

Response from Communities Against Sprawl and Exploitation (7 Feb 2018)

Subject: ERR [Eastern Relief Road] Removal

I write on behalf of CAUSE to express total opposition and outrage at the way in which this ERR scheme has been forced upon the electorate despite no justification, no impact analysis and in the face of overwhelming opposition in the consultation process.

As you know I represent over 200 households in this area.

At a meeting 11 months ago at the Football Club organised by the Tiddington Village Residents Association, the Leader of Warwickshire County Council, stated unequivocally that an Eastern Relief Road was not part of any plan being considered by the County Council. Despite this assurance, the scheme has been retained.

Please advise me why this is so. Please please reconsider.

Thankyou

Janie Swaby
Chair of CAUSE

ALVESTON VILLAGERS' ASSOCIATION

(Founded 2003)

Chris Fox
Chair 1
Church Close
Alveston
STRATFORD UPON AVON
CV37 7QG
Tel: 01789 204646
chris.alvestonvillage@gmail.com

Jane Dodge
Secretary
1 Ferry Bank, Ferry Lane
Alveston
STRATFORD UPON AVON
CV37 7QX
Tel: 01789 261033
jane@janedodge.co.uk

16th February 2018

Councillor Izzi Seccombe
Leader
Warwickshire County Council
Shire Hall
Warwick
Warwickshire CV34 4RL

Dear Councillor Seccombe

Transport Strategy for Stratford

As the body elected to represent the interests of those living in and around Alveston, we are writing to express our dismay at the Transport Strategy for Stratford. Whilst there are many aspects of the report which we find disappointing, this letter focuses on one issue only, the proposed Eastern Relief Road (ERR) for which there appears to be no clearly defined purpose nor justification.

Many within the village have a professional background and are used to developing strategies of one form or another. They are familiar with the analysis and detailed testing of options required to ensure that an optimal outcome is delivered. Unfortunately, we cannot discern any evidence of such rigour and analysis in the work undertaken for this strategy; it remains devoid of any useful information which explains why the strategy has been selected and what it will achieve. There are many shortcomings in the report published by the two Councils but in order not to confuse the many overlapping threads, we have tried to structure our arguments under three headings: Technical; Professional; and Political. Each is discussed below.

Technical

Our understanding is that a transport strategy is no different to any other type of strategy in that it needs to set out clearly and in some detail:

- The outcome it is designed to deliver;
- The reason why a course of action is deemed optimal; and
- How, in practical terms, such a course can actually be delivered.

Unfortunately, the strategy fails to address any of these points satisfactorily, and in the case of the ERR, actually presents more compelling arguments against its inclusion. Taking each point in turn:

Outcome designed to be delivered by the ERR

The only argument alluded to in your strategy for possibly including an ERR is that it 'may' allow some measures to be introduced which reduce the volume of HGV's on Clopton Bridge. This is a very narrow and limiting objective – surely such a huge scheme with so many adverse impacts and massive price tag must be designed to do more than that?! The justification seems even more obtuse given the acknowledgement within the document that the scheme is not required to accommodate development within the Core Strategy.

Reasons why the ERR is deemed optimal

The reason given in the document to include the ERR is therefore on the basis of a very modest ambition, but the document then gives absolutely no information on its impacts! At the very least one would expect to see a table of impacts describing in some detail:

- The outcomes it would achieve (e.g. substantial traffic reduction in the town centre and on the bridges etc.);
- The adverse impacts it would impose (eg loss of countryside, noise, visual intrusion, additional induced traffic etc);
- Any associated risks (eg encouragement of unwanted, unplanned, development); and
- Any opportunities (eg supporting planned development).

The document has absolutely none of this information - how can that be the basis to make such a profound decision which will affect, for all time, the very nature of this unique and historic town? To omit such vital information is unfair both to the two Councils and the electorate who rely on those responsible to provide objective and well-researched data as the basis for making critical decisions.

How the ERR can be practically delivered

Our final technical test of a strategy relates to delivery. In the draft strategy the document confidently stated that developers would pay for this new road. Whilst developers would undoubtedly be willing to pay for something, there would be a price tag. Nobody is in any doubt that this would be development within the line of the proposed new route. We understand from both Councils' point of view why this would be a convenient solution - it would capture the necessary funding and probably avoid complications relating to the compulsory purchase of land as well. Given that such a scenario is planned, however, would it not have been more transparent to state that massive new housing and industrial development in south east Stratford was part of the delivery solution? Discussion within the consultation response document makes it very clear that the modelling analysis used to justify this scheme was undertaken on exactly that basis, with associated major housing and industrial development. How could such important and relevant facts be omitted from the strategy document? Is that a fair way to treat the electorate who expect their Members and Officers at all times to act in their best interests?

If such development were to take place it would generate approximately 20,000 additional trips per day on the existing road network around Stratford - where is the analysis to show these impacts?

