

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [A303 Sparkford to Ilchester](#)  
**Cc:** [Dean Alford](#)  
**Subject:** Fw: A303 Sparkford to Ilchester Dualling Scheme - The Planning Inspectorate Review / Assessment DCO  
Process: SUBMISSION  
**Date:** 08 March 2019 23:56:07  
**Attachments:** [A303 HE Complaint Letter 28-12-17.pdf](#)

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Good Evening Gentlemen,

1. Wrt to the above Project. Kindly find at Attachment: a submission document - prepared by the West Camel Community Steering Group (**not to be 'confused' with the West Camel Parish Council**) for your due consideration please. This representation summarises a wide-range of relevant topics and key "issues" - which your Inquiry Panel Members might find of some assistance with your systemic deliberations towards the **deliverance of a balanced, fair and just decision on behalf of the "principal stakeholders" (viz: the Residents and Community of WEST CAMEL) - who will be most impacted by all outcomes of Highways England's (HE) of this project, as proposed.** Moreover, the arguments which have been previously presented to HE, ongoingly, continue to make a 'powerful' case against the justification of Highways England's Preferred Route (Option 1) choice.

2. I propose to be in attendance at the Public Consultation sessions tbh in May; and would welcome the opportunity to present a 'keener 'insight' - as a long standing resident & member (44 Years) of the community of West Camel - should your Panel (or Officers) require any further "sharp-end" detailed Information. Additional Documentation (e.g. Flooding Photo's and 'Rat-Run' off-route Traffic incursions with Video's etc - can be provided as supportive evidence, if required ?

3. Thank you for your kind attention and consideration.

Regards,

David

JD Green

[REDACTED]  
Tel(H): [REDACTED]

Mob: [REDACTED]

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** kate kirkham [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, 4 January 2018 10:40:17 GMT  
**Subject:** Re: A303 Sparkford to Ilchester Dualling Scheme – Formal Complaint

Dear Resident

Following our public meetings held in West Camel on the 6<sup>th</sup> December and the 15<sup>th</sup> November 2017 the Steering Group finalised the draft of the letter to be sent in to Highways England to initiate the formal complaint process. As requested a copy of that complaint letter is being circulated to local residents to ensure as many people as possible are kept informed about the progress with the complaint. A copy is attached for your information.

The letter was sent to Highways on the 28<sup>th</sup> December and the next steps of the HE complaints process are as follows:

- HE to provide initial response within 15 working days of 28<sup>th</sup> December.
- We may appeal to the Chief Executive of HE if the response is deemed unsatisfactory.
- We can request to involve the Independent Complaints Assessor if the response is still unsatisfactory.
- Finally our MP can involve the Parliamentary Ombudsman if the issues raised have still not been addressed.

For now we will wait to receive Highway's response in mid January before taking a decision on what further action is required to ensure that the challenges to the flawed consultation process are taken on board and reviewed.

More information about Highways England's complaints procedure is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/highways-agency/about/complaints-procedure>.

I hope you find this information useful and please pass on to anyone I have missed.

Kind regards

Kate Kirkham

On behalf of Camels Expressway Steering Group



28/12/17

## Re: A303 Sparkford to Ilchester Dualling Scheme – Formal Complaint

Dear Highways England (HE),

Please accept this letter as a formal complaint into the HE process used to determine the best route for the A303 Expressway between Sparkford and Ilchester. The overall proposed benefits of this scheme are fully supported but we believe the process used to determine the preferred option (Option 1) was flawed. Our rationale for this conclusion is set out below:

