

Girton Parish Council

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**Minutes of Extraordinary Girton Parish Council's Meeting of Monday 21st December 2009  
at the Cotton Hall at 7.00pm.**

**Present:** Cllrs D de Lacey (Chairman), S Clift (Vice Chairman), J Thorrold, R Gordon, R Martin, P Starling, and M Taylor.

**In attendance:** R Stone (Clerk)

**09/156 Welcome from the Chairman**

Cllr de Lacey welcomed Councillors to the meeting.

**09/157 Apologies**

Cllrs Bromwich, C Starling, Hiley and Godby.

**09/158 Members' declarations of interest for items on the agenda**

None.

**09/158 Public Participation session on agenda items & matters of mutual interest**

No members of the public were present.

**09/159 To agree the draft response to the published A14 Draft Orders.**

Prop: Cllr de Lacey Sec: Cllr Martin

Cllr de Lacey explained that Cllr Martin had produced an extended version of the noise section of draft document that had been circulated to Councillors. Cllr Martin's document was tabled, discussed, and approved by unanimous vote as an amendment to Girton Parish Council's response to the A14 Draft Orders.

The final draft including the amendment was then approved by unanimous vote and the Chairman undertook to circulate the combined document (attached at Appendix A) to ensure it accorded with what was agreed.

The meeting ended at 7.10pm.

## **A14 Draft Orders (draft of December 22, 2009)**

Girton Parish Council wishes to object to the Draft Orders for the A14 on a number of grounds outlined below.

### **1. Noise Pollution**

The proposals as they stand make wholly inadequate and unacceptable provisions for reducing and minimizing the impact of additional noise pollution that the changes to the A14 will bring. The lives of Girton's residents have already been blighted for many years by the current noise levels from the A14, particularly from the elevated section between the Girton interchange and Bar Hill. Measurements already taken in Girton suggest that impact is unacceptably high and we are seeking more data here (unfortunately we do not have the finances for a proper and full noise survey)<sup>1</sup>. Our discussions with the Highways Agency and Atkins about our concerns over increased noise pollution have been very disappointing, and indicate to us that the very bare minimum in terms of noise abatement and reduction measures will be undertaken. The attitude seems to be that the residents of Girton will have to 'learn to live with the noise, or move'.

The modelling presented in the Environmental Statement only extends 600m beyond the edge of the roadway, and no attempt is made to assess the noise impact further afield. Yet high and intrusive noise already reaches the village from the Girton Interchange to Bar Hill and the Girton to Histon stretches of the A14, both of which are well over 600m from the village. This problem will intensify considerably given that the proposal includes an elevated interchange which will generate noise that extends over much greater distances. Further, we have been informed by Atkins that no attempts had been made to model shaped noise barriers, such as are now common on the Continent where they have been found to be very effective, 'because it wasn't in the Design Manual'<sup>2</sup>. We have researched numerous examples of major road construction or widening in a number of European and other countries, and in almost all of these the measures taken to minimize the environmental impact of noise pollution, and hence the negative impact on the quality of life of local inhabitants, seem to aim for a far greater degree of abatement than appears to be the case in the A14 proposals. We would also draw attention to the new and stringent protocols that are under discussion with the European Commission. Further, we have consulted with expert noise barrier engineers (Sound Barrier Solutions Ltd) about the quality and extent of the barriers included in the proposals, and they confirm that these will be wholly inadequate. We request that proper assessment of the kinds of noise abatement so successful on the Continent is undertaken, and the results applied here before the scheme proceeds<sup>3</sup>.

We would also request that consideration be given to placing speed restrictions on the stretch of road between Bar Hill and Histon, or Milton, in order to reduce noise levels. In addition to the use of 'quiet' tarmac, there is copious evidence from road tests and from road schemes across many countries (from the Netherlands to Singapore to the United States) that, contrary to what the Highways Agency argued to us, large-scale plantings of evergreen tree barriers also reduce noise (and air) pollution (as well as greening the landscape)<sup>4</sup>.

We cannot over-emphasise the depth of residents' concern about the noise problem associated with the A14 proposal. The problem is particularly acute for Girton because the village is bisected by the A14, and is very close to where the huge elevated interchange will be built.

A recent questionnaire of Girton residents, (with over 1000 responses), undertaken in relation

<sup>1</sup>We have presented measurements to WS Atkins of levels in excess of 90dB(A); as a result of which Atkins have agreed to undertake further testing of their own, though not at locations beyond their 600m self-imposed boundary.

<sup>2</sup>The Design Manual is 'advice', often rather out of date, not a Statutory Instrument.

<sup>3</sup>The TRF has done work on other designs of barrier than the simple vertical plane barrier (see for instance Watts and Morgan (2003), 'Evaluating the effectiveness of novel noise barrier designs', Proceedings of Euronoise 2003, Naples, Italy, Paper No. 060-IP, available from the TRF website) but does not appear to have evaluated the latest Continental research.

