



## ATTLEBOROUGH TOWN COUNCIL

Town Hall, Queens Square, Attleborough, Norfolk, NR17 2AF  
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### Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of Attleborough Town Council Held on Monday, 30 January 2017 at 7.00pm in the Town Hall

#### Present:

		Cllr Burton - presiding	
Cllr Ellis	Cllr Crouch	Cllr Montague	Cllr Tyrer
Cllr Williams	Cllr Dale	Cllr S Taylor	Cllr Cobb
Cllr Busk	Cllr T Taylor (left at 7.55)		

In attendance – Gina Lopes – Clerk to Attleborough Town Council  
Trisha Drewery – Admin Assistant (minute taker)  
116 x Public (signed in)  
Dist. Cllr Martin, Dist. Cllr Ashby  
Norfolk County Council Highways Department –  
Tig Armstrong, Richard Doleman, Paul Sellick  
Breckland District Council - Tim Mills

#### **123.16) Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received and accepted as below:

Cllr Sparke - Unwell  
Cllr Bond - Work

Further apologies were noted from: Dist. Cllr Adrian Stasiak, NCC Alec Byrne  
Valerie Watson-Brown and Colin Kilby.

#### **124.16 Declarations of Interest**

##### **a) To receive and consider declarations of interest in items below**

Declarations of interest received as follows: -

Cllr Crouch - Agenda item 4d – Carvers Lane

##### **b) To receive and consider dispensations in respect of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests: None received.**

#### **125.16) Chairman's Welcome and report**

The Chairman welcomed members, external officers and the general Public and presented a written report regarding Highway Issues and proposals as below: -

*“The decision to call an Extraordinary Meeting of the Town Council is one which has not been made lightly. This has been brought about by the Councillors who currently feel frustrated regarding a number of Highways issues around the Town.*

*We feel that these issues have been brought to the attention of Norfolk County Council and Breckland District Council; in some cases, for a number of years.*

*However, the views of the Town Councillors and Public who live in the Town are being ignored.*

*I have listed below the seven main Highways issues that we, as a Town Council, would like to be considered/discussed at this meeting. I appreciate that Highways is an emotive issue and that you cannot please all the people all the time. However, having lived in the Town myself for approaching 30 years I can only see the traffic problems in the Town worsening. In this time the Town has grown enormously and another 4,000 homes + are planned to be built in the next 20 years. Those living in the Town know that there has been virtually no Highways improvement since the A11 bypass has been built to accommodate this increased traffic.*

- 1) Proposed Town Centre Highways Improvements: As seen from recent roadworks on the gyratory system the current 1 way system is extremely fragile. As a concept, I believe Traffic should be pushed away from the gyratory system wherever possible. The proposed improvements in the main consist of traffic lights at the major junctions and 2-way traffic along Surrogate Street. Will this improve the flow of traffic? Is this a sticking plaster only? Can the £ be better spent improving the main arteries around the Town?*
- 2) Proposed Link Road from Old Buckenham Road to London Road. This needs to be built before the 1st new 1200 houses on the SUE are completed, as proposed at present, and all avenues should be pursued for the financing this. Can the Town Centre cope with this increase in traffic? Should the new houses start being built first at the London Road end?*
- 3) With the proposed SUE South of the railway line where the vast bulk of the new 4,000 houses are being built, there is still planned just one major road crossing in the Town. This will effectively split the Town in half. The Station Road crossing gates are Currently closed Circa 80 times a day causing traffic to build up - can either a road Bridge be built across the railway or have another road crossing?*
- 4) Attleborough needs the Besthorpe End A11 junction to be a 4-way junction arrangement rather than the current 2-way junction. This will allow traffic to enter and exit from both London and Norwich routes rather than just the Norwich route as at present. This junction improvement was promised 9 years ago, when the Town was looking to expand.*
- 5) The Town Council has lobbied for a number of years; including again during late 2016 for a 7.5 tonne weight restriction be placed through the Town Centre from Connaught Plain along Exchange Street. This would prevent lorries turning right from Connaught Road and therefore making them use the A11. This would ease traffic congestion and also help make the Town Centre safer for pedestrians. Our latest request was declined due to the road being classified as a B road.*
- 6) Carvers Lane is a good through road running North to South within the Town. This road is to be closed to through traffic by a housing development. The TC again have lobbied for this to remain open for approximately 6 years and residents have obtained petitions against this closure. This road is used by locals will be particularly used when the new schools are opened. The existing houses will now be serviced via existing estate cult de sacs. can this road remain opened?*
- 7) Planning permission has been passed for a new circa 170 houses on the former Suffolk Sovereign site on Buckenham Road. Could White House Lane, which is currently a 'Green field site', be upgraded to allow 2-way traffic. This road would effectively be part of a Northern Bypass for the Town and reduce traffic coming into the Town.*

