

Question under Rule 9.3 - from Cllr Alexandra Kemp

It is universally acknowledged in West Winch and West Norfolk, from resident and business experience alike, from delays, tailbacks, unreliable journey times, personal injury and highway damage accidents, the difficulty, danger -and even impossibility, of turning into residential accesses along the A10 without undertaking a multiple-mile detours, that the A10 in West Winch and Setchey is over capacity.

Yet West Winch is in the deeply unpopular and locally unsupported - Local Plan for an allocation of 4,000 houses. The Mott Macdonald Study of 2014 showed there would be a 1,000 car tailbacks at peak times, queued south from the Hardwick Roundabout, if the 1,100 Hopkins Development goes ahead without a Bypass to take the traffic out of the village before development commences.

So it is scandalous that the West Norfolk Local Plan is worded to allow all 1100 Hopkins houses to be built, before a proper Bypass is constructed and Highways cannot allow it. Because this Council's Sustainable Transport Strategy, which accompanied the West Winch Bypass Funding Application, outlining measures to traffic-calm the A10 to a village road to try to make new development sustainable, cannot be implemented, until the Bypass takes the traffic out of the village.

But the Government has not yet granted funding for the £84 million Bypass and cannot be guaranteed to do so. If building starts without the Bypass, the development would be completely car dependent and unsustainable.

West Winch cannot be let down again as it was by a previous Conservative Government in 1990 when Bypass plans were drawn up but Govt took away the funding but major development followed. Does the Cabinet Member agree with me that the only realistic, sustainable and decent approach for the Highways Authority to take is to oppose major development on the A10 in West Winch and Setchey before the arrival of a fully built-out Bypass, and that provision is needed to bypass Setchey too?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

I do not agree with the proposal to oppose major development in West Winch. As set out in previous questions to Cabinet (see August 2023), the consultation for the West Winch Housing Access Road (WWHAR) included details indicating up to 300 homes being delivered with a connection to the existing A10, which is consistent with the Highways response to the planning application already submitted by Hopkins Homes.

The Highways response to the Hopkins planning application accepts that some traffic could connect to the northern sections of the existing A10, but this has been capped at not more than 300 new homes.

The Hopkins application includes for the potential for consent to be granted for up to a total of 1,100 homes, but this is subject to significant new highway infrastructure within the development site and new junctions connecting to the A47, which would need to be similar in their location and size to the northern section of the WWHAR project.

In view of the scale of the highway infrastructure that would be required within the Hopkins development it is unlikely that the developer would deliver that, which is why they are working with the County Council and the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk and will be making a contribution to the WWHAR project through section 106 agreements linked to any planning consents. All parties are keen to complete the WWHAR as soon as possible, and the current timeline for its delivery indicates that very few properties will be completed before the WWHAR is opened. The aim is to deliver the WWHAR and the associated sustainable transport improvements for West Winch as soon as possible, with the current target opening date (subject to government funding being confirmed) being 2027.

The 2014 modelling work completed by Mott MacDonald is now nearly 10 years out of date. More recent modelling has been completed to support the development of the WWHAR project, and this has been further updated with 2022 survey data. It is important that all modelling is based on the most recent information and that is the case for the latest proposals in West Winch.

As indicated above, the current timeline for the delivery of the WWHAR is that it will be completed by 2027, before any significant new housing development, which will minimise any impacts to the existing A10, but will also then enable the planned new housing growth area to be delivered as quickly as possible.

The proposals for the WWHAR include details for sustainable transport which will encourage more active travel and improve non-vehicular links to and from the town centre.

Details about the project have been submitted in a planning application that is due to be published and consulted by the County Planning Authority imminently. This planning application and an Outline Business Case submission to DfT (published on the county council's website) have been progressed as rapidly as possible to enable the new road to be delivered as soon as possible. Every effort is being made to establish the necessary consents and funding for the project to enable construction to start in 2025.