

## **A12 Improvements: A14 'Seven Hills' to A1152 Woods Lane**

### **Response from Martlesham Parish Council**

#### **Martlesham as a Principal Stakeholder**

Of all the communities affected by the proposed improvements Martlesham has the most to gain from a successful scheme but also the most to lose if the scheme is not a success. The Parish Council is extremely disappointed that SCC have not yet thought it necessary to meet us to discuss these proposals, or engage the local community more effectively. This has led to the anomaly of issues in Sandy Lane being addressed as part of the proposals while serious issues arising much closer to the A12 which are legitimately part of this project have been ignored entirely.

About 1400 homes depend entirely upon junctions C and D, for all road journeys, and about 1200 upon E and F (with its associated mini roundabout on the B1438). The 2000 new homes at Brightwell Lakes will depend upon the A12 new access T junction (not shown) and roundabout B. Roundabouts C or D will also be used by traffic exiting by the proposed north quadrant which will join Gloster Rd opposite the entrance to Aldi.

The retail and employment opportunities at Martlesham make it a major destination for non-residents, which together with through traffic places a high environmental cost on its residents.

The lack of capacity and associated delays on the A12 affects residents in that rat running particularly through the older parts of Martlesham is making life intolerable for residents and dangerous for cyclists and pedestrians. Current delays on the A12 were also a significant factor in the withdrawal and reduction of bus services in 2019.

We are also totally dependent on safe and convenient ways of crossing the A12 for cyclists and pedestrians for linking the different parts of our community, a factor which will be magnified by Brightwell Lakes.

#### **Justification for the proposed scheme**

The proposal is predicated on eliminating problems from current and future traffic levels. There is nothing regarding the assumptions made about levels of housing, business and traffic growth in a post covid and post carbon world. Related to this, the financing is opaque as it will depend, at least partially, upon developer contributions and such contributions depend upon future developments. The full scale, type and location of the developments, and their relationship with the Local Plan, need to be made explicit before a full assessment of the costs and benefits of the scheme can be made.

Martlesham, in common with the principal and neighbouring councils has declared a climate emergency and all proposals should be judged with this in mind. A full environmental impact assessment must be made. A key benefit sought is the reduction of pollution, this should be fully documented from reliable and up to date base lines, and a key part of any proposals. This includes vehicle exhaust emissions, particulates, tyre particles, light and noise pollution, and ecological diversity/sustainability. Mitigation measures should also be taken to include low noise road surfaces, planting to absorb noise and pollution and wildlife corridors accompanying crossings. Roadside planting should be supplemented by planting elsewhere to achieve maximum off set.

We see no reason why some initial commitments should not be made as part of this consultation without waiting for further studies e.g.:

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- Use of Quiet road surfacing along the whole section of the A12 from Junction B to Junction H.
- Expanding air monitoring to more locations along the route to benchmark current NOx levels and monitor the changes after the scheme's introduction.
- That measures to minimise particulate levels will be taken e.g. by minimising queueing near houses and smoothing traffic flows.

While a number of objectives are quoted the only one which is consistently documented in the proposal is aggregated reduced delays at the roundabouts. This information is meaningless as it does not detail the delays which will be experienced by drivers joining, leaving or on the A12. This will be a major concern for our residents due to complete dependence on these roundabouts and we wish to see delays reduced for residents and lights which facilitate sufficient time to safely join or cross the A12.

#### **The roundabouts and traffic lights**

We understand that the use of properly synchronised smart traffic lights is generally considered to be a success, and that it is unfair to compare them with fixed lighting sequences. However, maximum benefits (both in terms of traffic capacity and environmental impact mitigation) will only arise if the junctions are synchronised with each other (e.g. using SCOOT), not just individually managed junctions. This will involve greater initial costs but not to adopt such a system would be a wasted opportunity and a false economy. For safety, reduction of pollution, and the reduction of complexity, we wish to see a constant 50mph limit throughout the whole scheme.

If queueing of vehicles is still to take place this should be minimised at roundabouts C, D and E which are nearest to residential areas, and between roundabout C and the Brightwell Lakes T junction where there will be housing on both sides of the A12.

