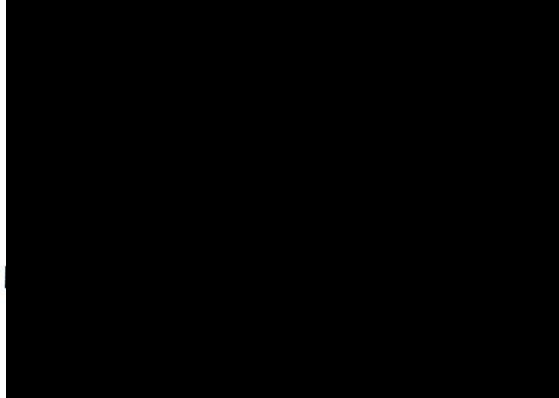
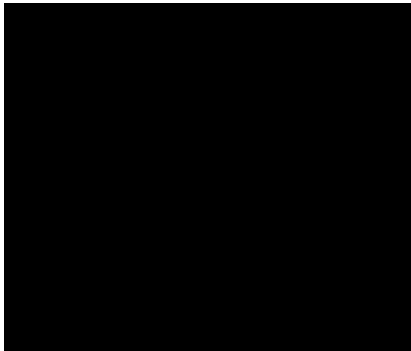




SG19 ROAD SAFETY GROUP



12th August 2020



Please include the following in this process.

As set out in my letter of 30th April 2019, Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) has stated that an integral part of the first draft of the Plan has been the close working relationship it has had with Highways England (HE) and its own Highways Department (HD). However, very little evidence of such working together existed then and that appears to remain the case. Crucially, nothing of any relevance to the road infrastructure in this part of CBC's area – ie the A1 corridor – appears in the modifications made.

The A1 is a major trunk road serving the nation and many of the local traffic movements involve using it, whether for long or short stretches. In 1994 a bypass was mooted for Sandy and Beeston by way of completing the missing link to the A1M from Baldock to Alconbury. CBC's original Plan appeared to have been prepared with minimal consideration to the A1 through Sandy and Beeston - which has significant air pollution well above the accepted levels as evidenced by the statistics CBC has itself gathered over the period 2015 to date. The levels of dangerous pollutants significantly exceed the acceptable levels as reported by the WHO. Statistics available show Sandy and Beeston have air quality that is so poor it

compares with big industrial conurbations. Nothing has been done in the modifications to the Plan to address these problems.

Despite this, the Plan proposes building significant numbers of houses adding to the traffic in a large part of the area covered by the Plan without any apparent joined up thinking on rerouting the A1. While it may be said that relatively few houses are planned for Sandy and Beeston, the point remains that it is vehicles travelling around the area and through this community that are creating the pollution. The most recent report on the number of houses for which planning permission has been granted or applied for exceeds 3,000. This is before the additional numbers designed to be delivered in consequence of the Plan. Adding up the smaller developments proposed for the A1 corridor sees a total of 771 houses in addition to the 1500 proposed for the Biggleswade village.

It appears that reference to the development proposed for a new village at Tempsford – where it was suggested some 7,000 houses could be built in conjunction with the East West rail link – has been dropped. However, the cynic in me wonders if this is to facilitate the acceptance of this plan with CBC knowing that it can bring this proposal back to the table once a plan has been accepted.

The effect of all these houses adding traffic to the existing overloaded network will be horrendous. HE is planning to replace the existing Black Cat roundabout with a free flowing junction in conjunction with its current plans to dual the A428 to Caxton Gibbet. (I am old enough to remember that it was intended this would be done in conjunction with the construction of the original A14 so it is long overdue.) However, the consequences of that will be increased congestion and pollution at Sandy roundabout as no proposals exist to improve this junction. HE have said that there is insufficient room to build improvements at this roundabout where the A1 and the A603 from Bedford to Cambridge, which continues on the B1042 to Potton, meet. We must not forget numerous other settlements along the route of the A1 in CBC's area that are blighted by the existing road and its general poor condition. It has been stated that more vehicles will use the A428/Black Cat junction with the A1 when the project is completed as it will stop the rat running through villages that happens at present as traffic seeks to avoid the congestion at this notorious roundabout. The only solution is a re-aligned A1 so completing the A1M between Baldock and Alconbury.

