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WDC PLANNING
Ref
Officer
24 JUL 2012
SCANNED
CC CR PD MA
PRE GEN DIS

WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL

OBJECTION TO LOCAL PLAN

(particularly Locations 2 and 3 on the Banbury Road)

SUMMARY

- 1. The improvement of air quality in Warwick town centre must be tackled before any new housing is constructed.**
- 2. The District Council is adopting a contradictory approach to traffic management; on the one hand it is supporting reduction of traffic in Warwick town centre as a means of improving air quality, yet on the other it is proposing a huge increase in housing which would exacerbate this problem. The District Council MUST clarify its position.**
- 3. The current proposals will require a significant change to the trunk highway infrastructure south of Warwick, but there is no plan as to how this might be achieved.**
- 4. Trunk highway improvements need to be provided before, and as part of the housing construction programme, not afterwards.**
- 5. It is recommended that a 30m wide shelter belt be planted along the eastern edge of Banbury Road in order to maintain the green approach to the town.**
- 6. It is essential that an independent report is commissioned as to the fatigue life and working life of the Castle Bridge; the report to include any precautionary measures which might be necessary to prolong its life such as reducing the maximum permitted weight.**
- 7. It is recommended that consideration be given to a "Warwick Underpass" ie a N-S tunnel to divert a significant proportion of through traffic.**

Local Transport Infrastructure

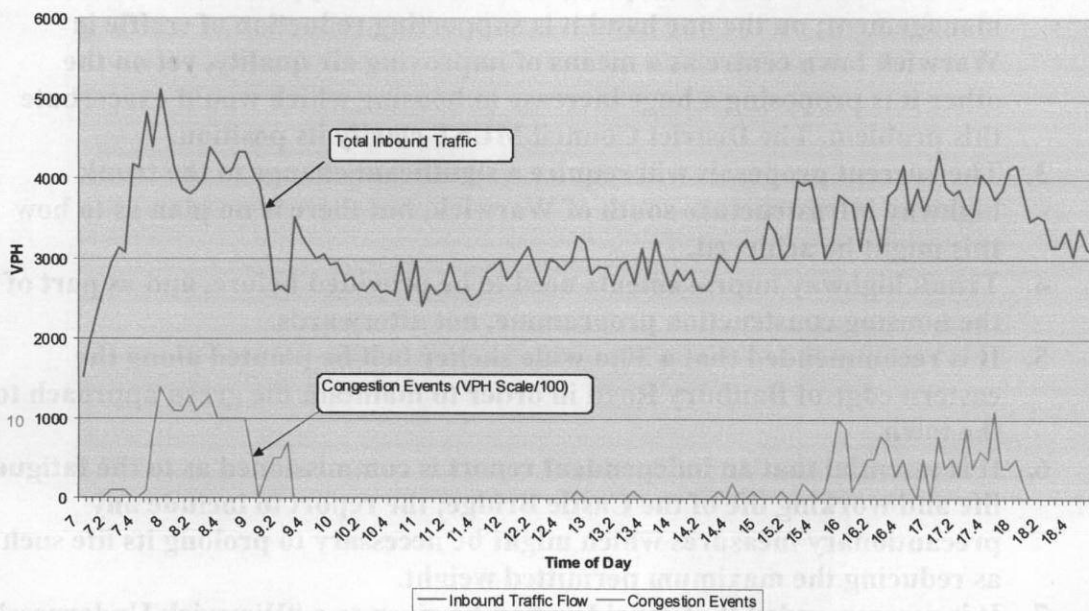
The Underlying Traffic Congestion problem (Policies PO9, PO10, PO11, PO13)

Many of the following comments which I made in June 2011 have not been taken up by the District Council but are still relevant.

The existing highway infrastructure is demonstrably inadequate to deal even with current traffic loads. The current situation has been allowed to arise by over a century of inadequate forward planning by the Local Authorities. The 1880 Ordnance Survey Map shows Warwick and Leamington as two well separated communities, with North-South traffic served by two bridges across the river/canal system separated by a distance of about 2 miles. In the intervening 130 years, with the huge growth not only of housing, industry and especially the use of motor vehicles, the Highway Authority has constructed only one new bridge in Princes Drive, and even this does not provide a clear and complete north-south route between the towns. In parallel, the District Council has allowed every last opportunity for a north-south through road to be frustrated by yet more piecemeal housing development which itself compounds Warwick's traffic congestion problem.