*In summary, the Town Council has concerns how the current proposed Town Centre Highways Improvements will work and is putting forward some proposals to reduce traffic within the gyratory system”.*

### **126.16) Town Councillors discussion on Highways**

#### **a) Proposed Town Centre improvements (traffic lights)**

Discussion took place and comments included:

- Potential problems regarding an increase in the number of traffic lights has been highlighted by the recent temporary traffic lights for emergency repair work over the past fortnight.
- It was noted that a lot of businesses were affected by the temporary traffic lights. Planners need to consider how the traffic flow could affect business owners in the long term.
- Norfolk County Council wants to situate 3 more sets of traffic lights around the Town - concerns were raised; as generally felt this is likely to create more problems rather than being a solution to ease the situation.
- An increase in the number of traffic lights will force residents to shop elsewhere.
- A crossing is planned for Connaught Road; however, the Town Council is currently considering having a zebra crossing for Surrogate Street; due to concerns regarding elderly residents who will have to cross 3 lanes of traffic to get to the Doctors Surgery.

#### **b) Proposed Link Road**

Discussion took place and comments included:

- It is necessary to think longer term regarding the future efficiency of the Link Road; not just that 1,200 homes need an exit point from the Town in isolation. It will be beneficial to look at the long-term effects of the total planned 4,000 houses and plan for the future expansion of the Town.
- Clarity is needed as to what the proposals would look like, and how they fit in with Phase 1 of the Draft Neighbourhood Plan.
- Current plans do not include cycling, walking or public transport.
- Not all £4.6 million is available for the improvements; as some has already been spent and funding will come in stages.
- The Developers' financial contributions towards improvements and the Link Road were queried? It was noted that Developers usually have to pay through S.106 monies for any mitigation measures taking place, particularly regarding transport.
- All available options need to be looked at and considered, prior to making any decisions.
- A holistic thought process is needed and it is felt that all possible options have not been considered. At the moment, there seems to be a perpetual cycle regarding how we create good quality communities.
- It is essential to build the Link Road first; due to the potential problems from sewerage drains caused by the increase of traffic along Connaught Road.
- No money has been secured for the Link Road as yet and it was reported that funding is being sought by Norfolk County Council to bring this work forward.
- If the traffic is diverted to White House Lane it will increase the through-traffic onto Mill Lane, however, this could be an option to free up the gyratory system.

- It was felt that Surrogate Street becoming 2-way would be beneficial, however, concerns were raised regarding the widening near the Tree Protection Order (TPO) trees and the historic church wall. It was suggested that it would be better to widen the road from the railway station direction to take traffic onto Surrogate Street.
- Concerns were voiced regarding how the Emergency Fire Service will pull out of Thieves Lane during times of congestion.
- The housing development should start at the Old Buckenham Road rather than the Norwich end of the Town.

### **c) Railway crossing**

Discussion took place and comments included:

- Network Rail will not be happy to increase the traffic on the Railway Crossing if traffic is diverted onto Station Road.
- In a previous meeting, Norfolk County Council Highways Department stated that the new traffic lights will be synchronised with the railway crossing - concerns were raised regarding what might happen if the railway traffic lights jam.
- The railway crossing is crucial to ensuring traffic flow.

