

## **Complaint Against Suffolk County Council Failure to Address Highways Matters Adversely Affecting Moreton Hall, Bury St Edmunds**

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### **Outline of Complaint**

Suffolk County Council (SCC) has failed to address Highways matters adversely affecting the Moreton Hall area of the Eastgate and Moreton Hall Division, specifically the following:

Unacceptable numbers of HGV's transiting through residential areas, particularly Orttewell Road.

Delay at the Orttewell Road rail bridge creating tailbacks on Orttewell Road, Barton Road and A143 Compiegne Way.

Congestion at the "Sainsbury" roundabout and A14 Junction 44 roundabout continuing the A1302 and A134 to the Southgate roundabout.

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### **Background**

The Moreton Hall area comprises a large residential estate and a large commercial and retail area. The two distinct areas are separated by Bedingfield Way and Skyliner Way running East to West, with everything to the North being residential and to the South being commercial.

The commercial area has numerous established businesses on the Retail Park, including Sainsburys, Currys, Homebase, Dunelm Mill, DFS, Jewson, ATS, Audi and many more SME's.

A new access road, now named Rougham Tower Avenue, provides access from Junction 45 of the A14 to employment land known as Suffolk Park and Suffolk Business Park. Congestion at Junction 44 (Sainsburys) remains a barrier for access to the A14, access to the town and access to the West Suffolk Hospital.

Construction of the residential area started in the 1970's and continues to expand, with a housing total of approximately 4,000 when the 500-home development at Lark Grange on Mount Road is completed.

Access to the residential area is from Junction 44 of the A14, Barton Road from Bury St Edmunds town, Compiegne Way from the North and Gt Barton and Mount Road from the East, including Thurston.

In addition to the Lark Grange development, 1,375 dwellings, school and local center are to be built at the North East Bury site at Compiegne Way, separated from Moreton Hall by just the railway line. Just to the south of Moreton Hall,

1,250 dwellings are to be built at the South East Bury site between Rougham Hill and Sicklesmere Road.

The Suffolk Park development by Jaynic and Suffolk Business Park development by Churchmanor, together comprise approximately 100 acres of employment land. Each developer website says usage is B1 (Office) or B8 (Warehouse and Distribution). Both uses, particularly B8 have the potential to generate high levels of traffic, particularly HGV's for the latter. Both websites only refer to J45 of the A14 for access, but this is not enforceable by Planning Condition.

Fig 1 identifies locations and relationship to each other. More detailed images are included where relevant.



**Fig 1 General layout of Moreton Hall**

## **Unacceptable numbers of HGV's transiting through residential areas, particularly Orttewell Road**

Orttewell Road runs approximately South to North between the Bedingfeld Way/Skyliner Way roundabout and Compiègne Way. The road is bordered on the East side by Helhaw Road, Cranesbill Drive, Poppy Close, Cardinal Close, Codling, Markant Close and Fiske Close and on the West side by Downing Close, Winsford Road, Leabrook Close and Brackenwood Crescent. All of these roads are wholly residential.

Fig 2 shows the small roundabout on Orttewell Road that gives access to Symonds Road and Cranesbill Drive. Relevant details are included to highlight the following:

The roundabout is not a mini-roundabout where HGV's can drive over a painted white circle. This one needs to be manoeuvred and is usually busy as, in addition to Orttewell Road traffic, Symonds Road leads to the many community facilities, notably convenience store, primary school, GP practice and pharmacy, requiring vehicles to slow/stop and then accelerate with associated noise and diesel fumes.

The pedestrian crossing is signal controlled and forms part of a safe route to Sebert Wood CP School, the pre-school, and the many community facilities at Lawson Place. It often results in stopping and starting or slowing and accelerating with resulting noise and diesel fumes.

A recently refurbished children's play area and green gym are exposed to noise and diesel fumes from traffic at the roundabout, particularly as the hedgerow was removed at installation. The roundabout has been the scene of several vehicle collisions, increasing local anxiety over safety at the play area and travel to it.