The result can be experienced in Warwick with peak traffic loads causing major congestion twice a day on every working day, and ensuring that air quality, as measured by the District Council falls below acceptable standards on many of our streets. This adversely affects the sustainability of the local economy, and of the historic environment. The May 2006 traffic count undertaken by the Warwickshire County Council (WCC) as Highway Authority showed (see below) that congestion occurs with traffic loads exceeding about 3600 vehicles per hour (vph), and this occurs for about 3 hours every working day.

Traffic Flow and Congestion May 2006



The WCC's measurements have shown that over 70% of Warwick's traffic burden is "through" traffic, a problem most certainly caused by the failure to provide an adequate highway infrastructure in the past.

The Immediate Requirement (Policies PO9, PO10, PO11, PO13))

In 2008 The WCC established a Joint Study Group, of which I am a member, under the auspices of the Traffic Forum to evaluate the options for traffic reduction. No firm target has yet been set, but early indications are that a reduction of between 15% and 30% is necessary in order to achieve the Forum's objectives, including the restoration of air quality to acceptable levels. The displaced traffic would have to be accommodated by alternative routes, by changes times of travel, by modal shift or even by "evaporation".

This **MUST** be resolved before any new housing development proceeds, and in particular the proposed developments which affect the Banbury Road.

The Contradictory Approach by the District Council (All Policies)

Both the Highway Authority and the District Council are members of the Warwick Traffic Forum and therefore committed through the Forum Objectives 1 and 5 to reduce pollution and to reduce traffic volumes. Yet the same District Council is now proposing a massive increase in housing immediately to the south of the town on the Banbury Road itself, which will inevitably cause increased traffic demand on an already beleaguered town.

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE CONTRADICTION IN THE DISTRICT COUNCIL'S POLICY OF SUPPORTING A REDUCTION IN TRAFFIC IN THE TOWN CENTRE ON THE ONE HAND YET PROPOSING AN INCREASE OF TRAFFIC ON THE OTHER IS BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE INSPECTOR.

Too Little, Too Late (Policy PO14)

The Local Plan suggests that improvements to roads and public transport will come only from the new developments; ie after the existing problems have been allowed to become significantly worse. The funds arising from such developments (S 106 Agreements) are in any case unlikely to be sufficient to fund the extensive increases in highway infrastructure which would be required. The Chase Meadow development of 1200 houses, for example has yielded only about £3.3M.

The Castle Bridge (Policy PO11, PO17)

The present single span bridge on the Banbury Road was opened in 1793, and was designed to support its own weight and that of the contemporary traffic. Fortuitously it is strong enough to carry the much greater present day loads, accounting for some 33% of the peak hour traffic and so tends to be taken for granted. It is also used illegally by significant volumes of overweight vehicles.

In recent years there has been concern in professional circles over the working life of masonry arch bridges, and much work has been undertaken by the University of the West of England. The Castle Bridge is not just a vital north-south link, it is a huge tourist attraction giving unique views of the Castle and the Avon and is a major part of our local heritage.

IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT THE DISTRICT COUNCIL OBTAINS AN INDEPENDENT PROFESSIONAL OPINION ON THE FATIGUE LIFE AND WORKING LIFE OF THE CASTLE BRIDGE WITH RECOMMENDATIONS AS TO ITS FUTURE CONSERVATION.

The Garden City Approach (Policies PO10, PO15 PO16)

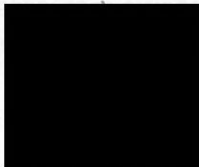
The guidelines for garden cities laid down by Ebenezer Howard nearly 100 years ago affect not just the layout and amenities of the town centre itself, but also insist on wide and green approaches to the town. If housing is to be built along the Banbury Road, then it is essential that a 30m wide shelter belt is planted along the eastern side of the road in order to preserve the "green" approach to the town.

A possible alternative (Policy PO14)

The fundamental problem about alternative routes is that of the north-south crossing of the river canal system for which no obvious alternatives exist. Trial journeys by the author suggest that without such an alternative, Warwick town centre, and in particular the Castle Bridge will always be the route of choice, however congested, since it is half the distance and takes half the time of the alternatives. The strategy therefore must surely be to reverse this situation and to ensure that Warwick town centre is no longer the route of choice for through traffic.

A possible alternative would be to build a 3km tunnel between Europa Way and Guys Cliffe to take all the new and existing N-S through traffic. While this may seem radical in Warwickshire, it is quite a normal process in Portugal (Madiera) and in Spain (Canary Islands), which use EU funds to build new trunk roads through geologically and topographically far more demanding terrain.

In the absence of any viable alternative IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE CONSRUCTION OF A "WARWICK UNDERPASS" BE SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED, USING EU FUNDING.



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Cc The Warwick Society