



HOUSE OF COMMONS

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Highways, Transportation & Waste
Kent County Council
1St Floor, Invicta House
County Hall
Maidstone, ME14 1XX

Reference No. HW32856

15 October 2020

Dear Victoria

Re: Blue Bell Hill consultation response

I'm writing to respond to the A229 Blue Bell Hill Junction Improvement Scheme public consultation.

Please accept this letter as my response to the consultation.

The junction is not within my constituency, however securing improvements to this junction is important for many of my constituents – particularly in Walderslade and Lordswood – which is why I'm making this submission.

Any changes to this junction are also likely to impact traffic flow on the A229 towards the M20 Junction 6, which is in my constituency.

I welcome the work done by Kent County Council to look at ways of improving the Blue Bell Hill junction. This is a well-known local bottleneck and traffic blackspot, so an upgrade is badly needed.

I understand Kent County Council has produced three specific plans for how this junction could be improved, with a view to putting a proposal and bid for funding to the Department for Transport later this year. I'm happy to help secure funding for an improvement scheme that has local approval.

I urge Kent County Council to work with local groups, including Boxley Parish Council based in my constituency, in deciding which option to pursue. It maybe that none of the existing proposals are adequate following consultation, and I urge Kent County Council to keep all options open in respect to how this junction can be improved.

Any improvement scheme needs to improve the flow of traffic in all directions at this junction. This includes making it easier for people in Walderslade and Lordswood to join the M2 in both directions and to cross from one side of the motorway to the other with ease.

Proper consideration should also be given to traffic flows coming from the south in Maidstone on the A229. Improving access from the A229 onto the M2 in both London bound and coast bound directions should be a priority.

Kent County Council should recognise that this junction is used by hundreds of people every day for local journeys. Any improvement scheme needs to make life

better for local motorists.

The views of people who live near the junction should be listened to carefully, including residents in Walderslade and Lordswood. I would expect to see consultation responses broken down by area, and an assessment of the impact on local air quality, noise levels, and traffic volumes before any proposal is submitted to the Department for Transport.

I know there are particular concerns about encroachment into the North Downs AONB as part of any improvement scheme. This needs to be properly assessed and mitigation measures put in place. People feel extremely strongly about protecting our countryside in Kent, especially AONBs.

Any improvement scheme should also be designed to cope with additional flows of traffic on the A229 as a result of the Lower Thames Crossing. Modelling shows traffic volumes on the A229 will increase by 10 per cent even without the new crossing.

With the new crossing in place, the A229 – as the most direct link between the M20 and the A2 – will essentially become a trunk road. The junctions at either end of this road are already congested at peak times and this can only get worse.

Without appropriate upgrades to the A229 there is a risk that traffic coming from the south and west will use, or be diverted, onto the A226, A227 and A228, which are not suitable. Any improvement scheme needs to be completed before the Lower Thames Crossing opens to avoid creating serious traffic problems.

I urge Kent County Council to find a solution that addresses the needs of local motorists as well as making sure this junction is fit for the future.

If you would like any more information, or if it would be helpful to discuss any of the points in my submission, then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best wishes,
Helen

Helen Whately MP
Member of Parliament for Faversham and Mid Kent