<sup>4</sup>See, for example, Huddart, L. (1990) The use of vegetation for traffic noise screening. Crowthorne, Berkshire: U.K. Transport and Road Research Laboratory Research Report; Martens, M. J. M. (1981) 'Noise abatement in plant monoculture and plant communities', Journal of Applied Acoustics, 14, 167-189; Martinez-Sala et al. (2005) Control of noise by trees arranged like sonic crystals, Journal of Sound and Vibration, 291, 100-106.

to a local village plan, revealed that the likely noise impact of the proposed A14 works is by far the single most important concern of local residents (some 80% ranked this issue their main worry and oppose the scheme in its present form, as the tables below indicate)<sup>5</sup>.

“Q22: How would you regard the A14 Improvement Scheme as a whole, if the following conditions applied?”

	If it caused noise to increase	If it caused noise to decrease	If it caused air pollution to increase	If it caused air pollution to decrease	If the cutting through Girton was covered over	If noise, air pollution and cutting remained unaffected
Strongly support the scheme	1.8	39.7	1.2	42.3	26.6	10.0
Support the scheme	7.6	46.8	4.3	42.4	25.2	29.4
Neutral or no opinion	9.4	10.4	8.8	11.3	37.1	35.8
Oppose the scheme	34.8	1.9	36.7	2.8	6.8	13.5
Strongly oppose the scheme	46.3	1.2	49.0	2.8	4.2	11.3

**Summary:**

In the hypothetical absence of change in noise, air pollution or cutting, more than a third of respondents supported the A14 improvement scheme, while fewer than a quarter opposed it. In the event that noise increased, more than four fifths opposed the scheme, while fewer than one in ten supported it. In the event that air pollution increased, more than four fifths opposed the scheme, while only roughly one in twenty supported it. In the event that either noise or air pollution decreased, more than four fifths supported the scheme. If the cutting was covered over, roughly half supported the scheme.

In the absence of other change, support for the scheme was strongest in areas A, B, H and I<sup>6</sup>. Support for a tunnel was highest in area E (and among those aged ten and under, based on a small sample). In the event that noise increased, opposition was strongest in area E (more than 10% higher than areas F and G); opposition was weakest among the 85-and-over group. In the event that pollution increased, opposition to the scheme declined with age.”

“Q23: Are you concerned by the current state of the following in Girton? [the list includes ‘Air pollution’ and ‘A14 traffic noise’ as below]”

	Air pollution	A14 traffic noise
Very concerned /a high priority	29.3	33.2
Concerned /a medium priority	30.8	33.2
Slightly concerned/ a low priority	24.9	23.0
Not concerned /not a priority	13.1	9.2
No opinion	2.0	1.4

**Summary:**

Roughly a third of respondents were very concerned about air pollution and A14

<sup>5</sup>These data are taken from <http://www.grantavista.org.uk/girton/> which presents the (as yet preliminary) results from the Girton Village Plan. 1034 1029 responses were received and the data are currently being analysed.

<sup>6</sup>The areas into which the village was divided for convenience of analysis are as follows (number of returns in parentheses):

(A) Dodford Lane, Fairway and roads off (67)

(B) Cambridge Road west of church, High Street North, Oakington Road and roads off (except Dodford Ln) (86)

- (C) Woodlands Park, High Street South, Duck End and roads off (126)
- (D) Church Lane, Hicks Lane and roads off (except Duck End) (65)
- (E) Cambridge Road south of church, Girton Road north of A14 and roads off (except Hicks Ln, Pepys Way, Weavers Field) (160)
- (F) Pepys Way, St Vincent's Close, Weavers Field and roads off (95)
- (G) Wellbrook Way and roads off (62)
- (H) Girton Road south of A14, Thornton Road NW of Thornton Way junction, St Margaret's Road and roads off (except Wellbrook Way) (169)
- (I) Huntingdon Road, Thornton Road SW of Thornton Way junction, Thornton Way and roads off (except Girton Road and Thornton Road NW) (199),

traffic noise. ...

Concern over air pollution was strongest in area F, with more than two fifths very concerned. Concern over A14 noise was again strongest in area E (more than 10% higher than areas F and G)."

The current provisions for noise reduction and minimization in the A14 proposals are grossly inadequate as a response to our community; and we request that proper assessment of the kinds of state of the art noise-abatement measures being used and proving successful on the Continent be investigated and applied here. Unless such large-scale environmental measures are included we cannot support the proposals, and indeed would argue strenuously that an alternative route for the enlarged A14 be investigated, one that will not so drastically reduce the quality of life of so many households in our village, and indeed in the other villages that straddle the road.

## 2. Atmospheric Pollution

Despite current EU concerns the UK does not in general measure the prevalence of PM<sub>2.5</sub> particulates, and the modelling done for the present and future state of the A14 must be highly suspect. Even PM<sub>10</sub> is not measured at Girton despite the fact that the A14 bisects our village and Girton is in an AQMA.

