

AGENDA ITEM 10 – ELLINGTON TO FEN DITTON FURTHER CONSULTATION

a) STATEMENT FROM HILTON PARISH COUNCIL

A meeting was recently held involving representatives from Parish Councils, Parish Meetings and Action Groups from fourteen communities along the A14 corridor. These communities expressed common concerns at the environmental impact of the Highways Agency's current proposals for upgrading the A14 between Ellington and Fen Ditton. The meeting agreed that a joint letter of concern should be sent to the Highways Agency and made available to local elected representatives. The meeting asked Hilton to take the administrative lead in this. A summary of the concerns raised has been placed before the County Council Cabinet and include:

Noise: Current amelioration measures appear inadequate and communities wish to see measures which significantly reduce the noise signature of the new road over a wider area than is currently shown by the Highways Agency.

Visual Impact: The new road will have a significant visual impact especially over the proposed extensive elevated sections. Communities seek a reduction in the height of the road and cross-over bridges as well as attention being paid to achieving a high degree of visual screening. Communities wish to see minimal carriageway lighting.

Flood Risk: The upgrade to the A14 could exacerbate the flood risk to local communities. Communities are not confident that adequate studies on this issue have yet been undertaken, nor that the cumulative impact of other project in the area on water runoff have been adequately considered.

Local Traffic: In addition to the A14 proposal, there are a large number of major concurrent projects in being or planned which will impact on local roads. Together these projects will have a major impact on local communities. Communities were not confident that these changes are being sufficiently coordinated and felt strongly that much more work, by all levels of Government is needed to ensure that the impact on local roads and villages was adequately assessed, monitored and then minimised.

Air Quality: Most communities and especially those closest to the proposed routes were concerned that the new road would generate significantly higher levels of air pollution, particularly if traffic levels rose beyond those predicted once the road is completed.

Non-motorised transport: Communities are concerned that access to official bridleways, footpaths and cycle paths and quieter roads which are used by walkers, cyclists and riders will be lost or rendered unattractive.

They request agencies and local authorities work together to take full account of the combined impact of all developments in the area.

**b) Statement by Godmanchester Town Council – February 2007
Response to Highways Agency**

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Godmanchester Town Council approved this response to the Highways Agency at its meeting on 15 February 2007.
- 1.2 Godmanchester Town Council has reviewed the options described in the consultation documents and accompanying technical reports. The Council recommends the adoption of the **Orange** route.
- 1.3 This note concentrates on the impact of the various routes on the residents of Godmanchester but does cover in outline some of the other impacts of the various routes. We also emphasise the need for a multi-modal approach to solve future traffic problems.
- 1.4 All the routes proposed in the consultation will cause some disturbance to people living in their vicinity, including the residents of Godmanchester. However, the Orange route is favoured over the Blue and Brown Routes because:
- the number of houses within 300 and 750m of the routes is less and this is directly linked to the noise and pollution impact
 - the visual impact is less as more of the route between the A1 and Fen Drayton is within cutting
 - the route avoids the £70m additional cost and pollution risk of a route through the Buckden landfill site
 - the route has least impact on wildlife
 - the area of land taken is least
 - the route is the shortest and
 - it is the most cost effective.
- 1.5 Godmanchester Town Council also supports the removal of the A14 viaduct at Huntingdon railway station as long as the improvements to Huntingdon Town centre lead to substantial reductions in traffic on the Huntingdon ring road and through Godmanchester and do not increase journey times.
- 1.6 The people of Godmanchester have suffered for 25 years from the current road. Using an objective appraisal of the current options, the Orange route is clearly preferable over the other routes.
- 1.7 The need for further consultation has delayed the start of the construction of the A14. The Councils recommends that the Orange route is chosen without delay and construction of this much-needed road starts as soon as possible.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 Godmanchester Town Council welcomes the proposals to improve the A14. Residents on the north side of Godmanchester suffer severely from noise and pollution. Noise levels are currently 60dB or more within 200 – 250m of the A14 and 55dB or more within approximately 400m. These figures are predicted to increase substantially under a “Do Nothing” scenario. The levels compare with areas at the southern side of Godmanchester where noise levels are currently in the 40s – low 50s dB.
- 2.2 The Government has recently published for consultation its Proposed Changes to the draft East of England Plan (RSS14). The Government proposes a

minimum 508,000 new homes should be built in the East of England by 2021 and at least 452,000 new jobs created. This will inevitably lead to more traffic on the A14, probably more than is currently being forecast. It demonstrates the importance of ensuring the route chosen causes minimum impact on people and the environment and the existing problems are dealt with as soon as possible.

