

Stage 1 Response from Suffolk County Council

From: Officer (Suffolk Highways)

Sent: 30 September 2020 17:18

To: Trevor Beckwith (SCC Councillor)

Cc: Copied to various officers at SCC and Suffolk Highways

Subject: Complaint - C/20/53 - Cllr Beckwith

Dear Cllr Beckwith,

Further to my initial email in response to your complaint I've now re-visited your report and received feedback from colleagues from whom I sought comments. I've also looked at the road layouts in this area. This email is a continuance of our Stage 1 response to your complaint.

Again, I'm grateful for your detailed report and the included maps.

I'm writing this response in my capacity as a safety and speed management engineer and because my team deal with HGV issues reported by the public. I have copied in others, mainly in our Transport Strategy team, as they have a wider, strategic remit which may influence or contribute to any solutions if they become justified.

You have raised 3 points – HGV's using Orttwell Road, the issues at the arched bridge and congestion at the A14 junction and its approaches.

Taking these in turn I'm inclined to agree that there are identifiable distinctions between the commercial area to the south of Bedingfield Road and the mainly residential areas to the north. As such I can see an argument being put forward to justify an HGV restriction on Orttwell Road with HGV's then expected to use the A14 and Compiegne Road as the detour route. If this was to be progressed we have the options of seeking to introduce a permanent TRO from the outset or an Experimental TRO which lasts for up to 18 months and gives us time to monitor the effects before deciding whether to make permanent. I'd be happy to seek estimates for both options to include the design, consultation and works costs, if you wish?

In progressing any TRO I think its reasonable to take into account the comments made earlier from Kerry Allen about any unintended consequences of restricting HGV's, such as the risk of HGV's seeking other routes around the area and that in the main Orttwell Road is of a high quality design with most residential properties well set back and no injury collisions reported between 1/3/15 and 1/3/20 when we last assessed this road. I raise these points as any TRO consultation will probably generate levels of support but possible objections as well.

I have also copied in colleagues who are progressing the countywide HGV review. I'm aware they are looking at strategic issues but have also involved themselves with local issues that could have a wider impact.

Looking at the arched bridge I see the argument that if HGV's are prevented from accessing the bridge then it can be opened up again for 2 way traffic and thereby remove the bottleneck and resulting congestion. However I have a worrying concern. Unless high-sided vehicles such as HGV's are physically restricted there remains the risk that such a vehicle will collide with the lower parts of the arch. We cannot rely simply on signs. Any HGV restriction on Orttwell Road will include the usual exemptions such as permission to enter the restriction for loading of unloading purposes or making deliveries. It also exempts construction and maintenance vehicles and others. So unless some form of height barrier was constructed either side of the arched bridge there would be a risk of unintended collision. We saw recent news coverage of a school bus having its roof ripped off under an arched bridge with resulting serious injuries. I've not see examples of physical height barriers over highways.

An alternative is to enhance the traffic signals controller using MOVA which constantly adjusts the signal sequences depending on demand. This seeks to optimise the capacity of the road layout and minimise queue lengths.

You also described the problems of congestion at the Sainsbury's roundabout, junction 44 and the Southgate roundabout. I apologise that these issues are outside my remit hence my copying in of others who have commented previously.

Regrettably I'm unaware of any SCC HQ budgets to fund a TRO or a MOVA upgrade. Such schemes are normally funded from local funding sources such as town or parish council precepts or grants they can secure, such as County and District Councillors highway, Locality or enabling budgets. You have advised of your commitment to another scheme now and into next year so I wonder if other funders could be approached?

Regards

Safety and Speed Management Engineer
Web: www.suffolkroadsafe.com

From: Highways Safety and Speed Management
Sent: 02 July 2020 12:32
To: Trevor Beckwith (SCC Councillor)
Cc:
Subject: Complaint - C/20/53 - Cllr Beckwith

Dear Cllr Beckwith,

I'm the manager assigned to investigate your complaint. This email is a response at Stage 1 of the SCC Corporate Complaints process.

Firstly, thank you for compiling a comprehensive report into the various issues.

I'm aware that over recent times a variety of SCC teams have become involved in looking at the issues and considering possible solutions. These include my Safety and Speed Management Team, our HGV Incident officer, our Development Management team, HQ's Transport Strategy team, our Traffic Signals team and our Rougham Service Delivery Centre. We may have also contacted the District Council.

In light of your complaint I've canvassed comments from all of these teams and should have sufficient information to compile a considered response. However some team members have, and still are, actively involved with Covid 19 Social Distancing measures across our market towns. This has been of the highest priority so I politely request an extension of time, say 2 weeks from now to formally address your complaint. I will lead on this.

If you however remain dissatisfied following my response to your concerns, you can contact the SCC Complaints team to see whether anything else can be done to resolve your complaint at this stage. You can do this by writing to, Customer Rights, Suffolk County Council, Constantine House, Constantine Road, Ipswich, IP1 2DH; via email or by telephone.

Yours sincerely

From: Trevor Beckwith
Sent: 03 June 2020 16:42
To: Officer (SCC)
Subject: Complaint.

Dear

Please see attached complaint against Suffolk County Council. I've included quotes from relevant documents, hopefully making it easier to follow than numerous attachments with cross-referencing.

SCC has also previously received many emails from a local resident, who provided Highways and relevant cabinet member(s) with a large amount of data and images of HGV movement at Ortwell Road. The content is too large to submit as part of this complaint but will be available on file.