While there are assurances that the A12 Brightwell Lakes new access junction (but not the associated northern quadrant access) is taken into account there is no real evidence of that in the documentation. Any final scheme proposed should explicitly include these essential elements of the Brightwell Lakes development, not a tweak to be added later. If this integrated document cannot be provided it does not engender confidence that an integrated scheme can be delivered. Why is there no table on the Annual Average Daily Traffic Flow Map to show traffic volume data between Junction B and C since this is likely to have very different characteristics to the traffic volumes between D and E for which data is shown on the map.

From our experiences with the current signalised roundabout E, we would like to see part time lights, free flowing turn left lanes considered and assurances there will be sufficient space to stack right turning vehicles without blocking carriageways on all roundabouts.

We prefer option 1 for roundabout C because this will ensure the full benefits of the scheme are realised by directing more of the BT generated traffic onto the A12 and away from rat running through the employment and retail areas.

The mini roundabout on the B1438 is so close to the A12 and forms a junction which is important to Martlesham residents that it should be considered an integral part of the scheme which may have implications for its lane control and signalisation.

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#### **A12/Anson Road Junction D and rat running**

This is the major bottleneck (with C to a lesser extent) which has the effect of encouraging rat running through residential and cycle priority roads. We do not think the proposals go far enough to remedy this. The unresolved problem is the capacity of Anson Road to accommodate all the vehicles entering and leaving the retail and employment area. As a result, traffic from the north (including Woodbridge) uses Junction F and its mini roundabout to go through the older parts of Martlesham. This has resulted in ever increasing congestion at busy times and unacceptable overuse of the narrow Old Felixstowe Road, Crown Point junction and The Street. There is evidence from SDR data to show that the volume of traffic using this back route has increased by a huge 48.5% in just 4 years from 2015 to 2019 to the detriment of local residents. Cycling, walking and crossing the road has become dangerous because of this and road noise (and potentially air quality) impacts heavily on their quality of life. Old Felixstowe Road (designated a cycle priority route) has been shown to carry over 42,000 vehicles a week and The Street in excess of 81,000 per week. Cottages along Old Felixstowe Road and The Street have front doors that open almost straight into the road and there is no shielding from the effects of this heavy traffic. With new housing on the horizon things will only get worse and quickly.

Part of the solution must be to widen the westbound Anson Road carriageway so it remains at least two lanes on the approach to roundabout D. Land which we believe is highway verge is available for this.

We seek confirmation that this and the increased capacity of the A12 will be sufficient to allow Old Felixstowe Road to have a scheme of calming and traffic management applied to it so it can revert to its designated purpose as a cycle priority route, part of National Cycle Route 1, and cease to be a rat run. This route will then link with the proposed quietened Sandy Lane and the proposed pedestrian/cycle overbridge at Junction F.

If these modifications are not made rat running will continue and the proposed benefits from the A12 improvements will be undermined.

The Eagle Way arm of this roundabout leads immediately to a residential area and is crossed by an important pedestrian/cycle route leading principally to the retail area via the underpass, locally known as the Manor Road crossing. Currently vehicles leave the roundabout at speed, where visibility is limited, making this crossing hazardous. This will also be the point where the potential Portal Avenue bus link joins Eagle Way. Appropriate calming at this location should therefore be an important part of these improvements.

#### **Adastral Park, Brightwell Lakes Access, junctions C and D**

A major cause of congestion, and therefore the rat running is traffic generated by Adastral Park. Consideration must be given to how this can be mitigated by directing traffic flows to/from the A12 using current entrances and exits and the northern quadrant changes. This includes the adoption of option 1 for roundabout C. As above, if this is not done the full benefits from the scheme will be undermined by continuing non-use of the A12 and rat running through Old Felixstowe Road etc.

#### **A12 Lay By, close to proposed Brightwell Lakes access junction**

This lay-by behind Lancaster Drive should be closed. It is causing a legal nuisance. It was implied this would be closed at the time of the early consultations regarding Brightwell Lakes. This has been a running sore for many years affecting the quality of life and

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wellbeing for residents of the houses whose rear gardens back immediately onto it. It is about 60ft from their rear windows. A layby would not be constructed there under current road design guidelines. Problems include:

- Overnight parking (some with chiller units running through the night); typically, 3-4 lorries at night.
- Engines being warmed up in the early hours of the morning.
- The lay-by area is regularly used as a public lavatory, resulting people repeatedly causing criminal damage by breaking down the fencing to use private land as a toilet.
- Litter/fly tipping - in the lay-by, and thrown into private gardens (including bags of faeces).
- Trespass.

These problems could well be exacerbated by the anticipated increase in freight traffic during the construction of Sizewell C.