- 2.3 As well as improvements to the A14, Godmanchester Town Council would also like to see a wider programme of multi-modal transport measures. Bus services from Godmanchester to Cambridge need improving, as they are not frequent enough for commuters. The new guided-bus system is unlikely to bring benefits to Godmanchester as it may run only to St Ives, and there are no plans for Godmanchester residents to benefit.
- 2.4 Much of the freight traffic on the A14 is travelling to or from the east coast docks. Felixstowe, Harwich and Ipswich are increasing their container handling. Current plans are for around 150,000 a month, only 25% of which leave/arrive by rail. Godmanchester Town Council believes the rail network needs upgrading and fiscal measures introduced to ensure that more traffic is transported by rail.
- 2.5 As no junction is proposed with the A1198 on any of the routes, west and north bound traffic from Godmanchester, including heavy lorries from Cardinal Distribution Park will have to go through Huntingdon and join the A14 or A1 at the Spittals Junction. Traffic from the east and north will have to take a similar route to Godmanchester.
- 2.6 Godmanchester Town Council is concerned that the highway authorities seem to be accepting that the removal of the Huntingdon viaduct would lead to increased congestion on Brampton Road in the vicinity of the station and don't have any plans to improve the situation. Godmanchester Town Council believes measures can and should be taken to avoid additional congestion and traffic delays as part of the implementation of the Huntingdon Vision.

3. Comparison between routes

- 3.1 Godmanchester Town Council has compared the various routes using the Highways Agency's and other relevant information. In the following sections we review the key issues:
 - Number of properties affected by the routes
 - Impact of Buckden landfill site
 - Landscape impact across the Ouse Valley
 - Ecological impact
 - Cost
- 3.2 We have excluded consideration of Blue Variations 1 and 2 from our analysis, as we do not believe that widening the online section of the A14 through Fenstanton is acceptable. They would worsen, rather than improve the local air quality problems and considerably more people would suffer from noise pollution. Blue variation 2 would cause similar disruption to Godmanchester as the Blue and Brown routes.

- 3.3 We have also not commented on the impacts on properties to the west of Brampton. The consultation drawings show the Blue and Brown routes joining the existing A14 further west of the Brampton Hut roundabout than the Orange route. We understand that the Orange route could also join the A14 at this point rather than further east as is shown. Moving the Orange route west at this location would potentially benefit Brampton, although it may have an impact on Brampton Wood SSSI. Either way the impacts in this locality would be the same if all three routes joined the A14 at the same point west of Brampton.
- 3.4 We have also assumed that the road will be a 3-lane dual carriageway to trunk road standards. If the existing A14 viaduct is not removed, only a dual 2-lane road is needed. This would reduce the traffic flows, environmental impact and cost for all options. It would seem prudent that with this measure, the main structures and deep cuttings were constructed to allow for future widening.