Thanks

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

My response to SCC Stage 1

Complaint C/20/53

Thank you for your emailed response, dated 1 October 2020, to my complaint against Suffolk County Council. My response follows;

I welcome the acknowledgement that Moreton Hall is not a mixed estate, with an identifiable distinction between residential and commercial areas. I expect all relevant departments to be made aware and to react accordingly.

I also welcome agreement that an HGV restriction on Orttewell Road is justified. The offer to provide estimates for an experimental TRO or permanent TRO is tempered by the lack of a budget to fund the proposal.

HGV Use of Orttewell Road

Reference is made to the unintended consequences of restricting HGV's on Orttewell Road. However, the immediate area is served by the A14 trunk road and the newly constructed Eastern Relief Road, leading to J45. Both of these routes provide the opportunity for HGV's to avoid residential areas and to avoid the congested J44.

Reference is also made to Orttewell Road not recording any injury collisions for five years. There have been collisions at the roundabout at Symonds Road with paramedics attending.

Irrespective of accidents, the quality of life of many residents bordering Orttewell Road is compromised by the level of HGV traffic. Most properties are described as "well set back" which, in reality, is a narrow tree line and ignores the impact of noise, vibration and fumes that impact on all dwellings, particularly those positioned below the level of the road. The same impact applies to the children's play area and sports/recreation field at Heldhaw Road.

You are concerned that HGV's exempt from restriction will risk colliding with the bridge and that signs cannot be relied on. I suggest that is why we have laws and those that break them are punished, whereas the current arrangement punishes a very large community.

Rail Bridge

As the arched bridge was there long before Moreton Hall was planned and built, it is reasonable to assume that consultees, including Highways, would have been aware of predicted traffic levels associated with 3,400 dwellings and the highways limitations of the bridge.

Similar comments apply to the Local Planning Authority agreeing to increase dwelling numbers by around 270 through increased density and then to increase them by a further 500 with the Vision 2031 Moreton Hall Urban Extension (the Lark Grange development).

Despite the existing congestion at the A143 Compiegne Way roundabout, 1,250 dwellings were allocated as the NE Bury strategic site, with the agreement of Highways. The traffic impact is yet to come as they are not yet built.

Any HGV collision with the bridge results in disruption to the rail network while structural inspection is carried out. However, the network owner confirms that bridge replacement is not an option, preferring road users to suffer from the existing measures to mitigate its unsuitability. This is unsatisfactory.

Congestion at Sainsbury Roundabout and A14 Junction 44

You refer to previous responses to my attempts to address congestion from Moreton Hall through to the Southgate roundabout. These responses referred to such measures as UTMC, MOVA, changing travel habits and so on. However, the only tangible mitigation is the proposed road from Rougham Hill to Sicklesmere Road that officers claim will divert 40% of vehicles that currently queue to merge from dual to single carriageway. A separate claim is that 36% will be diverted. Even if these estimates prove reliable, the proposed road is part of the SE Bury Strategic Site development and will not be delivered in the near future. The following extract in a letter from the Principle Transport Planner at SCC, dated 5/10/18, confirms this;

As discussed at our meeting, Suffolk County Council is working closely with Highways England to address capacity issues at Junction 44 through the Road Investment Strategy 2, and the County Council has also made a bid to the Housing Infrastructure Fund to provide additional capacity on the A14 slips and under the A14 bridge.

The County Council has also been working with West Suffolk councils to deliver improvements to Rougham Hill, through the delivery of a new relief road on Sicklesmere Road that will link from the Rougham Hill Roundabout to the A134. Traffic modelling from the Abbots Vale Transport Assessment shows that this will provide a separate route for 36% of traffic travelling to Sudbury. The road is connected to the Abbots Vale development and discussions are ongoing to agree the s106. The trigger point for the road to be completed is on the development of 500 houses. As mentioned in the previous letter to you, capacity improvements are required to Rougham Hill to help reduce congestion on Bedingfeld Way.

Increasing capacity on the A14 slips and under the A14 bridge will not address the bottleneck at Rougham Hill. In the meantime, the current congestion issues continue to blight Moreton Hall residents and users of the local commercial and retail outlets.

Regarding, "Suffolk County Council working closely with Highways England to address capacity issues at Junction 44..." this complaint was an opportunity for "others who have commented previously" to update me on progress rather than being dismissed with nothing added.

Pages 7 and 8 of my complaint refer to several documents used during the St Edmundsbury Vision 2031 process that throw doubt on the modelling procedures

used by Highways when agreeing to the level of housing and commercial development. I do not consider these have been addressed by previous responses.

Summary

My complaint that Suffolk County Council failed to address highways matters affecting Moreton Hall has not been resolved. Where there is agreement, there is no funding to action.

Your response refers to others who have commented previously. One of the previous comments was a joint letter from SCC and West Suffolk Council, dated 14/9/2018, that included a statement from the Vision Bury 2031, Planning Inspector's report, paragraph 13.15;

"Taking all these factors and the **recommended changes** into account, I conclude that the strategy for Bury St Edmunds, including the strategic growth locations, is soundly based and deliverable."

I maintain that the **recommended changes** have not been delivered and that my challenge to claims made in highlighted documents have not been addressed.

Suffolk County Council should not be under any misapprehension that this complaint is limited to the concerns of one county councillor. A very large residential community are equally frustrated by development outstripping mitigation measures and an apparent reluctance to revisit decisions.

If, as seems the case, that progress is unlikely, I request this complaint be escalated to Stage Two.

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