Whilst the revised 'Final' strategy states that following consultation other sources of finance would now be considered, unfortunately, no details of such alternatives are actually provided. Our suspicion remains, therefore, that developer contributions linked to massive development remains the most likely, perhaps only, delivery strategy. **We trust that no discussions have yet taken place between any member of your team and developers on this basis and would request your confirmation of this.**

Finally, the strategy now declines to say exactly what the line of any proposed route would be. This means that the Councils, should they ratify ERR as part of their strategy, will be adopting a scheme for which there is no line, no clear objectives, no demonstration of impacts and risks and no demonstration of benefit - does this make any sense?

Professional

As demonstrated above, the technical case for an ERR is non-existent, certainly from the information provided in the strategy report. From a professional perspective as well, we believe that there have been, and continue to be, major failings which discriminate against the interests of the local communities. These relate primarily to:

- The lack of relevant information;
- The attempts to 'hide' the ERR (both in the strategy and the consultation process); and
- The continuing involvement by the Councils' team of an advisor who has a clear conflict of interest.

The lack of relevant information

This has already been discussed so will not be repeated here except to emphasise that from a professional point of view, the strategy document should have been designed to make all information relevant to the decision-making process as accessible and explicit as possible to those reading the document.

Ploys such as directing readers to supporting information in other documents were particularly unhelpful, especially when those documents contained between 500 and 1000 pages of text! One might almost think that there was a deliberate attempt to deter readers from becoming too interested or discovering relevant information.

Attempts to "hide" the ERR

Throughout this whole process, there has been a wholly unprofessional approach designed to make the ERR as difficult to challenge as possible. Apart from no information being provided on either its purpose or its impacts, every opportunity has been taken to make the scheme as 'invisible' as possible. Two examples illustrate this;

- First, the consultation did not allow people to disentangle the merits or otherwise of an ERR from other aspects of the strategy. Instead, people were asked if removing HGV's from Clopton Bridge was a good idea and the ERR was only mentioned in passing as a pre-condition to achieving this! This is a highly unprofessional and misleading way in which to capture people's views by denying them the opportunity to comment directly on one of the strategy's most controversial elements and, instead, aligning it with something where widespread support could almost be guaranteed; and
- Second, the inclusion of an ERR is not formally stated in the Final Strategy - instead it is stated in the consultation response report which most people won't bother reading. This alone makes the whole process extremely questionable and unprofessional when the electorate isn't even told within the Strategy document itself what is included within the strategy!! Why has the scheme not been formally included within the relevant document - is this another attempt to make it 'invisible' until it is too late?

Political

Politicians have a difficult role making decisions in which, inevitably, there will often be clear winners and losers. Their job is made easier, however, by having relevant information and high quality advice on which to make these critical decisions. Similarly, the electorate finds it easier to understand the decisions made if they are also provided with good information and can trust the integrity of the processes which resulted in those decisions. As discussed above, however, the current study has fallen a long way short of the professionalism which is to be expected, and hence there is now widespread mistrust over the integrity of the processes.

A few weeks after the launch of the consultation, it appeared that many of the concerns of those living south of the river had been listened to and acknowledged. At a meeting in Stratford Football Club, Knights Lane (27th February 2017), Cllr Seccombe told those assembled that the ERR had never been a part of the County's thinking and that there was absolutely no likelihood of it being so in the near to middle future. Many left that meeting thankful for the Council Leader's intervention. Undoubtedly, the scale and strength of adverse consultation response was also influenced by these welcome comments. For those who attended the meeting it therefore came as a shock some 10 months later to find that the ERR scheme was still included in the strategy. In fact, the only change made was that the two Councils now declined to give any indication of the corridor within which the scheme would actually be contained. Whether this was a case of "right hand/left hand", since some personnel had changed in the interim, or simply a change of heart we do not know. **However, we would certainly welcome an explanation of how it could happen that we were told by the Council Leader responsible for roads that the scheme would definitely not go ahead, only to find that it is still firmly proposed within the Strategy and about to be ratified by the two Councils.**

On a final point which has political implications, it should be remembered that the massive new development which would inevitably result from the ERR is exactly the same development overwhelmingly rejected by voters in 2014 as part of the Strategic Housing Allocations referendum. It would be an affront to democracy and the electorate if this new road opened the area for exactly that same development which was previously rejected in a popular vote.

Conclusions

In the foregoing text we have set out the range of Technical, Professional and Political issues which we believe invalidates inclusion of the ERR within the Stratford Transport Strategy. This is a scheme which has no defined outcome which it is trying to achieve; has no defined line, standards or junction arrangements; has no description of impacts which will afflict local communities; and has no discussion of the risks which it will create, risks which in traffic terms could overwhelm Stratford and make the remaining parts of the strategy irrelevant. The scheme is not even required to accommodate the current Core Strategy and, if constructed, massive and unnecessary development would inevitably follow. Such development would completely undermine the referendum of development preferences as expressed by the electorate in 2014. Despite all this, the ERR apparently remains integral to the Council's Transport Strategy.

We request that the Council takes one of two actions:

- Remove the ERR from the Strategy with immediate effect; or
- Delay ratification of the document until the issues discussed above have been satisfactorily resolved.