### **d) Carvers Lane closure**

Discussion took place and comments included:

- Cllr Crouch gave a verbal update.
- If Carvers Lane was an open road, it could be used as a route to alleviate traffic congestion from the Town Centre.
- Residents have been petitioning against the road closure since 2012.
- Residents and Town Council members should have a say in what roads are closed, not a builder or Breckland District Council.
- Breckland District Council and Norfolk County Council Highways need to come to an agreement regarding the use of the road as part of the solution to traffic flow; at present they are in a stalemate situation.

### **e) White House Lane**

Discussion took place and comments included:

- If White House Lane was widened this would particularly help with traffic flow on the north side of Attleborough, however, this would open up the other junction to more traffic.
- Traffic coming from Old Buckenham would avoid the main level crossing which would alleviate traffic there.
- Residents coming from the Grampian site would go straight down Mill Road avoiding traffic going through the Town.

### **f) A11 Junction**

Discussion took place and comments included:

- With no planned junction to take traffic in the direction of London, traffic will still have to go through the Town.
- Instead of a 2-way junction heading only towards Norwich, the Besthorpe end should be designed as a 4-way junction to include traffic heading towards London.
- The A11 junction is crucial to the continual growth and economy of the Town.

- Unless clear steps are taken there will be continual “snarl-ups” which will affect the wider economy of the Town.
- If there is no easy access from the A11 to and from the new estates, there will be reluctance from potential employers who will prefer to go to Thetford or Wymondham where there is already access to the A11.

**g) 7.5T weight restriction**

Discussion took place and comments included:

- Having a weight restriction could be an option to ease the number of large vehicles coming through the Town.
- Initial enquiries to Norfolk County Council Highways Department have indicated that this restriction is not possible as a “B” road.
- Large lorries on Connaught Plain have been seen to mount the pavement; this is an accident waiting to happen.
- A Link Road would alleviate the need for a weight restriction through the Town.

**127.16) Open Forum**

The Chairman invited comments from the general public; comments included:

- This is a one-time opportunity to get the traffic right for all residents; not just to push traffic chaos from one area of the Town to another.
- A Resident thanked the Town Council for the opportunity to allow members of the public to have their say.
- The Town Centre traffic is a big problem which is having a big impact upon residents’ lives.
- There are good plans for a Southern Link Road; but no plans for a Northern Link Road. There does not seem to have been proper research into the consequences of only having a Southern Link Road. There was an agreement for a 4-way junction at the Northern end of Town that is no longer in the plans.
- All vehicles wanting to go Norwich will be fed down White House Lane to Mill Lane; which is another unsuitable road as it is very narrow with no pavements or streetlighting.
- If the traffic is sent down Mill Lane, what is going to happen when they build the houses on the water meadows off Norwich Road. This will cause problems with residents who need to pull out on to the main road.
- A business owner stated that any improvement to the infrastructure would be welcomed. At peak times, all that can be seen is stationary traffic. There has been no movement on the Southern Link Road and this is unlikely to be so for the next 5 years. Because of this, there will be an increase of approximately 2,000 cars when the new housing has been built.
- Any investment into the gyratory system to improve traffic flow would be welcomed. However, can the public have assurance that if a planned gyratory system does not work, residents’ comments will be taken into any future consideration.
- In the current plans, no accommodation has been made for walkers, cyclists or mobility scooters.
- Resident suggested having a speed limit in the gyratory system; or there may be a “free-for-all” where drivers have no priority; as within some Norwich areas.
- Suggestion to have controlled weight restriction with time limits, avoiding school hours, or only have HGVs in the Town at night.