- **Cost** – in the HE assessment criteria of the two options (page 105 Scheme Assessment Report (SAR)), it is stated that Option 1 is more expensive than Option 2 by £11m, however, given that MacDonald and HE are still exploring the detail of the chosen option (Option 1) – including the requirement for deep cuttings through unsurveyed land, interchanges (junctions), link roads, bridges, footpaths and bridleways etc – it would seem premature to use these figures in the decision making process due to their uncertain nature.
- **Benefit to Cost Ratio**--it is unclear how HE have arrived at a benefit to cost ratio (BCR) of 1.82 (Option 1) and 1.83 (Option 2). We have received advice from an experienced Quantity Surveyor that suggests that Option 1 is likely to be considerably more expensive with a delta of more than £40M quite probable. Moreover, in relation to the BCR for Option 1 it would appear that the 'potential damage' caused to the region's economic development by long term traffic jams, delayed journey times, and enforced 'rat run' diversions would generate a significantly different figure and negative comparison with Option 2.
- **Disruption to Local Journeys** - HE accept that Option 1 would impact more on existing local journeys as more existing roads and non-motorised user routes would have to be diverted than with Option 2 (page 13 of SAR). This may well lead to significant additional traffic – including HGVs – using West Camel roads as 'rat runs' but these comments are not in part accurately reflected. Para 8.2.32 states "Option 1 would result in an on-balance slight beneficial effect on amenity

whilst option 2 would result in a slight adverse effect". This seems misleading and inaccurate.

- **Land Acquisition** – It is accepted that that Option 2 would require additional land acquisition but this would be limited to just 18.45% more (using HE figures), however we believe that this difference will reduce once the full extent of Option 1 is determined (addition of interchanges / junctions, cuttings, additional relief roads, bridges, footpaths and bridleways etc). We observe that you state that the cost of land acquisition is higher for Option 1 over Option 2 at table 6.2 "Core Scenario" but with no explanation as to why. Could this be that the quality of the land for Option 2 is not as "pristine" as alluded to by the contributors at appendix E? Finally on this point it is considered that the existing land ownership along the A303 by HE was of material relevance and as such should have been declared under a conflict of interest. In this respect this is a clear example whereby the process of consultation can be demonstrated as unfair.
- **Development Opportunity**— We perceive ourselves as a forward thinking community and prepared to recognise the benefits of well planned and organised developments. One aspect completely absent in the consultation documentation is the opportunity and cost benefit thereof that should Option 2 be selected there would be an existing infrastructure to support development along the existing A303 corridor (on land perhaps owned by HE) for both residential and business purposes. It is thought such opportunities should be recognised, in some way, perhaps as a reduction in the costs for building Option 2.
- **Ease of Build** – HE accept that Option 1 would be more difficult to build (page 104 of SAR) because more statutory undertakers' utilities would require diversion. In addition, there would be much more disruption to traffic as there would be no alternative route available and therefore the overall construction period would be longer.
- **Safety & Traffic Interruption** – HE acknowledge that Option 2 has the real advantage of a natural diversion route using the existing A303 during routine maintenance and emergency closures (page 106 of SAR).
- **Biodiversity** – HE accept that both Options are expected to have similar impacts with Option 1 having slightly less impact in the long term on bats (page 105 of SAR). Para 8.2.56 also states "Both Option 1 and Option 2 would result in an overall neutral effect to biodiversity, once mitigation planting has matured".

However document PR111/17 “Preferred Route Announcement” page 9 concludes that Option 1 “is preferred by stakeholders and most of the local community as it has less impact on biodiversity”. This conclusion is not supported by the documents provided by HE.

