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Andrew Alcorn (A303 Stonehenge Public Consultation)
Highways England
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Our Reference: ANON-BABJ-X6VN-1

3 March 2017

Dear Mr Alcorn,

A303 STONEHENGE AMESBURY TO BERWICK DOWN – BERWICK ST JAMES RESPONSE

OUR SITUATION

In addition to this submission from Berwick St James, the Campaign for the Preservation of the Southern Till Valley (CPSTV) has submitted a formal report that embraces the whole of the southern Till valley. Given the seismic impact of the decision and that almost all of the proposed southern bypass runs through our parish, we, as the Trustees of the village of Berwick St James, need to impress upon you the concerns which we have with the proposals. We should stress that we support the need for the tunnel and a bypass of Winterbourne Stoke – our concerns lie in the options for providing it.

So, the top-level issues are:

COMMUNITY, ECONOMY, ECOLOGY, HYDROLOGY

We wish to raise concerns across a wide range of topics, notably significant adverse impacts on the community through permanent separation of our two historic Norman villages, permanent damage to our local businesses, and destruction of a vital part of the River Till SSSI that will have major downstream impacts through the Avon SAC.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPACT

There is a site of untouched archaeological interest south of Normanton Gorse, and has remained undisturbed for many thousands of years. There is a sensible solution that avoids this location whilst ensuring smooth connectivity to the aspired route. In siting the western portal north west of Normanton Gorse parallel to the existing A303, the impact on the ancient history of the landscape is minimised and this reflects the survey work conclusions of the published 2003 scheme.

PROCEDURAL

Secondly, we also have considerable concerns relating to every stage of this consultation process. As most people have discovered, there is a paucity of information released to the public by Highways England (H-E), and it is therefore impossible to comment fully on the proposals. It is quite apparent that the amount of information supplied by Arup Atkins and H-E on which local residents are expected

to base their concerns, is at a very different level to the degree of detail that people who live here believe is necessary for them to make an informed choice. Assurances have been given by H-E that local concerns based on inadequate information would be fully addressed, but only after the decision to select one of the two bypass options had been made. An appropriate analogy might be to expect someone to jump into one of two tanks of water when blindfolded; one of which has sharks in it. The assurance given would be that the sharks would be removed the following day: this is clearly unhelpful!

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

To provide substance and support our position, the community has gone to considerable efforts since the 12th January 2017 to achieve the following:

- Formed a representative body called the 'Campaign for the Preservation of the Southern Till Valley' whose membership embraces individuals across a significantly wider section of the Till valley.
- Reached a consensus of opinion that the northern route is the clearly best option, but not as currently presented.
- Established relationships with external bodies such as Environment Agency, Natural England, World Heritage groups, Wiltshire Unitary Council and Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, JNCC and others.
- Raised a fund through voluntary donations to support the engagement of professional consultants, whose reports are enclosed with this letter.
- Delivered four public meetings relating to the consultation to inform concerned residents and wider interested parties.
- Collated individual subject matter expert (SME) research reports on a range of technical matters which have also been presented to H-E.

DISCUSSION OF KEY CONCERNS

The Parish Community is united in objecting to the southern bypass option.

The southern bypass option is a proposal that will deliver a permanent barrier both visually, socially and economically through this community. It is a huge concern to all. We are two Norman villages, of equal precedence in terms of history, contribution to the local archaeology, family history and our two churches are linked by nearly a thousand years of worship and footpaths. Design mitigation efforts will never deliver any degree of meaningful healing to the damage caused by such a severe and permanent structure through the southern Till valley. The impact of such an enormous rift on our thriving community, ecology and local businesses both now and in the future can only be devastating.

The residents cannot understand why the proposed northern bypass option around Winterbourne Stoke is not exactly the same in position and profile as was agreed back in 2005. Importantly, this was largely accepted by both the landowners and the community of Winterbourne Stoke. It is of note, however, that the new proposed northern bypass is viewed by residents as being significantly less acceptable when compared to the 2005 plan.

The late exposure to us of a southern bypass option, coupled with an unattractive and less-than-acceptable northern option - which is significantly higher in profile than the 2005 version – has been upsetting and worrying for most residents.

Communities north of Winterbourne Stoke are extremely concerned that the proposed position of the A303/A360 interchange on the northern route will do nothing to alleviate the rat-run through Shrewton and will be inconvenient to drivers from all directions. This point was raised to H-E by Shrewton's Deputy Parish Chairman, Darren Henry at a meeting on 23rd February 2017. But there is a pragmatic solution in the relocation of the junction back to the A360/Longbarrow roundabout and which adjustment is supported by us and the community of Shrewton. In detail; positioning the new roundabout in the south-west quadrant below the existing junction, would minimise the archaeological impact.

The ecological outlook for the Till valley is of considerable concern: we enclose a study that concludes that the overall impact on the ecology here is significantly greater than on the northern route.

We have considerable and, as yet, unanswered concerns about the hydrological impacts do not seem to have been appropriately considered: this ranges from the initial construction through to the life-long impacts of the structures and run-off on the valley.

OUR SUBMISSION

We attach 4 key reports that you will want to examine with your team: the first and most important being a report by Mabbett, who we have contracted to examine the proposals and processes. They have:

- Undertaken to deliver an independent critical review of the consultation process and quality of information presented to the public in order to make an informed choice on the route options.
- Identified concerns expressed by the CPSTV community.
- Supported the preparation of a consultation response from the CPSTV community to HE.

We have also attached the three further detailed assessments by EPR (Ecology Consultants), Vector (Road Design Consultants) and JSP (Acoustic Consultants).

Please acknowledge receipt of this letter and the enclosures.

Yours sincerely,



N. R. H. MacDougall
Chairman Berwick St James Parish Meetings



Councillor I. West
Wiltshire Councillor for Berwick St James

Enclosures:

1. Mabbett Report.
2. EPR.
3. Vector.
4. JSP Consultants.