



Councillor Call for Action Request Form

This form should be used by any Councillor who would like the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider a Councillor Call for Action in their ward.

Councillor: Trevor Beckwith

The Ward you represent: Moreton Hall, Bury St Edmunds.

Title of your Councillor Call for Action:

Impact of the Eastern Relief Road (ERR) and A14 Junction 45 (J45) on the Moreton Hall Residential Area

Date of Submission:

7 April 2021

Please give a brief synopsis of the main areas of concern, including any community groups affected by the CCfA

Since the opening of the ERR and improved J45 in September 2017, HGV traffic in residential areas, notably Orttewell Road, Bedingfeld Way and Skyliner Way has increased to an unacceptable level with serious negative impact on residential amenity through noise, vibration and pollution, frequently from 05.30 onwards and throughout the day.

Evidence Section

Which organisations have you contacted in trying to resolve this issue (please attached relevant documentation)

Note: Employment land served by the Eastern Relief Road is divided between Suffolk Park and Suffolk Business Park. For ease, I refer to the area as "Suffolk Park".

Note: Reference is made to a complaint against Suffolk County Council. The complaint includes issues regarding congestion at access points on the estate but do **not** form part of this CCfA.

Frequent contact with Suffolk County Council (SCC) Highways officers and cabinet members and a 2018 meeting with Highways officer and West Suffolk Council planning officer. A post-meeting letter from SCC, dated 5 October 2018 (**Appendix 2**), is attached. The letter attempts to deal with HGV concerns by stating that Orttewell Road has sufficient road space and that pedestrians have footpaths providing safe passage around the area. That is not disputed but footpaths do not address noise, pollution and vibration from HGV's. The letter raises concern that weight restrictions could cause HGV's to use more unsuitable roads. This is an obvious risk but confirms the need for the matter to be dealt with comprehensively throughout the Moreton Hall area. The letter claims that HGV traffic at that time had reduced significantly following the opening of the ERR. This is disputed but even if accurate, does not address the current situation.

June 2020; Formal complaint against SCC (**Appendix 3 and 4**) are attached. The complaint referred to residential streets with the emphasis on Orttewell Road. The level of HGV disturbance on Bedingfeld Way has increased significantly more recently as Suffolk Park expands.

January 2021; SCC final response to complaint (**Appendix 5**).

February 2021; Referral to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).

March 2021; I contacted Highways England (responsible for the A14 trunk road) regarding installing directional signs on the A14. They agree to investigate, subject to the signs being funded. I await an estimate of costs.

What responses have been received from those organisations, and how do those responses demonstrate that the matter is not being progressed? In particular, have the organisations been given sufficient time to progress the issue (please attach relevant documentation)

The meeting with highways and planning officers took place in 2018. Briefly, the response stated that affected dwellings are bordering roads categorized as suitable for all traffic.

The formal complaint response concluded that while SCC did not question the impact of HGVs and other traffic congestion in the Moreton Hall area, they are satisfied that Bury St Edmunds Transport Strategy and Suffolk's Local Transport Plan 2011-31 addresses it. They disagree that there are other interventions the council should be undertaking and the solutions put forward are not achievable given current budget constraints.

Reference to the two documents quoted gives no confidence that any of their vague indications will be achieved even in the medium to long term. The LTP is half-life expired but nothing additional to benefit Moreton Hall has come forward.

The single positive outcome from the complaint was agreement that Moreton Hall is not a "mixed" estate and that the commercial and retail areas to the south are distinctly divided from residential areas in the north.

The LGSCO declined to investigate because I, as a resident, am not sufficiently affected (a councillor cannot complain about their council and I was treated as an individual resident).

Has the Committee considered a similar issue recently – if yes, please evidence how the circumstances or evidence have changed

No

Is this a case that is being or should be pursued via the Council's corporate complaints procedure?

No

Is it relating to a "quasi-judicial" matter or decision such as planning or licensing?

No

Is there a similar or related issue which is the subject of a review on the current work programme?

No

Is this an issue currently being looked at by another form of local scrutiny, eg Suffolk County Council?

No. The option of SCC scrutiny was considered but despite the complaint being submitted in June 2020, time ran out because of the delayed final response from SCC, received on 5 January 2021, seven months after submission (they apologized), followed by the LGSCO process. The county council entered pre-election purdah on 25 March. I lost my SCC seat in the election.

As with all scrutiny, does the matter referred have the potential for scrutiny to produce recommendations which could realistically be implemented and lead to improvements for anyone living or working in the referring member's ward? Please provide details.

Yes. It's important to note that the community (Moreton Hall Residents' Association, individual residents and myself) accepted the creation of the ERR to facilitate expanding the employment land at SP. However, HGV's (legally) transiting through streets bordered by residential properties is having a serious adverse impact on residential amenity with regular early morning disturbance affecting sleep and continuing disturbance throughout the remainder of the day.

The adverse effects of HGV's on Orttewell Road also affects this primary walking route to Sebert Wood CP School, the adjacent equipped play area and sports field, pedestrian access to the community facilities, including GP surgery, pharmacy, community centre, convenience store and much more. Secondary impact includes damage to grass verges and to the roundabout at the junction of Symonds Road.