- **Noise & Vibration** – HE accept that Option 2 would produce greater noise benefit than Option 1 due it being further away from existing villages (page 106 of SAR).
- **Political Lobbying** - Local MP, Mr David Warburton, lobbied strongly in favour of Option 1 without having consulted with those constituents most affected by this option. Please could HE disclose the minutes of any meetings that have occurred with all politicians or any other politician or government official who have lobbied either way and that may have influenced HE’s decision? Equally, at the local consultation meetings in March, at least one planning consultant was present representing the interests of one or more of the significant land owners. Could HE confirm the nature of any lobbying that took place and how such lobbying is made transparent given there is no reference to it under appendix E (organisation responses by letter to consultation)?
- **Consultation criteria** – There has been considerable concern voiced by many local residents in West Camel, Wales, Urgashay and other locations adjacent to the proposed A303 preferred Option 1 route regarding the extent of the HE consultation process in geographical and impact location terms. HE stipulated a 1.5km (1500M) ‘cut-off’ from the existing A303 for inclusion in communications. This has resulted in many surrounding villages along the proposed preferred route not having received any form of official notification and/or documentation. Some local residents, seemingly within the 1500m area refer that consultation documentation was not received. Could HE independently evaluate the perimeter of contact ‘in order to demonstrate that full conformance with their stipulated consultation distance criteria can be validated. Furthermore now that the footprint and scale of the suggested Option 1 build includes new/upgraded roads around Podimore the 1500m swept width should have included these communities. This in itself demonstrates that HE did not consider all options as required by the DCO consultation.
- **Failure to explore all Options** —it appears to be a clear requirement that HE are able to demonstrate to the minister and the inspectorate that they have considered all options. We believe we have demonstrated within this letter of complaint and beyond reasonable doubt that HE failed to include the necessary references to the detailed information material at the first consultation phase. If this logic is accepted then as a consequence the consultees will have been unable

to participate in the option generation therefore removing most of the justification for the consultation in the first place. Simply put, how can HE explore all options with consultees if HE don't provide the information on which they are being consulted about.

- **Flooding Issues** – HE acknowledge that flooding is a real concern to local residents, especially those in West Camel, but it does not feature in the assessment criteria (page 104 of SAR para 11.1) in a comparison of the pros and cons of both options. The only reference made is headed, 'Road Drainage and Water Environment', where you conclude there are "No significant differences between options" - this is not agreed. It is known that the last flood in West Camel in January 2014 was significantly contributed to by surplus water 'run-off' from the existing A303 running down into West Camel village. Doubling or tripling the road surface area adjacent to West Camel and other villages (Option 1) is highly likely to worsen the chances of flooding and by choosing Option 1, significantly more people are likely to be adversely affected.
- **Public Consultation** – HE claim (page 12 of SAR) that the 1237 responses received were primarily from community stakeholders, and that 64% were in favour of Option 1. This was used at the presentation of the preferred route to justify the selection of option 1. However HE's own breakdown of those figures reveals more detail:
  - 49% of the local community (within 1.5km of the scheme) favoured the preferred option
  - 72% of land holders favoured the preferred option.
  - The land holders responses were also included in the 1.5km radius votes.

A poll of 92 residents, attending an A303 Dualling meeting in West Camel on 15th November 2017, found that over 70% were in favour of Option 2. In addition, it is understood that the original consultation contained some responses from people who were not local residents - please could HE confirm what proportion of stakeholders are not directly impacted by the options chosen. Additionally, please could HE confirm whether the survey responses from people with only an interest in the scheme from a tourism and leisure perspective (27% of respondents according to Consultation Report 5.2.25) have been taken into account in forming a decision It is also noted that HE received lobbying letters from a number of organisations who favoured Option 1 e.g. British Horse Society, Campaign for better Transport, Campaign to protect Rural England, the CLA, The Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership, Historic England, National Trust, Natural England, the NFU, Ramblers Association, Somerset Wildlife Trust, South Somerset Bridleways Association and the Woodland Trust. Whilst we accept that these

organisations may have an interest, none are directly affected and so their concerns should be appropriately weighted when compared to those residents whose lives will be directly affected. On page 28 of Report on Public Consultation paragraph 5.1.1 you state quite clearly that, *"The questionnaire responses received were primarily from members of the local communities, with a number of statutory and non-statutory bodies submitting formal reports and letters in place of a questionnaire. The additional reports and letters (referred to above) were combined with free text comments provided via the questionnaires for analysis"*. This, in our view is wrong. Also, and most importantly, the initial consultation process failed to inform that the new road – regardless of which option is chosen – would be an Expressway. Indeed, the term Expressway was conspicuous by its absence in document ref PR103/16 (only a single reference on page 1 with all further references stated as "dual carriageway"). Only after Option 1 had been declared the preferred route was document reference PR155/16 made available even though it had a same year publication date. Given that the public consultation will be two-fold. The first part is supposed to be non-statutory to gather as much feedback as possible from stakeholders, which will feed in to the technical studies. This will lead to a PRA in the middle of 2017. Following the PRA is the statutory consultation period on the preferred route only. Given that nowhere in document PR103/16 is reference made to any online consultation detail document and the requirement to obtain "as much feedback as possible" the process is again demonstrably unfair in omitting any link to the appropriate reference documents. This is unacceptable, unfair and did not allow for a proper consultation.