- Introduce a park and ride system to encourage people into the Town.
- The new plans do not have any crossing on Surrogate Street to allow older residents to cross safely to the Doctors Surgery. With regards to the narrowing of Surrogate Street; if the road is widened from the side of the Church or the Rectory; Holly Court will lose 2 or 3 parking bays out of their drive; there are currently 11 tenants who have cars.
- There has been a lot of sound work done by the Attleborough Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and their suggestions have not been incorporated into the traffic flow. Endorsement regarding the need for a long term strategic plan.
- Edenside Drive is a “race track”; can a ‘box system’ be put back by the crossing to allow residents to pull out.
- Resident asked whether the Norfolk County Council Highways Department have considered the flooding on White House Lane.
- The gyratory system needs to keep traffic out of the Town Centre. The plans are looking at turning the gyratory system into 2 lanes and 3 in Surrogate Street. Resident stated that the plans reflect what happened in the Town 40 years ago; resident remembers discussion taking place in 2000 with Norfolk County Council Highways requesting a Besthorpe junction; yet no progress has been made.
- Concerns were raised regarding the traffic congestion during school times; which will be worsened by families who have to cross the town to collect children from both schools.
- A resident has witnessed two separate occasions where cars stopped on the railway crossing; also, a time when the barrier came down on a lorry.
- Safety appears to be a huge issue regarding traffic coming out of Thieves Lane; it is an accident waiting to happen.
- Resident supported the widening of White House Lane and taking traffic through that way. The more traffic that can be taken away from the level crossing the safer the crossing will be.
- Concerns were raised regarding the Mill Road junction as this will take traffic down Silver Street which is already busy.
- Options to take the traffic out of the Town should seriously be considered; especially on the Southern side. Alternative plans have been produced and is disappointed that they have not been considered. The Towns biggest employer has a huge amount of truck movement; this needs to be considered within the gyratory system.
- When the A11 was made into a dual carriageway; requests were made to Norfolk County Council Highways Department for a Besthorpe junction; but did not listen to residents’ comments.
- A local Emergency Fire Services representative spoke:
  - The Emergency Fire Service sympathise with all the comments that have been made. They continually have to deal with issues when doing call-outs. These have to be made within a timescale to get to a call-out in 4 minutes and 4 seconds. Traffic issues are also impacting upon the potential to recruit Retained Firefighters; which should total 12 but currently down to 9.
  - Firefighters have bought bicycles to store around the Town to enable them to get to the Fire Station during emergency call-outs. This is because there is no way of identifying to the public that they are Firefighters during travel to the Fire Station
  - The local Fire Service already feels stretched to the limits.

- In addition; the traffic around the Town centre prevents a quick response during call-outs; as roads and traffic flow has not been designed to accommodate vehicles the size of a Fire Engine.
- The Emergency Fire Service stated that if current proposals go through it will push the service to its limits and risk lives.
- A former Firefighter informed the Council that in the past Norfolk County Council Highways consulted the Service for input regarding traffic flow during planned previous road changes. Concerns about traffic flow for emergency vehicles were not being taken into account
- The planned houses are due to be built over the next 5 years, before the southern bypass is put in, with an additional 1,000 behind the Grampian site. These houses will be three-quarters of the way down White House Lane. It seems that on an improved White House Lane, with a diversion to bring it away from the crossing; all the estate traffic could use this as an exit point.
- The Breckland Local Plan is out to consultation; they are looking to adopt by December this year; the development controls should come forward for the planning of 4,000 houses. Outline planning permission for these will come out in 3-4 months' time.
- Big articulated lorries come down Mill Lane and in the top end of Norwich Road; if the road gets widened on White House Lane will there to be a 7.5-ton weight restriction on this road?
- 18 months ago, at a Forestry Commission meeting, a presentation was given mentioning the £4.6 million that would be available, however, despite asking, no clarity has been given by Norfolk County Council's Highways Department regarding how the funding would be spent.
- A proposed Link Road, at the end of Buckingham Road near Foundry Corner for the planned build of 1,200 houses, is not going to happen anymore.
- Whoever makes the decisions regarding the Link Road needs to seriously consider the consequences for the people of the Town including what the people of the Town will think about their local authority.

### **128.16) Chairman's Summary**

The Chairman thanked the public for their attendance at the meeting and assured them that their comments have been noted and will be collated and sent to both Norfolk County Council and Breckland District Council. The Town Council will continue to lobby on behalf of the residents of Attleborough.

The Chairman informed members of the public that there is an Attleborough Town Council meeting on the first Monday of every month and a Planning and Highways Meeting on the first and third Monday of every month and they are very welcome to attend all open meetings.

Meeting closed at 8.25 pm