Number of properties affected by the routes

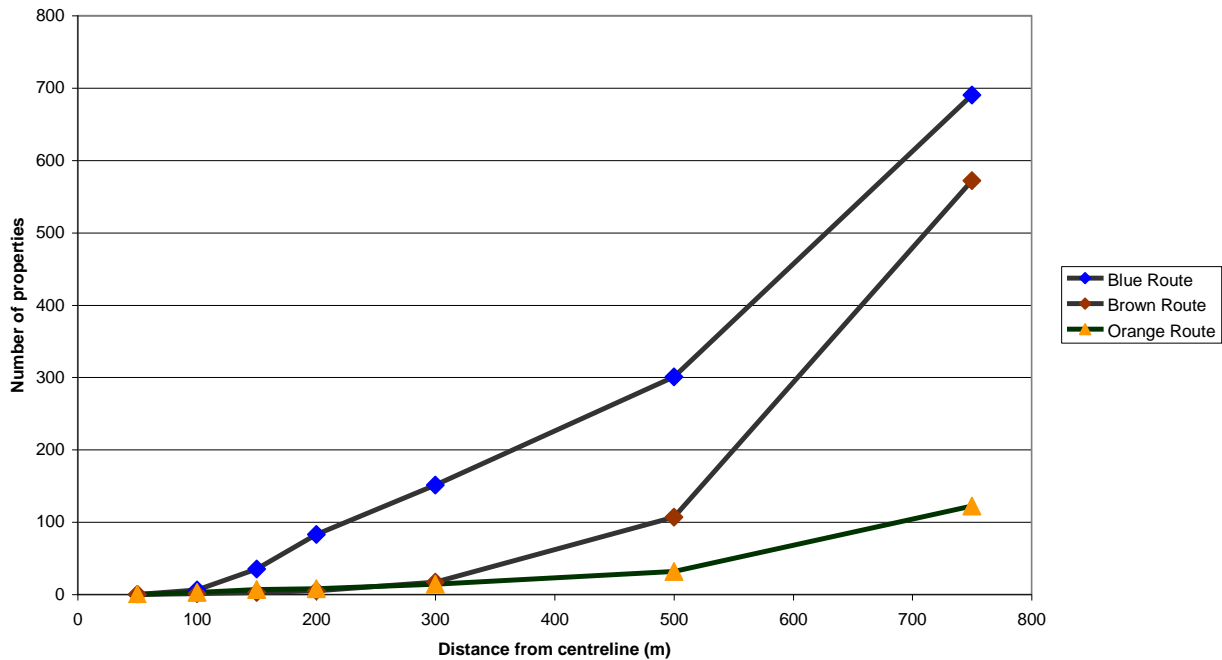
- 3.5 The following table and chart shows the current number of properties close to the main route alternatives within 300, 500 and 750m respectively. These distances have been selected as experience shows that the noise of major roads operating at their peak capacity can extend well beyond the 300m considered in the Highways Agency's Environmental Comparison Table.

Key: x, y, z = number of properties within 300, 500 and 750m respectively. The figures are cumulative. eg in Brampton, 1 property is within 300m, 3 within 500m and 31 are within 750m of the centreline of the Orange Route

	Orange	Brown	Blue
Brampton	1, 3, 31	2, 4, 145	142, 203, 265
Buckden	7, 7, 7	5, 5, 6	0, 0, 6
Offords	0,0,1	0, 0, 0	0, 0, 0
Godmanches ter	2, 8, 13	5, 83, 347	5, 84, 347
Hilton	0, 0, 1	0,0,0	0, 0, 0

- 3.6 The chart overleaf is based on data provided by the Highways Agency. It includes all the villages between Ellington and Fen Drayton and shows that the Blue route affects most houses, followed by the Brown Route. The Orange Route affects least, even with its more easterly alignment near Brampton.

Cumulative number of properties within 0 - 750m of route centrelines - Ellington to Fen Drayton



Notes:

1. The figures exclude 149 houses proposed on southern edge of Godmanchester on land allocated for development and any additional homes on the southern part of Godmanchester included in the forthcoming Local Development Framework
2. The impact on western Brampton would depend on the route chosen where the A14 would run west of Brampton village. The impact of the Orange route would reduce further if the more westerly route of the Brown/Blue route were chosen from the A1 to Ellington.
- 3.7 The figures demonstrate clearly that the Orange route affects fewest properties for whichever distance is considered.
- 3.8 The Atkins Scheme Assessment Report Traffic Noise Assessment calculates the likely impacts of the Do Nothing option and different routes. It also concludes that the Orange route is more favourable.
- 3.9 The consultants have not considered the impact of the prevailing south-westerly wind. Experience shows this can have a marked impact on noise nuisance. Villages to the north-east of the routes, such as Godmanchester will therefore suffer disproportionately more.
- 3.10 Health impacts caused by pollution is also a problem beyond 300m. A recent report in *The Lancet* reported that children who lived within 500m of motorways between the ages of 10 and 18 had significant lower lung volume and peak flow than children who lived more than 1500m away. The Orange route is therefore more favourable from a health consideration.
- 3.11 The alignment of the routes will have a bearing on impact with longer lengths in cutting restricting the impact. On the Blue route, extensive earthworks are needed where the road crosses the A1 near Brampton on a 13m embankment. This would severely affect the south side of Brampton. The road then drops down before rising up and passing under the A1198. However for much of its

