

A417 Missing Link Project Team
Highways England
Temple Quay House
2 The Square, Temple Quay
Bristol
BS1 6HA

31 October 2019

Dear Sir/Madam,

A417 MISSING LINK CONSULTATION

Having attended a number of consultation events we are grateful for the time the Highways England team took to go through the proposals and answer our questions.

It has been a long journey getting to this point and the delivery is well overdue. It will evidently provide economic benefits to the local businesses, while providing safer and cleaner transport for drivers using the A417 and for those communities nearby.

However there are caveats attached to our wholehearted support, which are detailed below.

OPTION 30

We have no problem with Option 30, which was our preferred route when this matter was last consulted on. We think that this route offers the correct balance between the essential road improvements, deliverability and value for money; and, subject to appropriate levels of compensation for landowners, Gloucestershire Liberal Democrats support this.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND AIR QUALITY

You will be aware that Gloucestershire County Council recently declared a climate emergency. This included a commitment to cut our county's greenhouse gas emissions by 80 per cent by 2030. Similar commitments have been made by five of the six district councils in Gloucestershire.

It is notable that this is a much more challenging target than the international and national policy positions outlined in the PEIR. It is also disappointing that the commitments made by these Local Authorities were not referenced in that document – despite being made many months ago.

A reduction of 80 per cent will require all public bodies, private industry and individual citizens to make significant changes to their model of operation. It will not be achieved by continuing with business as usual. Gloucestershire Lib Dems are therefore calling for Highways England to respect the climate emergency declarations and to respect the commitment to reduce the county's greenhouse gas emissions by 80 per cent in 11 years.

This means that Highways England will need to take significant steps to offset 100 per cent of the additional emissions caused by the scheme, both long-term from additional car users and short-term from the construction phase.

NOISE MITIGATION

It was highlighted at the consultation events that the expected increase in traffic will likely lead to a 2 decibel increase in noise along the Missing Link section. You have stated in consultation documents that you are committed to assessing the potential impacts and we can expect relevant mitigation to follow as a result.

At the same event, however, it was confirmed to multiple group members that Highways England will only consider the effects on the very specific geographic area covered by the scheme. This means that you would not address issues on other areas of the A417/A419, the most pressing of which being the section of concrete road between Daglingworth and Latton which already suffers greatly from noise.

Since the works being undertaken by Highways England will directly lead to an increase in the volume of traffic, the impacts of this must be considered further along the dual carriageway. This means that resurfacing of the concrete section must be accelerated and noise mitigation measures implemented – which could include acoustic fencing/ barriers, or even a slowing of traffic in those areas most affected.

GREEN BRIDGE

We are very pleased by the inclusion of a “Green Bridge” for both wildlife and walkers. There is a legitimate fear, however, from professionals and the public that this bridge is neither wide enough for effective wildlife migration and that financial pressures may mean this bridge is not realised at all.

Gloucestershire Liberal Democrats are therefore calling for Highways England to guarantee that the bridge will come to fruition and listen to those professionals questioning the width of this, reviewing as appropriate.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the A417 Missing Link Project is uniquely exciting for our county. The project will be economically beneficial for Gloucestershire and will greatly improve the safety of those using the A417 and communities nearby.

However, there are areas which Highways England needs to do more, most notably relating to the total offsetting of greenhouse gas emissions to match our county’s commitments and to address the longstanding issues with noise further up the carriageway, which will only get worse with this project.

Yours faithfully,



Cllr Paul Hodgkinson
Group Leader of Gloucestershire Liberal Democrats
Responding on behalf of the Gloucestershire Liberal Democrat Group