

Little Hadham Parish Council

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Mr Rob Egan
Team Leader, Development Management
Spatial Planning and Economy Unit
CHN216, County Hall
Hertford
SG13 8DN

Tuesday, 5 January 2016

Dear Mr Egan

Re. Application for proposed 3.9km northern bypass of the a120 and flood alleviation scheme, comprising a new 9.3m wide single carriageway road, verges, roundabout junctions (including lighting), bridges, embankments, drainage, landscaping and associated engineering on land North of Little Hadham, Hertfordshire.

This application was considered by the Council at an extra-ordinary meeting on Wednesday 6th January 2016 attended by 84 local residents.

For many years the Council has supported the provision of a bypass to the parish. This planning application brings the bypass much closer to creation.

The Council is aware that the principle driving force for the bypass comes from those traveling through the parish who will save eight or nine minutes during peak times and about four minutes at other times when they do not have to queue at the A120 traffic lights.

Parish residents will see many benefits from a bypass including:

- The flood prevention measures associated with the bypass will help protect many homes at the Ashe and the Ford. Many of these homes have been flooded more than once in recent years. This is seen by many residents as the most important aspect of the scheme.
- Queueing times at the A120 traffic lights will be shorter for those from the side roads. This will reduce the number of vehicles jumping the lights and putting pedestrians at risk.

- People have been deterred from sending their children to the village school and from buying homes in the parish because of the prospect of spending so much time waiting at the traffic lights.
- Fewer people will try to avoid the traffic lights by following a 'rat run' through Cradle End, Bury Green and Westland Green. These roads are unsuitable for fast traffic and there is a constant danger of accidents.
- The reduced volume of traffic along the A120 will make turning into the village school easier and safer. Pedestrians will be able to cross the A120 without a long wait for a gap in the traffic.
- The reduced volume of traffic through the parish, especially heavy lorries, should improve the air quality around the A120. This would have a particularly beneficial effect on the village school and nearby homes.
- The reduction in vehicles stopping and starting at the A120 traffic lights at all times of the day and night will reduce noise levels for those living nearby.
- Drivers will not be tempted to exceed the speed limit in an attempt to pass the traffic lights before they change to red.

The bypass will not, however be without drawbacks for local residents including:

- The bypass will pass relatively close to homes on the west side of Albury Road and Hadham Hall. Residents will have an increase in noise and visual pollution.
- The removal of the traffic lights holdup will attract more vehicles to use the A120. The traffic volume through Standon will increase. The lack of the 'platooning' effect on traffic flow will making turning onto and off the A120 in Standon more difficult and dangerous. A bypass for both Little Hadham and Standon would be more sensible.
- The planned bypass is for a simple road with one lane in each direction. There are some who doubt that this will be sufficient for future traffic. A dual carriageway between the M11 and A10 is likely to be needed eventually.
- The removal of the traffic lights holdup will increase traffic travelling through the parish travelling south. Traffic on the road south of the traffic lights, towards Much Hadham, is forecast to more than double at peak times.
- Although traffic along Albury Road is forecast to be reduced by a bypass, vehicles travelling to and from the Pelhams will still have to use the road. This includes a significant number of heavy lorries using the recycling unit at Furneaux Pelham.
- The bypass will occupy what is now open countryside and will be clearly visible – particularly from Albury Road.
- The bypass will disrupt a number of well used footpaths.
- A number of established trees will have to be felled.

There have been many views on the bypass expressed by a number of residents both for and against the bypass and the Council would like to address some of the issues raised.

Should there be a bypass at all?

A bypass will inevitably spoil open countryside. It will remove trees, affect footpaths and damage wildlife. Road improvements increase levels of traffic increasing the levels of air and

noise pollution for everyone. Building a bypass for Little Hadham will only move the congestion to Standon.

However, the Council believes that most of the residents are in favour of a bypass.

Which route?

During the consultation period, residents were offered a number of possible routes the bypass could take. Most people chose the route that took the road furthest from homes and this route was originally accepted by HCC. However, after further consideration, including consulting residents near the ends of the planned bypass, HCC decided to adopt a shorter route which was closer to the houses on Albury Road. This decision was made without consulting other residents – including the Council. This, understandably, enraged many residents who thought their views had been ignored.

After some reflection, the Council agreed to endorse the revised route as it would be lower down the hill to Standon and so less visible to surrounding areas and it would despoil less of the open countryside. The Council is disappointed that HCC did not plan its consultation more carefully by not offering residents a route that was later withdrawn and by not involving everyone in the parish, including the Council, when changes were made to the route.

Residents of Albury Road are concerned that their road will still be affected by heavy traffic – particularly by heavy vehicles accessing the recycling depot in Furnaux Pelham. Restricted views and many parked cars make travel along the road dangerous yet many vehicles drive recklessly fast in order to reach the traffic lights. Poor visibility means it is very dangerous for many residents to leave their driveways. Albury Road residents are very concerned that there should be a slip road off the bypass for vehicles travelling north so that they do not have to pass through the village via the traffic lights.

