A47 and wildlife can get green bridges across the Norwich Western Link but local residents in Honingham cannot have a simple road/footpath to connect the 2 areas of the parish.

Yours sincerely

David Bishop
Chairman of Honingham Parish Council