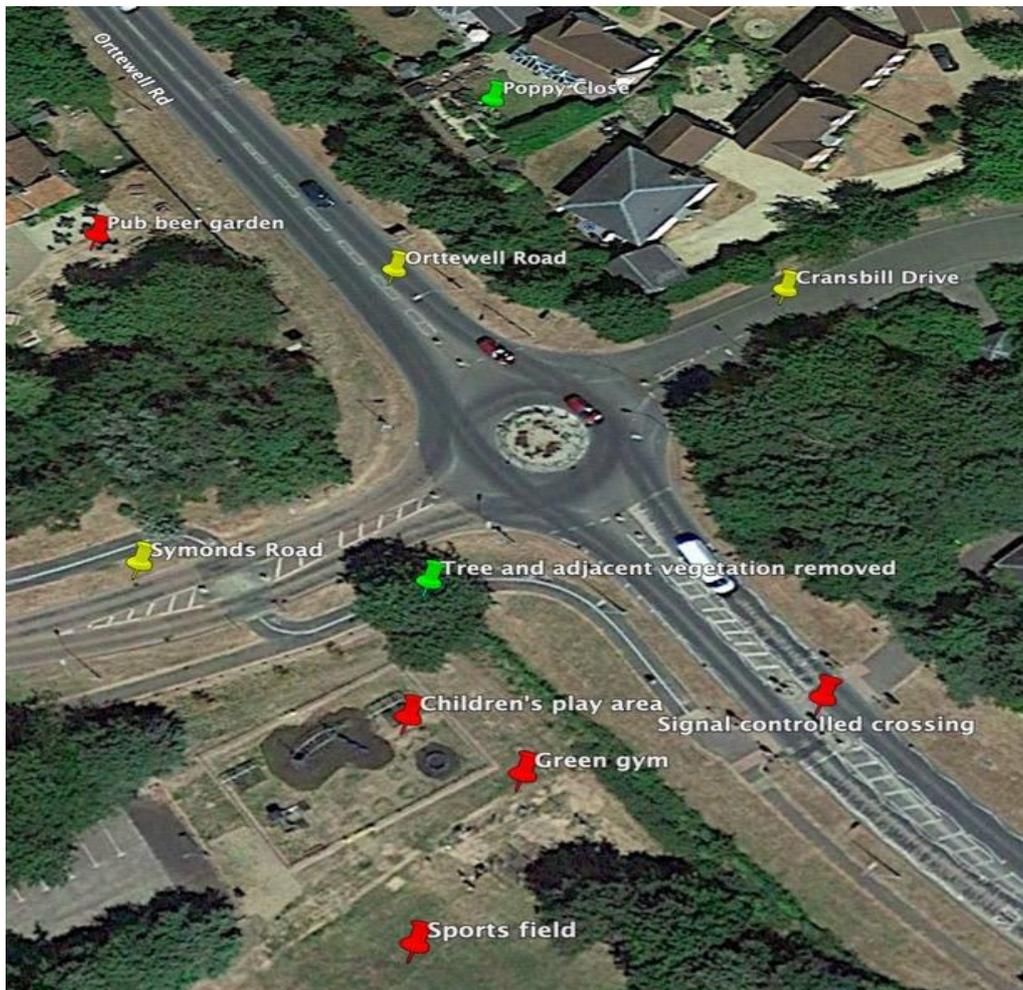
The sports field running parallel with Orttewell Road is one of just two on the estate to serve a population of over 8,000. Diesel fumes impact on this location.

The public house beer garden attracts many customers outside during warmer months but is exposed to the consequences of HGV traffic on Orttewell Road.

Poppy Close is highlighted as the properties and gardens are lower than the road resulting in diesel emissions having an even greater adverse impact.

Lawson Place (not shown), to the left of the pub garden, contains the only non-residential elements on the residential estate but are all related to residential, including community centre, GP surgery, church, pharmacy, chiropractor, dentist, hairdresser, butcher, convenience store and coffee shop. Access to these facilities from the North and much of the East of the estate is via footpaths along Orttewell Road.

