

Meeting between some Queen Camel Parish Councillors and representatives of Highways England (HE)

on 12th December, 2017 at England's Side, England's Lane, Queen Camel

Present: Councillors John Brendon (Chairman) (JB)

Simon Stapely (Vice Chairman) (SS)

Chris Bennett (CB)

Bryan Norman (BN)

Chris Setters – Mott McDonald (CS)

Drew Aspinwall – Newgate Communications (DA)

Patrick Pender-Cudlip – Parish Clerk (PPC)

The purpose of the meeting was to give members of the Council and the Highways England Project Team an opportunity to exchange information and explain their different perspectives on the project. Councillors were not empowered to represent the Council or make decisions on its behalf and the meeting was informal, rather than official; it was not minuted and these notes represent a purely personal account of what was said by someone who was there. PPC 8/1/2018

- HE's *Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report* (of Nov.2017) is not concerned with economic or transport matters but covers most other issues. It is not 'monetised'.
- HE's aspiration is for an Expressway linking the M3 with the M5.
- Using the existing A303 corridor (rather than Route 2) reduces the requirement for expensive junctions.
- The Scheduled monument and MOD relay station on Camel Hill create a 'pinch point' too narrow to accommodate a new dual carriageway and the existing A303 running side by side, and so HE ruled out this option ('keeping the old 303') at an early stage in the design.
- More recently HE have become aware of local support for keeping the old 303 but it will not be incorporated into their DCO application because carrying out all the necessary work would take far more than the six weeks or so available.
- However if a strong case is made in the Statutory Consultation on the DCO for keeping the old 303, then HE would certainly investigate the idea further and discuss the matter with the MOD about the extra land needed.
- The possibility of a junction at Downhead is the knottiest problem, with radically conflicting interests.
- Dual carriageway trunk roads have a lower RTA rate than single carriageway trunk roads, and they are more resilient when an accident does occur because of the second carriageway, so there should be less congestion.
- The route alignment on the western ridge of Camel Hill is such that this stretch of the carriageway will be elevated above ground level because of how the ground falls away.
- It would be very expensive to build an underpass for entry to Camel Hill Farm so there will probably be a bridge instead.
- Representatives of non-motorised users (horse riders, ramblers etc) have been consulted about crossings and for the most part they will share bridges with motor traffic.
- *Buildability Ltd* have been contracted to do the actual construction.
- HE is determined to keep one lane in each direction open all the time during the construction phase, apart from perhaps 2-3 short periods of night-time closures, eg when connecting old and new carriageways.
- QCPC and other local Councils quite properly represent the interests of local residents and businesses and HE must listen to them, but HE is also beholden to and constrained by national interests (economic, environmental, transport, safety) and has to seek to balance them all.
- The design and management of diversions will be handled by HE, their agents (eg Mott MacDonald) and the contractors.
- HE's ambition is to manage the construction of the new road in such a way that most local residents and businesses are hardly aware that it's happening.
- HE is keen to maintain a dialogue with QCPC and other local interests for the common benefit. The main points of contact are DA and Scott Harker (Newgate Communications) and Hannah Burgess (HE).