We wish to see a proper PM<sub>2.5</sub> survey undertaken in conjunction with the NO<sub>x</sub> station situated at Weavers Field, Girton, and the data therefrom included in the future modelling, and we wish the strictest limits to be placed on pollution through Girton for the health of our villagers.

The tables at 10.15 and 10.16 indicate that the results of the scheme will be a rise in levels of both PM<sub>10</sub> and NO<sub>2</sub> at Girton. In the light of all the other disadvantages of this scheme to be suffered by the village we believe this to be unacceptable.

Highways authority figures indicate<sup>7</sup> that whereas congestion is a significant cause of increased PM<sub>10</sub> emissions, so is speed. This graph reinforces the sense of imposing a 50mph limit through the village of Girton (and beyond). We note with disappointment that the effect of speed limits was not modelled.

On Villagers' views on atmospheric pollution, see the summaries of the Village Plan cited above.

## 3. Congestion

In economics there is a law, Say's law, to the effect that 'supply creates its own demand'. As many other motorway enlargements (eg M25) have show, enlargement typically leads to an expansion of traffic over and above that predicted<sup>8</sup>. We object that this is not adequately taken into account in the projections on which the project is based.

The possible effects on A14 traffic volumes of moving freight to rail should also be modelled before any decisions are taken to proceed with this scheme. A significant amount of EU finance has already been obtained to facilitate the movement of containers from Felixstowe by rail and if this is successful it will remove a significant amount of the A14 traffic. Modelling is needed to assess whether this might be adequate, perhaps with comparatively<sup>9</sup> small extra funding, to render the A14 upgrade unnecessary. The upgrade of the A14 should certainly not precede the upgrade of the Felixstowe-Nuneaton rail link.

## 4. Ecology

Both Say's Law and the simple fact that the proposed road is longer than the current A14 mean that the result will be an increase in carbon emissions which conflicts with stated Government goals to reduce emissions by at least 14%pa. The modelling must show, if the scheme is to go ahead, not just a reduction against the 'Do Minimum' scenario but an absolute reduction in

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<sup>7</sup><http://www.highways.gov.uk/knowledge/6068.htm>

<sup>8</sup>The New Civil Engineer reports (25 June 2009) 'CBT research suggests 75% of road projects completed last year went over-budget, with the overall budget 54% over. The overall deficit could be as high as £3.9bn.

In addition, completed roads were found to be more congested than expected. Of 20 new bypasses examined, 60% had more traffic on both old and new roads than predicted. 40% had 25% more traffic on the old route' ([www.nce.co.uk/highways-agency-39bn-over-budget/5204008.article](http://www.nce.co.uk/highways-agency-39bn-over-budget/5204008.article)).

<sup>9</sup>Compared to the total costs of the A14 scheme.

line with Government targets<sup>10</sup>. Tackling climate change is supposedly an official DfT goal for a sustainable transport system: it must be demonstrated that this project meets the goal if it is to proceed.

This is not merely a local concern but one which affects the project as a whole. 7.4.59 claims to support Government policy with respect to Stern and Eddington<sup>11</sup>. It is clear that for the people of Girton Village it is a travesty to suggest that there is a positive contribution to the 'safety, security and health' or 'quality of life' goals. And in the wake of Copenhagen 2009 the fifth goal is surely of over-riding importance.

### **5. Other relevant factors**

At a time of record levels of national debt, it is surely inappropriate to proceed before we know the impact of a number of other current issues:

- \_ the impact of the Guided Bus which should start running next year;
- \_ the effect on traffic levels of the changing economy (traffic levels had begun to fall even before the crisis);
- \_ the plans to move more freight from the East Coast ports on to the rail network.

There are a host of other (low cost) measures which could also be tried before resorting to what will be a huge outlay on the 'upgrade' of A14, and an 'upgrade' that will only attract yet more traffic. The Government should be looking at measures to reduce road traffic levels, not encourage more.

And if despite these concerns it is determined that this upgrade is required, then every possible mitigation measure should be fully explored. Some, such as speed limits, would be simple and cheap to implement (and as the M25 indicates, can also reduce congestion and thus actually increase throughput) and would greatly reduce both noise and atmospheric pollution. Others, such as afforestation, are highly desirable in their own right<sup>12</sup>.

### **6. Conclusion**

Girton Parish Council objects to the Orders in their present form, and requests that the issues outline above be re-assessed before the Orders are approved.

This response was approved by Girton Parish Council at an Extraordinary Meeting held on 21 December 2009.

Douglas de Lacey, Chairman, Girton Parish Council

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<sup>10</sup>UK Low Carbon Transition Plan, DECC 2009.

<sup>11</sup>7.4.59 ... Since 2004, Government policy on transport has taken on board the Stern Review and the Eddington study, leading to the adoption of five broad goals. The Scheme would contribute positively to four of these goals ...'

<sup>12</sup>We acknowledge reluctance to introduce more non-native species, given that needle-leaved, evergreen species are significantly more effective than broad-leaved, deciduous species as a sink for particulates, but feel on balance their beneficial effect would outweigh this concern.