Sebert Wood CP School has good number of pupils walking, cycling, or scooting to and from school with many exposed to the impact of HGV's.



**Fig 2 Junction of Orttewell Road, Symonds Road and Cranesbill Drive**

**Delay at the Orttewell Road rail bridge creating tailbacks on Orttewell Road, Barton Road and A143 Compiegne Way.**

Further to the North (Fig 3), the problem created by HGV's using Orttewell Road is again highlighted with the signal-controlled three-way single traffic flow under the arched rail bridge. This arrangement was implemented by Suffolk County Council sometime between 2001 and 2005. The aim is to prevent HGV's striking the bridge, often resulting in road closure for inspection and/or repair. In that aim, it succeeded but the resulting delays, congestion and pollution impact on other road users and neighbouring residents is unacceptable. Network Rail confirm they will not replace the bridge thereby enabling normal two-way traffic flow, so the community are left with the consequences.

Traffic queuing at Barton Road, Orttewell Road, and A143 Compiegne Way is a constant feature for commuters and neighbouring residents. Long delays are frustrating but the situation on Compiegne way is more serious with queuing on both carriageways and around the roundabout. The situation deteriorates further during the sugar beet campaign between September and March when

HGV's accessing the nearby British Sugar factory add to the numbers. Additionally, planning application DC/19/2456/HYB proposes 1,375 dwellings (125 more than the local plan allocation) plus a local centre and primary school immediately North of the rail bridge on the South side of Compiegne Way. Agents for British Sugar have objected to the planning application because of the traffic impact on their business.

Referring to the North East Bury development site, the Local Development Framework Transport Impacts - Bury St Edmunds, carried out by AECOM and commissioned by SCC states on Page 19, Paragraph 4.37:

"This site is remote from the town centre with poor connections. There are several pinch points on the road network due to constraints with crossing the railway line. It has been assumed by AECOM that access to the site would be onto the A143 Bury Road, and thence to Mount Road. There are serious and widespread transport access implications to be resolved at this location."



**Fig 3 Site of Orttewell Road rail bridge**

## **Action to date**

Reams of correspondence between myself and officers and cabinet members has failed to get the high numbers of HGV movements and congestion addressed. Similarly, the Moreton Hall Residents' Association (MHRA) and individual residents have worked tirelessly to seek resolution with representation made to all relevant parties. When the cabinet member, attended a MHRA committee meeting but despite acknowledging the issues, there has been no progress towards resolution.

Regarding congestion at the bridge, a Senior Travel Planner and I met with Network Rail to highlight the unsuitability of the arched bridge and the impact on traffic flow caused by the three-way working. Network Rail stated they will not replace the bridge. When the layout of Moreton Hall was proposed in the 1970's, plans did not include a pinch-point at such an important entrance to the estate.

Regarding the high level of HGV movement on Orttewell Road, correspondence with officers and cabinet member(s) has failed to produce a solution. A local resident, whose property overlooks Orttewell Road at the roundabout junction with Cranesbill Drive, has submitted a mass of data to SCC, detailing HGV registration numbers, time and date, company name and often images. The SCC response has been consistent in stating that Orttewell Road is suitable for all forms of traffic. Responses also claim that Moreton Hall is a mixed-use estate, which is to deny the clear demarcation between residential and commercial either side of Bedingfeld Way and Skyliner Way. More recently, I have been referred to the impending review of HGV routes in the county, but a wider review will not address the specific issue of a major HGV rat-run through a residential estate facilitated by the traffic flow restrictions.

## **Solution**

Orttewell Road must have a full-length weight restriction applied to prohibit any vehicle that cannot pass under the rail bridge in normal two-directional flow. That would not only resolve the high numbers of HGV's unnecessarily using the road but would also enable the rail bridge to be opened up to two-way traffic flow.

## **Congestion at the Sainsbury roundabout and A14 Junction 44 roundabout, continuing onto the A134 at the Southgate roundabout.**

Junction 44 of the A14 is frequently congested to the frustration of local residents and visitors, with vehicle queuing on the approaches to the Sainsbury roundabout from Symonds Road and particularly, Bedingfeld Way.