length, in the vicinity of Silver Street, it will be on embankment, within 300m of and clearly visible from Godmanchester.

- 3.12 The Brown route follows the Blue route from Offord Hill to Fenstanton. The only advantage it has over the Blue route is that the impact on Brampton is reduced.
- 3.13 The Orange route runs broadly midway between Brampton and Buckden, and also midway between Godmanchester and Offord Cluny. Whichever route is chosen, it has no impact on Offord D'Arcy. Considerably more people live in the southern part of Godmanchester than in Offord Cluny. It is some 1.5 km from Hilton. Extensive earthworks are needed where the A14 crosses the A1 but the position of the junction between Brampton and Buckden means the impact on properties is reduced overall compared to the Blue route. Again the Great Ouse crossing will require major earthworks but the route soon enters a pronounced cutting between Offord Road and Silver Street, approximately 2km long and up to 11m deep. The road will still cross the land just east of Silver Street on embankment and this will be visible from Godmanchester, but not from the Offords once it has entered into the cutting. Even where it crosses the Great Ouse and railway, the Orange route is still nearly 1 km from the northern end of Offord Cluny.
- 3.14 Overall, the assessment of traffic noise, children's health, route alignment and consideration of prevailing wind indicates the Orange route is clearly preferred.**

Impact of Buckden landfill site

- 3.15 Taking a 6-lane highway with associated hard shoulders, verges and earthworks through Buckden landfill tip will cost some £70m more than a route south of it. A route through the site will require considerable quantities of contaminated fill to be moved and disposed off. Much of the excavated material will be hazardous. There is a high risk of pollution of the river gravels and River Ouse. The material excavated will have to be transported elsewhere, and will take up valuable consented landfill space at a time when landfill is already limited. Recent estimates suggest that at current rates of fill there are only 10 years of landfill volume available in Cambridgeshire.
- 3.16 As waste decomposes it reduces in volume because the landfill gas and leachate formed from decomposition of biodegradable waste is either positively vented through a flare/extraction system or gas can be passively vented through the landfill cap. Additionally the waste mass is further compressed as containers etc decay and implode, and further settlement can occur through gravitational forces. The extent to which this latter effect is observed is dependent on the type of waste deposited and working practices at the time of deposit.
- 3.17 Once a cap has been applied to the waste mass, and presuming no other external forces are applied, it is not unusual for settlement rates of 25% to be observed. It is therefore not possible to build over the decomposing waste as has been suggested by some objectors.

- 3.18 The site is licensed to accept a wide variety of wastes, which include inert, household, commercial, industrial, liquids, sludges, clinical and special wastes including asbestos. Dangerous “List 1” substances recorded include various organic compounds containing mercury and cadmium.
- 3.19 A cutting through the landfill would be required which would be approximately 6m deep relative to the finished road level. Waste however extends some 13m below finished road level and this would also have to be removed giving a total depth of excavation of 19m of hazardous material to be treated and disposed of.
- 3.20 Atkins, Highways Agency’s own consultants advised against building across the Buckden landfill site for cost, environmental and risk reasons.
- 3.21 The Environment Agency has also stated that it will object to constructing the Brown route over the Buckden landfill for a number of reasons including:
- the risk of pollution from leachate that is likely to contain List 1 substances
 - the risk of harm to human health from landfill gas (noxious gases and risk of explosive or flammable mixtures of methane and air)
 - the dangers incurred due to the risk of excessive settlement of the road and its associated services
- 3.22 If a route through the landfill were adopted, the Highways Agency would have to take on liability for future maintenance of the tip and responsibility of any future pollution issues that may occur. The Environment Agency has already identified pollutants leaching into the river terrace gravels and disturbance would increase the pollution risk.
- 3.23 The Brown route through the tip is expensive and will be extremely risky environmentally. It will also be opposed by the Environment Agency – the regulatory body responsible for licensing the landfill.**