Alternative lay-bys are available about 1 mile to the north and to the south, and the industrial estate has on-street parking capacity at night for lorries. The police have said that it is useful for carrying out stops. However, stops seem generally to be carried out using the Eagle Way arm of junction C.

If there is a need for a lay-by with proper toilet facilities, this should be constructed in a suitable non-residential location. The A12 from the A14 junction to Lowestoft has very limited public toilet facilities (especially those suitable for HGVs) and this needs to be properly addressed rather than rely on ad hoc use of lay-bys, especially in residential areas.

### **Public Transport Measures**

We note these are described as "potential measures" and not proposals. This is disappointing as we would like to see solid improvements in public transport for environmental reasons. Long term proposals based upon a thorough review of the transport needs along the A1214 corridor from Ipswich to beyond Woodbridge should be included.

We outline our concerns about the potential measures, in the spirit of expecting these to be satisfactorily overcome to allow an agreed set of proposals to go ahead.

- Generally, the problem is that Martlesham is viewed as a destination or through route for buses, not as a place from where residents need to start journeys. Main Road in Martlesham, and substantial housing developments off it are currently completely without a bus service, we would like to see this rectified.
- The major factor inhibiting bus use is journey times into Ipswich, we would like to see limited stop, direct buses addressing this problem.
- The Portal Avenue – Eagle Way link. It is difficult to imagine how this can be achieved without an unacceptable loss of amenity to nearby residents and conflicts with the Eagle Way arm of roundabout D.
- We presume the bus gate is to hasten journeys to the proposed hub. We would not want to have the southern part of Martlesham Heath deprived of a service because

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of this. The site of the bus gate is a drought garden, a much-used amenity and a twenty-year-old demonstration project for plants that can survive drier conditions of climate change, this needs to be protected. The hub would also mean a further loss of recently already reduced car parking at the Square and subject nearby residents, primary school and nursery to a loss of amenity. As Eagle Way does not suffer from congestion is the gate really necessary?

- We were told at the time of the cuts to our bus services that large modern buses cannot negotiate the mini roundabout on Eagle Way adjacent to junction C. Has this changed, or will further undisclosed modifications need to be made to this roundabout?

### **Walking/Cycling Improvements**

We assume the recent ESC survey on this matter will be used to inform proposals.

Our comments will start at the southern proposals and move northwards

- We prefer the south option, through an underpass able to serve as a wildlife corridor. This is because the route will mainly be for cycle commuters so the most direct and fastest route is to be preferred. It will lead to parts of the national cycle network and towards Ipswich. This route will also gain in significance if developments at Long Strops takes place. The northern option would be slower and more tortuous and excessive use would damage the woodlands through which it would pass.
- The route from Brightwell Lakes to Barrack Square (alongside the western boundary of Adastral Park) and beyond is a vital link for the new development, linking it with the existing parts of Martlesham for "social, domestic and pleasure purposes". It will also be used by commuters who have crossed at the southern option. As such it needs to be pleasant, safe and fast without obstructions, essentially completely segregated from junction C. Neither roundabout option shows how this link can be achieved in any form.
- We welcome the widening of the existing footbridge and improvements to the underpasses which are important community links. As these all involve slopes non-slip surfaces for winter safety should be incorporated. The controlled crossing as part of the widening of Anson Road will also be welcome.
- Old Felixstowe Road is shown on the proposals map as a walking/cycling route, it is now too dangerous to serve this purpose due to the rat running referred to earlier. This map then starkly shows the gap in cycling provision and reinforces the need to calm and restore this road to its Cycle Priority status. This is reinforced by noting that an important walking/cycling route to/from the north of Brightwell Lakes will link to Old Felixstowe Road.
- Mill Lane is shown as a walking/cycling route. The east of this lane has a particularly poor surface and if this were to be improved it would improve a valued link for leisure cycling.
- We welcome the improvements which will be made by a quietened Sandy Lane and the proposed pedestrian/cycle overbridge over the B1438. Our only concern is will the gradient on the overbridge be manageable by users of varying physical abilities?

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- The map does not show the footpaths to the north of Bloomfield's Farm between roundabouts E and F. These are blocked by the A12, which is too dangerous to cross at this point and does not have access stairs from the footpath to the carriageway level. Options to remedy this should be evaluated. These could include adapting the tunnel carrying the Fynn under the A12 to accommodate a footpath.