With reference to Fig 4, queuing continues from the Sainsbury roundabout onto the main Junction 44 roundabout with gridlock commonplace. Queuing continues along the A1302 dual carriageway to the Rougham Hill roundabout where it merges into a single carriageway and on to the Southgate roundabout. Here, traffic splits to either the A134 towards Sicklesmere/Sudbury, Southgate Street towards Bury St Edmunds or Wilks Road/Hardwick Lane towards the West Suffolk Hospital and Horringer/Haverhill.

Traffic from the 1,250 home SE Bury site will feed into the same road network. During discussions with a SCC Senior Travel Planner and West Suffolk Council planning officer, they advised that the site will include a road from Rougham Hill to Sicklesmere Road allowing traffic heading in the Sudbury direction to leave the A1302 at the Rougham Hill roundabout. They claim a third of traffic would divert via the new road, benefiting all road users. I am not convinced by this high estimate but even if accurate, it will not achieve the necessary relief at Junction 44.

Importantly and even if these predictions were achieved, the road is many years from being constructed whereas residents to the East of the town have already been suffering gridlock for years. Appointment times at the West Suffolk Hospital are determined by the expected level of congestion. Perhaps patients should follow council guidance and use public transport but to travel the three miles from Moreton Hall to the hospital entails a bus into the town-center followed by another bus back to the hospital.

The **2013** Bury Vision 2031 Draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan, Paragraph 6.4 states:

"The A14 passes through the town, as does the A143 and A134 while the A1101 starts in Bury St Edmunds. It is recognized that some of the junctions on the A14 are at capacity at peak times. The (*then*) Highways Agency, which is responsible for the management of the A14, seeks to ensure that the carriageway will not be affected by queuing at these junctions. In preparing the Core Strategy it was acknowledged that the development of some sites would not be allowed until the capacity issues has (*sic*) been resolved."



**Fig 4 Layout of key elements associated with congestion at the Sainsburys and A14 Junction 44 roundabouts**

On 15 May 2012, a SCC Planning Policy officer responded to the Bury Vision 2031 - Preferred Options Consultation stating:

"The St Edmundsbury Core Strategy (which was adopted in 2010 and with which all of the borough's planning policies must be in conformity) housing allocation leaves 5,900 dwellings remaining to be built in Bury St Edmunds in the period 2011-2031. This will have significant impacts on the town. The county council notes the position taken by the borough to date and therefore we will seek to work with St Edmundsbury to ensure that this growth is accompanied by adequate additional infrastructure that meets the demands of this growth. We have and will continue to work with you to refine proposals for mitigation as development plans move forward."

"A number of the county councillors for Bury St Edmunds have significant concerns regarding this level of growth."

On 7 May 2013, the document, Bury St Edmunds Vision 2031 - Transport, was sent to St Edmundsbury BC by the SCC Assistant Director (Highways and Transport). The covering letter states:

"Suffolk County Council will respond formally to your final draft Vision 2031 documents when you are ready to consult. They will include comments on the transport implications of the proposed development as they appear in your draft."

"In the meantime, this authority and St Edmundsbury Borough Council jointly commissioned consultants AECOM to carry out an assessment of eleven key junctions in and around Bury St Edmunds likely to be under pressure as a result of the development proposals as we understand them to be in September 2012 when the study was commissioned. The AECOM report is attached for information. Please note that this is a technical report produced by consultants and should not be taken as, or limiting, the county council's future response to your final draft documents that have not yet been seen by the county council."

"Views expressed by AECOM in the report about the **limitations of the modelling used and the desirability of a more comprehensive modelling approach should be noted. Such an approach does not, however, appear to be a practical possibility at this time given the likely cost.** It is considered that the modelling approach used is adequate to give a broad indication of the likely scale of impact of the developments and to test potential mitigation measures."

