

Councillor Len Gates C.Chem MRSC

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Leader Test Valley Liberal Democrat Group

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10 June 2010

FAO The Inspector for the Public Inquiry into the proposed diversion of Smannell Road (C99),
East Anton, Andover Ref: NATTRAN/SE/S247/85

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I write as borough councillor for the Andover Alamein ward of Test Valley Borough Council. This ward includes the parish of Smannell and the new development at East Anton known as Augusta Park. I have been the elected representative for this area since 2003 and wish to express my extreme concerns about the proposed stopping up of the Smannell Road C99 at East Anton and its rerouting through the new residential development at East Anton.

At the time when the new residential development (of 2500 homes) was first proposed existing residents expressed concern about the size of the development and the possibility of increased traffic and rat running through adjacent villages and along county lanes from the new houses to neighbouring towns such as Basingstoke and Newbury. The planning department response to this was to engineer a dog-leg into Smannell Road to discourage traffic from heading north east from the new development towards Smannell.

This proposal was poorly researched and had little local support. It was later included in the approved borough local plan and in subsequent planning applications despite strong local objections. The proposed diversion is unlikely to have the desired effect on new traffic in the area. It will however seriously disrupt traffic flows and cause inconvenience to existing users of the road as well as blighting the new housing development with unnecessary additional traffic.

Andover is the local centre for the parishes of Smannell and St Mary Bourne and all of the settlements along the Bourne Valley to the north East of Andover. The geography of the area is such that Smannell Road is the main artery connecting these communities to Andover. Alternative routes involve long detours and some are not viable for large (especially agricultural) vehicles. Residents of these settlements rely on Andover as the centre for shopping, leisure, banking and medical facilities, for schooling and for the local emergency services - the police, ambulance and fire brigade. If the diversion goes ahead, all of the traffic between Andover and these communities will be unnecessarily diverted through the new housing development.

The extent to which this road is used by existing local traffic was clearly highlighted by the number of complaints from residents and businesses, and the damage caused to alternative minor routes, seen during the recent six month closure of the road to install new roundabouts on Smannell Road at East Anton. A recent survey by Smannell Parish Council recorded 1275 vehicle movements in a twelve hour period. This traffic includes not just residential (car) traffic but also a number of heavy goods and agricultural vehicles. The volume and nature of this traffic was not fully understood when the original proposal was made.

The new housing development is on a green field site, previously agricultural land, and is surrounded by hundreds of acres of working farm land. The use of Smannell Road by agricultural vehicles has been underestimated if not ignored when considering the proposed diversion. The geography of the area means that this road is the main, if not the only, route to these surrounding farms. It is used regularly by large, wide, slow-moving agricultural vehicles. It is also used by fully loaded grain and slurry lorries travelling to and from the same farms and by heavy goods vehicles visiting commercial premises in Smannell and the surrounding area.

There is no alternative route for most of these vehicles. The diversion of this traffic through a residential estate is both unnecessary and detrimental to the health and safety of residents of this new and prestigious development. The proposed diversion is adjacent to public footpaths and cycle paths. Some of the new houses front directly onto this road. The diversion also takes traffic close to the site of a new primary school serving the development and therefore into close contact with pedestrian traffic to and from this school.

The East Anton MDA lies within the rural parish of Smannell, but it is, in effect, an extension of urban Andover. The fact that it is an urban extension is clearly acknowledged by Test Valley in its community development and other plans. Traffic management in the area should reflect the difference between the existing rural community and the new urban community. It should serve the needs and best interests of both. To divert existing traffic through the new estate benefits neither of them and harms all of them. I can think of no other urban development in Test Valley where a similar diversion has been proposed or implemented.

In summary I would urge you to reject the proposed stopping up and rerouting of the road because

- The initial reasoning, and justification, for the closure was flawed
- The closure is not in the best interests of existing users of the road and will cause unnecessary disruption to existing traffic
- The traffic diversion will adversely effect the environment of the new development and the health and safety of its residents.

Cllr Len Gates

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