- **Validation Surveys** — It is a point of significant concern that both a butterfly survey and the noise survey are apparently being conducted during the winter months. With regard to noise it is particularly challenged that as the prime justification for the upgrade is for summer seasonal queuing then we believe it is reasonable to expect a summer noise survey so that the decibel values are "like for like". Summer speeds are generally slower passing Orchard Park due to volume. Noise surveys taken at a quieter time will have a higher "initial" speed reference point at source covering the appropriate sample period, which will distort any quantification of noise decibel increase. It is a clear expectation that the government planning inspectorate should be in possession of appropriate data and evaluations. In addition, traffic counters placed on West Camel Road, Queen Camel and Fore Street, West Camel were only in place for approx 4 weeks covering November to December, some of the quietest weeks of the year. We are concerned at the use of this selective surveying as evidence for the DCO stage.

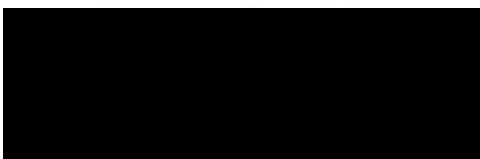
In summary, and for the above reasons, we believe the process HE used to determine the best option is flawed and was unfit for purpose. In Table 11.2 on page 106 of the SAR you set out the advantages of each option:

- *Option 1 journey times will be shorter.* In fact both options indicate a minor reduction of transit times of between 2 to 5 minutes depending on traffic.
- *Option 1 minimises land take by approximately 18% but this figure has yet to be confirmed and is dependent upon whether additional interchange junctions, cuttings, link roads, bridges and footpaths etc. are required and so this number could well reduce further (page 104 of SAR).*
- *Option 1 is most favourable with the public.* This statement is challenged as many of those who lobbied are not directly affected and most telling of all, HE assess that Option 1 is the option least likely to generate objections at DCO.

It is our view that Option 1 is likely to cost significantly more, will take longer to build, will be less safe, is likely to cause more disruption during the build, has the potential to increase the risk of flooding, is likely to generate more noise, pollution and traffic for residents, and is more difficult to construct.

Additionally, for the reasons outlined above, we believe that HEs selection process was **unduly influenced** by lobby groups and the process was demonstrably unfair in failing to provide reasonable access to information to consultees and effected stakeholders. Clearly it seems HE have chosen the path of least resistance to avoid objections at DCO. We therefore request that you revisit the options to ensure that the option selected to go forward to planning is the option that represents the best value for money, is the safest, will cause the least disruption during build and has the least adverse affect of those residents directly affected by the project.

Yours sincerely,



Kate Kirkham

On behalf of Camels Expressway Steering Group



**Sources:**

**A303 Sparkford to Ilchester: Scheme Assessment Report (SAR)**

<https://highwaysengland.citizenspace.com/he/a303-sparkford-to-ilchester/results/--a303-sparkford-to-ilchester---scheme-assessment-report.pdf>

**A303 Sparkford to Ilchester: Consultation Report**

[https://highwaysengland.citizenspace.com/he/a303-sparkford-to-ilchester/results/a303-sparkford-to-ilchester-consultation\\_report.pdf](https://highwaysengland.citizenspace.com/he/a303-sparkford-to-ilchester/results/a303-sparkford-to-ilchester-consultation_report.pdf)