The noise from HGV's on Bedingfeld Way is exacerbated by the mini roundabout at the junction of Easlea Road. The centre of the roundabout is a raised dome, designed to be over-run by large vehicles. An ill-conceived design feature that was certain to create unnecessary noise, for example, from vehicles accessing the Greene King bottling plant at Kempson Way, with thousands of transported bottles, bumping over the roundabout. The addition of SP traffic has generated additional unacceptable disturbance.

It is also important to note that SP development to date is predominantly massive warehousing and distribution, all dependent of large vehicles with some 24/7 operations. The largest warehouse, operated by Weert, is proposed to employ 600 people in three shifts.

Contact between one directly-affected resident and businesses using roads through residential areas as a shortcut has been met with sympathy and understanding.

In their final response to my complaint, SCC do not question the impact of HGV's. However, as a statutory consultee on planning applications, it is reasonable to expect the consequences of a massive new business park, served by a brand-new road and restructured junction of the A14, to have been anticipated. It is also reasonable to expect deliverable and funded, mitigation measures being in place to prevent unwanted consequences for the residential population. Instead, following a £4.8m overspend on the ERR, SCC are unable to offer any hope for residents other than reference to Suffolk's Local Transport Plan and the Bury St Edmunds Transport Strategy that have negligible reference to HGV's, stating;

The A14 provides several points of access to Bury St Edmunds. There are four junctions, from J42 to J45. The impacts on these junctions are required to be considered by the significant development sites and have also been identified as key areas for improvement in the Suffolk Chamber of

Commerce A14 Initiative. The County work closely with Highways England to consider the impact of all the significant development sites in Bury St Edmunds. The Eastern Relief Road will provide on and off slip road improvements to J45.

The results of SCC "close work with Highways England" should be of interest as the emphasis in the SCC documents concentrates on how to reduce car use.

Much of the £4.8m overspend on the ERR was to satisfy Highways England requirements regarding improvements to the subsequently underused J45.

Solution

If Orttewell Road was weight restricted, HGV's leaving Suffolk Park at J45 and heading north or north east would stay on the A14 (westbound) and exit at J43 (British Sugar), then onto the A134 to Thetford or A143, Compiegne Way, towards Diss. Similarly, all HGV traffic heading to Suffolk Park from the west would continue on the A14 past J44 and exit at J45 (**Appendix 6 – Map**).

Although a longer route, restricting HGV's to A-class roads would avoid the congestion caused by single-way working at the Orttewell Road rail bridge, introduced by SCC to prevent HGV's striking the bridge.

Bedingfeld Way is slightly less straightforward as HGV's have always used it to access the Retail Park and must continue to do so. That level of movement was acceptable to the community but, importantly, as the Retail Park was completed many years ago, the need for increased HGV movement cannot be justified. The increase can only be attributed to the opening of the ERR and Suffolk Park. The SCC cabinet member for Highways has stated, via email, that SCC would expect HGV's from the west to use the congested J44 (Sainsburys) as the shortest route to Suffolk Park. It is shorter but is not as straightforward as staying on the A14 to J45. In normal times, J44 is heavily congested, a fact acknowledged by Highways England and SCC. There is no justified reason why Bedingfeld Way cannot be returned to pre ERR/Suffolk Park levels of HGV traffic.

Following my request to Highways England to consider signs pre J45 westbound and pre J44 eastbound, they responded as follows;

I will get in touch with our Third Party Works team and ask for a rough estimate of the total cost for 2 signs similar to the one below but which state "For Suffolk Business Park use Junction 45."



If HGV traffic leaving Suffolk Park was similarly signposted to J45 from within the site, levels in residential areas would be improved. Many in the residential community want to know why J45 was upgraded at huge expense to facilitate access for heavy vehicles when SCC are content for any route to be used.

The Suffolk Park website states (note: the ERR is now called Rougham Tower Avenue);

Suffolk Park is strategically located adjacent to Bury St Edmunds' established primary out-of-town commercial, retail and trade location. It is situated between the A14 dual carriageway and the new Rougham Tower Avenue which provides direct access to the A14 at junction 45, just 1.4 miles to the east. The A14 provides the main arterial route for the region, linking the Port of Felixstowe in the east with Cambridge, the M11 and the wider motorway network in the west.

These measures would also reduce HGV traffic on Skyliner Way that is restricted in width throughout its length because of on-street parking from adjacent business premises.

It is accepted that some HGV's need access but must be limited as follows;

On Bedingfeld Way; servicing of Retail Park premises (Sainsburys) and Easlea Road (Homebase, Currys, FDS, Dunelm Mill car dealerships etc.).

On Orttewell Road; servicing of Lawson Place businesses (Tesco Express, Moreton Hall PH etc.).

Kempson Way; Servicing of edge of retail park businesses (Greene King bottling plant, car dealership etc.) but the ERR could be the preferred route.

Consultation leaflets were delivered to residents adjacent to the affected streets with over 90% of residents affected by HGV traffic supporting better management, leading to reduced levels.

So, the community confirm there is a problem, the residents' association know there is a problem, the former county councillor knows there is a problem, SP businesses know there is a problem and SCC know there is a problem. Hopefully, independent scrutiny will encourage SCC to deal with the problem.

Is the CCfA currently the subject of legal action by any party (to your knowledge) or is being examined by a formal complaints' process?

No

Are there any deadlines associated with the CCfA of which the Overview and Scrutiny Committee needs to be aware:

No

Please complete and return the form to either:

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