

Hazel Blears MP
Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government
Department for Communities and Local Government
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London, SW1E 5DU

1 May 2009

Dear Secretary of State,

Re: Westbury Bypass

We understand that you are or will shortly be considering the inspectors' report into the planning inquiry for Westbury Bypass.

There have been a number of significant new matters of fact since the public inquiry closed, which we believe are material to the decision, in particular: the closure of significant generators of HGV traffic; the end of abnormal traffic flows on the A350 caused by temporary closures of other roads, and the publication of the first UK carbon budget this month, in accordance with the requirements of the Climate Change Act 2008.

We are therefore writing to request that these are taken into account and that the public inquiry is either reopened, or that an opportunity for making written representations is afforded, in accordance with Rule 17(5) of The Town and Country Planning (Inquiries Procedure) (England) Rules 2000. If it is decided that these are not material new matters of fact, we would appreciate a statement of reasons as to why this is the case, in particular whether the carbon budget is considered as a matter of fact or government policy.

Major changes to the local situation cast doubts on the traffic modelling and evidence base

Since last autumn a number of generators of HGV movements in the Westbury area have ceased operations, including the cement works on the Eastern side of Westbury. There are no longer any significant generators of HGV movements on the Eastern side and no prospect of these generators re-opening or being replaced by other traffic. The majority of non-through HGV traffic is now headed for the West Wiltshire Trading Estate, which is located on the West of the town, and not easily served by the Eastern bypass route.

We believe that this is a significant and highly material change, because of the weight placed by the scheme promoters on the volume of HGVs. There is therefore an urgent need to examine remodelled traffic forecasts that take these changes into account.

We are also concerned that the public inquiry may have been materially prejudiced by abnormal traffic flows through Westbury. These were caused by the temporary closure of first the A36, then the A361, both of which suffer from heavier HGV traffic than the A350 through Westbury. In both cases traffic was diverted through Westbury, significantly increasing congestion and HGV volumes throughout the inquiry. The inspectors' formal site visits took place during the period of peak congestion. Informal visits were made later.

Carbon budgets

The UK's first carbon budget proposed a 34% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020, including a 10% cut in non-traded sectors, which includes road transport. The Climate Change Committee has previously highlighted "the importance of ensuring that investment over the next 12 years does not lock us into high-carbon capital assets which make achieving the 2050 target more difficult" (p106 in *Building a Low Carbon Economy*).

While it may be argued that the impact of the Westbury Bypass in itself will have a limited impact on overall carbon budgets, the decision whether to approve it or not is likely to be the first decision taken on a road scheme following the publication of the carbon budget and raises important questions as to the aggregation of seemingly small changes in emissions levels and the allocation of such changes between departments and local authorities.

Conclusions

We therefore request that the inquiry is reopened or that the opportunity for written submissions is afforded to consider the impact of the above on the traffic modelling and on the carbon budget.

We look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience. Please reply to Stephen Joseph on behalf of the others.



Pat Kinnersely
Chair, White Horse Alliance



Stephen Joseph
Executive Director, Campaign for Better Transport



Shaun Spiers
Executive Director, Campaign to Protect Rural England



Andy Atkins
Executive Director, Friends of the Earth