In the meantime, we will continue to oppose an ERR by all means possible until a rigorous technical assessment has been concluded which defines clear outcomes and objectives, considers alternative options and includes a detailed impact and risk analysis.

Yours sincerely



Chris Fox
CHAIR

Response from Stratford-upon-Avon Town Transport Group (4 March 2018)

I am writing on behalf of the Stratford upon Avon Town Transport Group to convey our views on the current version of the Stratford Transport Strategy, which we understand will be discussed at your forthcoming Cabinet and Council meetings. We hope that you will be prepared to modify the document to take account of our comments.

The first matter is its description as a “strategy”, which we believe oversells the content; in some parts it is very general and doesn’t add to what has already been set out elsewhere. It is in our view more of a loose “framework” which simply lists the possible component parts of a strategy without assessing their impacts or their inter-relationship.

The issue could be resolved if the Councils were to make a commitment to an Implementation Plan or Plans, identifying in more detail specific costed proposals for various modes, with funding sources, their impacts, and a timescale for delivery. In some cases, these Plans should spell out alternatives for public consultation (e.g. Park and Ride sites, options for new river crossing capacity for pedestrians and cyclists).

With that qualification, we are broadly supportive of many elements of the “strategy”, but we have a major difficulty with the proposed South Western Relief Road (SWRR) and the possible Eastern Relief Road (ERR). In the case of the SWRR we have no argument with the District Council’s inclusion of a possible corridor in the Core Strategy, which was considered by an independent Inspector to be “sound”. However, the Highway Authority (WCC) has a duty to consider the costs and benefits of alternatives before the Core Strategy proposal is taken forward. It is clear from the limited traffic data available that the proposed road is primarily intended for the relief of the town centre. Although we acknowledge that it serves the proposed Long Marston Airfield (LMA) development as well, the available traffic figures suggest that most of the new traffic (which we believe would amount to about 20,000 vehicles per day) will load onto the existing network. It therefore cannot be left to the developer to identify a route for such a significant element of the network; unlike the Highway Authority it has no power to determine any line other than by agreement with the relevant landowners. We also understand that the developer of LMA is currently proposing to fund the entire cost of the road, and whilst WCC may be tempted to accept this offer, it amounts to the sale of a planning permission for

the proposed LMA development. We believe this to be unlawful and is therefore challengeable in law. It is a well-established rule that any contribution by a developer towards infrastructure should be proportionate to the benefits gained, and this should not be undermined because of the Councils' financial difficulties.

In the case of a possible ERR we are very concerned that no information is provided on where it will go, what outcomes it will deliver or what impacts it will have. Since the Councils also concede that it is not required to deliver the Core Strategy it should not be included in the transport strategy at this stage, even to protect the possibility that there might be a need at a later date. The appropriate time to consider options for the ERR would be when the Core Strategy is reviewed, especially if the Councils wish to fund it by promoting substantial new development, as appears to be the case. To float an ERR now will simply risk unnecessary speculative development pressure in this area, which was firmly rejected through a public referendum in 2014 on Strategic Housing Allocations.

Any comments or queries to:

Chairman: John Deegan jledeegan@btinternet.com 07788-973355

and

Secretary: Elizabeth Dixon med2swan@gmail.com 07850-715782

Yours sincerely,

M. Elizabeth Dixon

Secretary to the TTG

Note: Stratford upon Avon Town Transport Group meets monthly to discuss all elements of transport that appear relevant to the town. We represent views from a broad range of stakeholders within the town and as far as possible try to build consensus rather than add to the disagreement over transport matters which traditionally has plagued progress here.

Response from Tiddington Village Residents' Association (8 March 2018)

Stratford-on-Avon Transport Strategy

Dear Councillors,

Tiddington Village Residents' Association are the elected representatives of Tiddington village. We have considered the proposed Transport Strategy for Stratford and support many of the aspirations set out in the document. However we are writing with regard the specific proposal for an Eastern Relief Road.

We are aware that Alveston Villagers' Association have already written to you, at length, to point out the particular concerns posed by this proposal. We echo their concerns and wished to lodge our own, formal objection prior to Cabinet's consideration of this document on 12 March.

While the document states many laudable outcomes, it is difficult to see how an ERR will deliver the necessary solutions. This is, in part, because no detail about the proposed relief road is provided. No information is provided about how the potential negative or positive impacts of this proposal have been considered, assessed or measured. No modelling is provided to demonstrate how the ERR will deliver its supposed benefits. There is no consideration as to how the additional housing needed to fund the ERR will subsequently detract from, and/or negate, its supposed effectiveness.

Given that there a number of interim measures being proposed to relieve traffic within Stratford (e.g. improvements to the Clopton Bridge roundabout) it seems absurd to consider such a major development without a full scoping exercise and before a thorough evaluation of the other measures' effectiveness.

We request that:

1. reference to any ERR is removed at this early stage;
2. further evaluation is done of the effectiveness of any interim measures;
3. all options for larger scale solutions, if required, are fully scoped, modelled, mapped, impact assessed and costed; and
4. options are publicly consulted on.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Grubb
Chair of TVRA