Para 3.12 of the AECOM report refers to A14 Junction 44 and states:

"The LINSIG model of the base case indicates problems with the A14 eastbound and westbound off-slips and Bedingfield (sic) Way (PM Peak). **Local knowledge suggests that there is actually a problem on the Bedingfield Way approach in the AM Peak which the model is not**

**reporting. This is not evident in the queue length data the model was validated against.** This problem could result from, for example, the A14 eastbound off-slip being given priority to enter the junction at the expense of the priority given to Bedingfield Way."

I have highlighted sections from the Bury Vision 2031 – Transport, document that demonstrate the modelling was inadequate and limited by cost. There cannot be any confidence in modelling that failed to indicate the gridlock that existed at the Bedingfield Way AM Peak.

## **Solution**

Given the imposed constraints, such as preserving free flow on the A14 and no new access on to the A14, I do not have a solution. However, unlike SCC, I did not endorse development that was certain to exacerbate congestion on a local highway infrastructure so obviously under stress long before expansion was agreed.

The Local Development Framework: Traffic Impacts - Bury St Edmunds, Paragraph 7.25 states:

"Site 5 - Moreton Hall Extension - will need some new road connections to allow full buildout, given its relation to A14 J44 both for accessing the A14, and crossing to the town center."

On behalf of an angry and frustrated community, I agree.

## **Summary**

Moreton Hall residents have endured highways shortcomings for too long. I have raised the inadequacy of the highway's infrastructure on numerous occasions and particularly when the district council embarked on a 6,000-dwelling expansion for the town, half of which will directly impact on Moreton Hall. Members were advised that development would not address existing problems, but measures would be introduced to mitigate the impact of expansion. While accepting we cannot assume there will be no detriment to the highway network in Bury St Edmunds, we do expect much better than what exists, particularly with so much of the agreed expansion still to come.

SCC have declined to revisit previous decisions. The example of the pinch-point created at the Orttewell Road rail bridge confirms they are content to disrupt many residents and commuters rather than deal with HGV drivers who ignore height restrictions. SCC also defend a polluting HGV rat-run through the residential estate by stating the road is categorized as suitable for all vehicles.

During the Bury Vision 2031 process, members were told of various mitigation possibilities such as UTMC, SCOOT, Smart Choices, methods to encourage a modal shift in travel habits away from the car and so on. All very laudable but nothing relevant has materialized. SCC did carry out works to the Northgate Street roundabout and Tayfen Road area and to the Spreadeagle junction. The works were not supported by local members and have had little or no impact on traffic movement, particularly to the East.

Every attempt to get SCC to address Moreton Hall highways shortcomings has failed, leaving no alternative to this complaint.

**To resolve the complaint, SCC should:**

- 1) Acknowledge that Moreton Hall is not a mixed estate and that development between Skyliner Way/Bedingfeld Way and the railway line is residential.
- 2) Other than for access to service the village centre or schools, prohibit HGV's from Orttewell Road to protect residential amenity.
- 3) Reinstate normal two-way traffic flow at the Orttewell Road rail bridge.
- 4) Take measures to address the queuing on Compiegne Way before construction of the North East Bury development.
- 5) Take measures to ensure that development on Suffolk Park and Suffolk Business Park does not impact on Moreton Hall residential areas or Skyliner Way and Bedingfeld Way.
- 6) Take measures to address the queuing and congestion at the Sainsburys roundabout, Junction 44 roundabout, A1302 and Rougham Hill roundabout.
- 7) Accept that a residential population of over 8,000 will never achieve sufficient numbers cycling, walking, or using public transport to significantly reduce car use for commuting to work, shopping, schools, attending hospital or living normal lives.
- 8) Work constructively with community representatives.

**Covid 19**

Most of this complaint was drafted before the lockdown and new ways of working were introduced. It was not my intention to add to the council's workload during difficult times and I delayed submitting it.

It's now clear that disruption is going to be very long term, therefore further delay is not justified.

Trevor Beckwith  
County Councillor  
Eastgate and Moreton Hall Division  
Suffolk County Council