

Winterbourne Stoke Parish Council

Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London, SW1P 4DR
(Via email to Planning Inspectorate website)

Wednesday, 23 March 2022

Re: Planning Act 2008 (as amended) and the Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010

Application by National Highways (“the Applicant”) for an Order granting Development Consent for the construction of a new two-lane dual carriage way for the A303 between Amesbury and Berwick Down in Wiltshire.

Sir,

Following Secretary of State’s invitation to Interested Parties to provide any comments on the Secretary of State’s Statement of Matters of 30 November 2021 and the Applicant’s response to the Statement of Matters of 11 January 2022 and 8 February 2022, Winterbourne Stoke Parish Council wish to offer the following observations and comment to assist the Secretary of State in his re-determination.

Winterbourne Stoke is the village most directly affected by the proposed scheme and the community that suffers most from the current congestion on the A303. Consequently, our villagers have both the most to gain and, perhaps perversely, the most to lose, by any changes wrought by this scheme. The matter has divided our community and no proposed solution, other than the removal of the A303 from this part of Wiltshire in its entirety, can satisfy all.

We must continue to criticise National Highways for their failure to even consider a “far northern route” for the A303, proposed in 2013 (see: <https://bypasswinterbournestoke.blogspot.com/2013/11/sh2-proposal-for-very-northerley-route.html>). We also note that this was not mentioned by the Planning Inspectorate in their determinations, even though they had requested to see it in the course of their inquiry.

However, we are pragmatists and accept that “the best is often the enemy of the good!” The traffic on the A303 cannot be allowed to continue as it is. As a consequence, we believe the solution proposed by National Highways represents the best of a number of poor solutions for the scheme as a whole and particularly for the village of Winterbourne Stoke. A longer tunnel would result in more disruption to our community during construction and more spoil having to be dumped here. Routes proposed to the south of the village ultimately have to rejoin the A303 to our west, introducing unacceptable levels of noise and vehicular pollution to the majority of villagers due to the prevailing meteorology and terrain.

Consequently, we have, reluctantly, to support the National Highways proposal for re-determination; though all the reservations expressed in our original submission to the Planning Inspectorate, not expressly dealt with in the latest National Highways submission, remain extant.

In giving support to National Highways re-determination, we urge the Secretary of State to come to a decision both quickly and decisively and to grant development consent. Our villagers have suffered enough from years of indecisiveness and cancelled plans; as have all those who have to use the A303 for business or pleasure.

Above all, we ask that in considering the scheme as a whole, Secretary of State focuses on the interests of the current generation and those generations yet to come, rather than the interests of the long dead. The landscape in which the Stonehenge World Heritage Site sits has been in a constant state of development and redevelopment for over 5,000 years. Even over the last century or so, the landscape has been occupied by a RFC/RAF airfield, a stud farm, a sewage works, and a massive troop assembly area. It is, arguably, the oldest brownfield site in continuous re-development in the UK. Improving the A303 is but the next logical step in once again improving the area for the benefit of its denizens and the wider community.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Andrew D Shuttleworth

For and on behalf of Winterbourne Stoke Parish Council