How will traffic through the parish be affected?

Traffic through the parish on the current A120 is forecast to be reduced by about two thirds at peak times. Most heavy vehicles will use the bypass. Traffic through Cradle End, Bury Green and Westland Green are forecast to be greatly reduced. However, traffic on the road south of the traffic lights and on the road from the A120 toward Albury End are forecast to significantly increase.

How will a bypass affect homes?

Those homes nearest the A120 will profit from a great reduction in noise and pollution – particularly as most of the heavy vehicles will be diverted.

Some homes in Albury Road will be closer to traffic on the bypass than they are to the traffic at the traffic lights. This will inevitably increase noise levels. Some homes at Hadham Hall will also be relatively close to the bypass. The noise will be moderated by some of the road being in a cutting and by a bund and vegetation on the elevated section.

How will the bypass affect flooding?

71 homes and several businesses and community assets such as the Nags Head Pub, the Post Office, Doctors Surgery and the Village Hall have flooded, some several times in recent years, and are currently at risk of further flooding. Many more homes are currently at risk of secondary flooding from drainage ditches and drains that back up due to being unable to empty into a full River Ash. Also secondary flooding from sewer surcharging due to drainage from household roof gutters and other drainage pipes illegally connected into the sewer system.

The flood in 2000 and in 2001 cost over half a million pounds to repair and also caused significant disruption to transport links through the A120 at Little Hadham and surrounding roads. A further flood occurred in 2013 costing a similar amount to repair. Householders are now faced with insurance premiums of over £2000 per year along with a £15000 excess to pay before a new claim can be made. Flood risk homes are very difficult to sell which makes it harder for new people to move to the village and very difficult for village people starting families to move on to bigger homes. Unsaleable homes are more likely to become short term rental lets to enable the owners to move on to properties that suit their family needs. Some homes did receive some funding from a Repair and Renew Grant towards items to make their homes more flood resilient, but these were only available to householders who could afford to pay for the improvements first then claim it back. Any homes on a low income were unable to access the grant as easily.

With three floods in Little Hadham over 13yrs, and the increasing number of severe flood events seen each year throughout the UK, it is clear that it is just a matter of time before further flooding occurs. The cost/benefit analysis for structural flood prevention conducted by the Herts County Council and the Environment Agency has concluded that the only affordable sustainable way to help protect homes is to implement the Flood Alleviation Scheme that they will be responsible for maintaining. This will be part of the development for the proposed A120 by pass. The computer modelling shown in their planning application shows that 69 of the homes and the Pub, Village Hall etc. will be protected from flooding in the future for 1 in a 200 year severe rainfall events which is a higher protection level than that installed in places such as York . This is achieved by a restrictor being installed where the bypass crosses the River Ash that during heavy rainfall will cause the water to back up into fields that currently flood, and be retained until it can be released slowly and safely back into the River. In extreme events such as a 1 in a 1000 year, the water will overflow along a slipway so that it does not affect Albury, and the overflow will flood homes in Little Hadham as before.

This proposal also says that as the water is held back to the north of the A120, the River level south of the A120 will be lower thus allowing the water run-off from the fields that currently backs up in drainage channels to be able to discharge into the river. There will be an improvement to the Lloyd Taylor Drainage by diverting the water away from the houses it currently affects and draining it around The Smithy directly into the River Ash using newly constructed channels that the Environment Agency will maintain.

There are concerns that the Lloyd Taylor scheme might not be able to cope at times of high rainfall. Residents would like an attenuation pond placed on this water course to the west of the village so that excess flood water will temporarily flood fields rather than flood the road.

Comments

1. The Council asks that HCC look again at the junction of the bypass with the Albury Road so that traffic bound for the north of the village does not have to travel via the traffic lights. Traffic should not be able to travel south along Albury Road from the bypass.
2. The Council asks that HCC revise its plans for the Lloyd Taylor drainage scheme to include the previously designed attenuation pond to prevent excessive water entering the waterway in the village.
3. The Council asks that HCC keep it informed of any changes to the published plan, however trivial, so that the local community can be kept informed.

4. The Council asks that the planning consent include time limits on when noise reduction measures should be installed.
5. The Council asks that the planning consent include time limits on the installation of traffic calming measures in order to reduce and slow the number of vehicles passing through the village after the bypass has opened.

Conclusions

The Council understands that some residents have serious reservations about the bypass as described in this planning application. However, the Council believes that, although far from perfect, most residents are willing to accept the plans as laid out by the County Council.

The Council wishes to add its support to the planning application in the hope that building can start as soon as possible. The Council hope to continue to work closely with the bypass team to ensure community input into the ecology/replanting and phase 2 road planning (traffic measures).

Yours sincerely

B M Evans – Parish Clerk