A vast amount of money is going to be wasted with the gross over engineering of the Black Cat junction which is going to entail construction of a massive embankment on a three tier format. It will also involve blocking off a number of roads joining the existing A1 and building new access roads with a number of new roundabouts, including a bridge over the A1 just to serve Kelpie Marina. Following the line of the originally proposed 1994 route for the re-aligned A1 would remove the need for this gross 'over kill' as the new East/West/North/South junction would be much simpler, being constructed in open country. This would remove the endless disruption, congestion, pollution and general misery for the duration of the project if the existing junction remains in operation while the work is being completed. The current proposals unbelievably leave the famous 'Kelpie Kink' in the A1 just south of the Black Cat in the northbound lane.

While it may be said that the Black Cat lies just outside CBC's 'catchment area', so to speak, the significance of this junction cannot be ignored as it affects traffic flow along the A1 as it continues across CBC's area. HE should be asked to pause the

existing project in so far as it relates to the Black Cat while it takes a more joined up approach to resolving the problem once and for all by construction of the A1M link from Baldock to Alconbury on a re-aligned route. Once the existing road is replaced for 'through traffic', so to speak, all the other problems reduce or disappear completely. The existing road could be designated a standard A road – it may be that one carriageway in the wider stretches could be dispensed with so creating further development opportunities – and would thus better serve local traffic with massively improved safety for residents, especially on the stretch through Sandy and Beeston. For example, the proposed bridge over the A1 at Biggleswade South roundabout to serve the industrial development will not be needed as another form of crossing would be perfectly adequate for the reduced traffic flow serving only local journeys. Some 77 HA of new employment opportunities with warehousing etc is proposed and that will generate significant extra HGV movements.

Other development areas highlighted in the updated plan get improved road access - for example the M1/A6 link is now a commitment as is the A507 upgrade around Arlesey where, to the east, some 2,000 houses are proposed – but no consideration appears to have been given to the consequences of this traffic all feeding onto the A1 whether for short or long journeys. In my view, CBC has been negligent in not pressing HE more strongly to re-route the A1 while giving planning permission for more and more houses to be built with no concern for consequences to the road network that is currently recognised to be dangerous and sub-standard, as detailed in the A1 East of England Strategic Study Stage 3 report produced by HE.

I have additionally commented on the need for more detailed promises about the provision of an improved water supply and additional sewage treatment facilities. Pottton has recently suffered, if not outages, significantly reduced water pressure as a result of increased demand which must, in large part, be due to the additional housing. In Sandy, a few years ago the sewage treatment system saw overflows near residences at the bottom of Ivel Road and although this was resolved by the addition of a larger pump in an existing small pumping station, the fact the system was over stretched was highlighted. Much more work is needed to ensure that the other aspects of increasing the number of houses and in consequence residents requiring the usual services – education, health and recreation – have been fully considered.

In summary, I would ask the Inspectors to take a detailed look at the evidence produced to the Examination in support of CBC's contention the Plan, updated with the proposed modifications, is fit for purpose, especially as far as the road network is concerned. While my concern is predominantly for Sandy and Beeston, the approach taken by CBC to the area covered by the Plan overall gives no comfort at all. I believe there has been a lack of thoroughness by CBC in approaching managing the additional traffic the Plan, including the proposed modifications, will create across the area as a whole, even if only some of the developments mooted come to implementation. I would ask the Inspectors to ensure that a robust framework is put into place to require infrastructure improvements to precede any development, rather than follow many years down the line as has been the case for too long. I believe CBC should be required to give a commitment to secure a re-aligned route for the A1 by completing the missing link from Baldock to Alconbury as a condition in the same way that it has for the M1/A6 and A507.

I confirm that I wish these comments and those made previously taken as an Objection to the Plan as proposed until assurances are received that a bypass – at least for Sandy and Beeston but ideally from the A1M at Baldock to the A1M at Alconbury – will be conditional on the Plan coming into effect.