Landscape impact across the Ouse Valley

- 3.24 All routes have an adverse impact on the setting of the Great Ouse valley. All require extensive earthworks and structures across the river and railway. The consultants have identified that the impacts can be minimised by careful location and design of the crossing. Serious challenge needs to be given to headroom requirements over the river and railway to minimise the impacts.

Ecological Impact

- 3.25 The Scheme Assessment Report concludes that all the routes have impacts on biodiversity. The Orange route is preferred as it does not affect the Brampton Flood Meadows County Wildlife Site and has the least overall impact on invertebrates, otters and water voles.

Cost

- 3.26 The following table shows the capital cost of the routes and total lengths:

	Orange	Brown	Blue
Capital cost (£m)	639	714	640

Length (km)	18.8	19.4	19.2

3.27 The table shows capital costs of the Orange route is the least expensive of the other options. As it is the shortest it will also have the lowest operating and maintenance costs and also offers the lowest cost for motorists' fuel bills.

3.28 Overall therefore, the Orange route will have the greatest discounted benefit to cost ratio for whatever discount period is used.

4 Conclusion

4.1 All the routes will cause some disturbance to people living in their vicinity, including the residents of Godmanchester. However, the Orange route is favoured over the Blue and Brown Routes because:

- The number of houses within 300, 500 and 750m of the routes is less and this is directly linked to the noise and pollution impact
- The visual impact, taken as the impact on nearby residents is less as more of the route is within cutting
- The route avoids the £70m additional cost and pollution risk of a route through the Buckden landfill site
- The wildlife impact is least
- The area of land taken is least
- The route is the shortest and
- The route is the most cost effective.

4.2 If the viaduct over Huntingdon railway station is removed, additional measures need to be taken to ensure traffic is able to move freely round the ring road and along Brampton road. If the viaduct stays, the new A14 should be built to dual 2 lane standards with the structures and major earthworks built to allow future widening.

4.3 Improvements to public transport and the rail network are also needed urgently as originally envisaged in the CHUMMS strategy.

c) Statement from Councillor Boddington

I welcome the opportunity to advocate the BROWN route, and trust you have been able to read the document produced by the A14 Action Group. Briefly The Offords opposed the proposal submitted by the Highways Agency in 2003 due to lack of consultation, they were not even on the submitted map. A decision was made to take legal action and as a result a new consultation now giving various routes. That is the past, but it shows a David and Goliath situation can be overcome.

The Boundaries of the Offords have been in place for many many years – two rural villages who work together; their residents choosing to live Not near Supermarkets, Bus stations and Train stations etc. This area of rural England would have remained in place for many years. Godmanchester has Grown and the now the By-Pass is no more - Development has encased it and Godmanchester will no doubt in the future creep slowly towards the Offords.

I wish to emphasise the following points

- NOISE – The brown route offers the best balance
- LANDSCAPE – All routes have a largely detrimental effect on the Ouse Valley but the Orange route is the worst option. The Brown route giving a shorter river and rail crossing.
- WATER ENVIRONMENT – No evidence to support claims of increased risk or delays caused by building over the northern landfill.
- ECONOMY – differences of costs crossing the landfill site are subject to challenge further clarification from the Highways Agency is needed.
- LAND USE - my comments here regarding the loss of LANDFILL – surely the government's policy is to reduce landfill.

Make no mistake WE ALL wish the A14 to be upgraded, the loss of life and many injuries are appalling. It seems a minor thing to talk about the loss to industry but we must; and the costs and frustrations caused by long delays on this road, with vehicles meandering through the countryside to find an alternative route, even to the A428 is being used more and more.

However the decision, when made, other than the Brown route, will result in land torn apart, tarmac and concrete laid, an un-repairable destruction of this Area of Best Landscape, and it will be LOST for ever.