



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

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Kelly Gibbons
Principal Planning Officer
Herefordshire Council
Planning Services
PO Box 230
Blueschool House
Hereford
HR1 2ZB

Don Kelly

SOUTHERN LINK ROAD: REFERENCE P 151314/F

I am writing to respond to the above consultation, and welcome the opportunity to bring a number of key points to your attention in my capacity as Member of Parliament for Hereford and South Herefordshire.

South Wye Transport Package

The stated aim of the original South Wye Transport Package (SWTP) award was to "promote economic growth within Hereford while tackling specific problems in the South Wye area". Complementary transport measures formed a key part of the package, with the potential to improve conditions for local cyclists and pedestrians.

In my letter to Balfour Beatty dated 6th August 2014, I welcomed the objectives of the SWTP, subject to some key caveats: a cost-benefit analysis of the Southern Link Road (SLR) against an Eastern Link Road, mitigation and consideration for people living in the vicinity, an appreciation of environmental concerns and a clearer explanation of how the proposed inbound bus lane on the A465 would work.

Indeed, the Highways Agency noted in August 2014 that "the building of new road infrastructure could only be justified in policy terms when other avenues such as travel planning and sustainable travel modes had been developed and shown not to address the transport needs and issues identified".

However, I have serious concerns that the Council has not met the aims set out in the original package, or addressed the concerns that I raised in my letter.

Southern Link Road

The main economic objective of the SLR is to ease traffic congestion in Hereford city centre. But Herefordshire Council's own traffic forecasts demonstrate that when the SLR is operational:

- a) The average daily volume of vehicles going over the Greyfriars Bridge will be unchanged (ADDT just under 46000)
- b) Small reductions in traffic volumes on the A465 Asda to Tesco stretch, between 9% and 13% (1800 to 2600 less vehicles per day), are countered with a 15% increase (3300 more vehicles per day) on the Asda to Holme Lacy Road section of the A49.



Thus it seems likely that the SLR would only redistribute traffic between the A465 and A49.

Alternative routes

The Council has stated that it does not consider an Eastern Link Road (ELR) to be a feasible option to tackle congestion. However, the evidence is that the ELR is the most cost-effective single piece of road infrastructure potentially available, and would likely cost in the same region as the SLR (approximately £25 million). I am separately writing to the Leader of Herefordshire Council to ask him to review the case for an ELR in this context.

I have long campaigned for better funding for Herefordshire, and the £27 million of central Government funding secured for the package is greatly welcome.

However, it appears that the money is not exclusively reserved for the SLR. The Government has stated that "LEPs will be permitted to exercise flexibility to substitute other projects if they have been rigorously assessed and offer comparable or better value for money".

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/growth-deals-firing-up-local-economies>)

I would be interested to know what steps the Council has taken to inquire as to the possibility of the money being re-allocated and used for alternative infrastructure projects in the county such as the ELR.

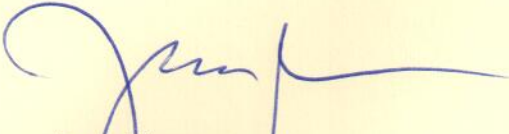
Compensation

I have previously been in touch with the Council to convey the worries of some of my constituents, whose names will be known to you. I would like to seek assurance that the many serious and proper concerns raised by local people throughout the last three years have been fully considered.

These concerns include planning oversight, noise and traffic problems, and the loss of property value due to planning blight. I would be grateful if you could clarify as soon as possible what compensation the Council will be offering to these people if the SLR is approved, and the timetable for its payment.

I very much hope that you will consider these concerns as part of the consultation, and would be grateful if you could respond to the points that I have raised at the earliest opportunity.

Best wishes,



Jesse Norman
Member of Parliament
Hereford and South Herefordshire