

Notes taken at a Public Meeting held at Iver Village Hall on Monday 20th May 2009 at 8 pm

The meeting was to seek the views of the public on the possible provision of a relief road which would entail the release of Green Belt land. The meeting was to inform the Parish Council's comments to the District Council on their Core Strategy documents only. It was a fact finding exercise.

There were 8 parish councillors present (Julian Wilson, Jeanette Watkins, Claire Mowat, Ruth Vigor-Hedderly, Pat Roberts, Sylvia Lidgate, Alan Oxley. Bill Lidgate arrived part way through the meeting. There were approximately 60 members of the public.

The meeting was chaired by the chairman of the Parish Council, Julian Wilson.

The chairman opened the meeting by thanking everyone for attending and showing an interest in the District Council's local development framework and core strategy consultation documents.

He said that there was a small document called – “help shape the future of South Bucks”, and copies were available at the meeting, which summarised the issues. There is also the full document entitled Core Strategy – Emerging Approach – available from the District Council or their web site. This document does not include provision of a relief road for traffic in Iver parish. The idea of a relief road has been discussed over at least the last 20 years by the Parish Council. The Local Development Framework will last until 2026. 1,880 new properties have to be built in South Bucks over the next twenty years and this averages out at 94 per year. The document defines the way South Bucks District Council sees things moving at present. It puts emphasis on Gerrards Cross, Beaconsfield and Burnham as the main areas of development and more development in areas close to Slough such as Iver and Richings Park. One of the key factors here is the Green Belt and whether this can be sacrificed for other purposes. To provide a relief road would mean giving up Green Belt land. The preferred route designated for HGVs at present is from the Ridgeway and Bardons up Thorney Lane North and then through the High Street and Wood Lane to Denham roundabout via the A412. The other route is through Thorney Lane South, Richings Way and North Park out to Sutton Lane and the M4 or M25 south. The view of the Parish Council for the last 20 years has been to re-route this traffic.

Other references to Iver in the Emerging Strategy document are to improve the quality of life in Iver and to improve facilities in Iver eg shops are limited and drowned by the noise of HGVs passing every 30 seconds throughout the day. Court Lane is listed as a strategic site. There has been unpleasant development there over the last 20 years and it is suggested that the site could be better used as an employment generating site with B1 use and one idea has been to use it as a police training centre. One of the reasons given for not needing a relief road in the Strategy document is that the development of Court Lane in this way would remove some of the HGVs. Class B1 is light industrial which would not involve HGVs.

One resident pointed out that other areas suffer as well as the High Street, such as Richings Way and North Park. The re-development of Court Lane to B1 would make

no significant difference as the HGV generating sites will move to Thorney Business Park on the opposite side of Thorney Lane.

There was a suggestion to re-designate the Ridgeway. There was also a comment about the possibility of getting rid of Thorney Business Park and placing restrictions on vehicle movements when giving planning permission. The chairman said that the District Council should respond to the Traffic Commissioner who deals with licences for HGV operations to try to get them refused. If planning permissions are given by BCC for mineral working sites then lorry movements are restricted but it falls to the individual operator to provide a mechanism for BCC to check the count and if this is not done then enforcement action is difficult. Capping on Thorney Business Park do not have a mechanism for counting lorry movements and enforcement actions will be taken at some time in the future.

Alan Oxley reported that he had the figures for lorry movements as provided by South Bucks District Council and these should be compared with an average for HGV movements on South Bucks roads of 3%.

High Street – 6.8%

North Park - 13.5%

Thorney Lane - 14.5%

Nora Sanders said that air pollution in the High Street sometimes exceeds what the EU considers safe to breathe and when that happens the road is supposed to be closed until the air clears.

The chairman responded that Court Lane is not suitable for residential accommodation because of the air quality and that a strip either side of the M25 through Iver is an Air Quality Management Area (which means that it does fall below EU standards). There is a monitor for air quality in the High Street outside the police station.

A resident stated that the amount of traffic at night is increasing and also vehicles go at high speeds at night. Can anything be done?

Another resident asked about the ownership of Court Lane.

Response. It is owned by one company who bought it in 2007.

Could a relief road go through Court Lane directly to the M25.

Response – probably not because the junction would be deemed to be too close to other junctions on that stretch of M25 (reason given for not having the Motorway Service Area there). Another resident pointed out that it could also create traffic back into Iver when the motorway was blocked for any reason as people might use it to get off or the police may use it to evacuate people.

Other possibilities that the chairman outlined for a relief road would be crossing the canal and the railway to the south of the Ridgeway but the cost of this is also very high.

Wendy Matthews said that from their Speedwatch figures it could be seen that much of the HGV traffic through Richings Park is not generated locally.

Another resident suggested a relief road via Iver Lane and onto the motorway from Palmers Moor Lane.

Another suggestion was that every residential and commercial development in Iver and Richings Park should put money into a kitty so that money is being built up towards a relief road. This money should be ring fenced for a relief road and the idea should be put into the plan now.

Claire Mowat said that it might be opening up a can of worms to suggest giving up Green Belt for a relief road. The issue of a developer providing a relief road means that Iver would get houses as well as a road.

Alan Oxley said that there are 2 issues

One of release of Green Belt for a road but actually Court Lane and Wilton Park (strategic sites in the plan for development) are Green Belt.

Secondly – do you have to give up green Belt for a project for a developer to provide the funds for a road?

This area will have something built at some point in the future without the District or Parish having any say because it will be deemed to be “in the National Interest”. This could be the Heathrow Hub or a Waste Transfer site. Either or both would probably be built on Green Belt. So there is a need to register the problem with HGVs through the village and Richings Park now.

Another resident suggested width restrictions through the High Street. Response from another resident was that there used to be islands in the road and they had to be removed because lorries passed them on the wrong side as did speeding cars etc thereby causing more danger.

Another resident said that generating new homes in Iver would be good for young families trying to get on the property ladder. Also a better bus service is needed (to get to Heathrow for work involves 2 buses). The infrastructure needs to be better.

What would a relief road cost compared to losing the life of a child one resident asked?

The chairman said that the regeneration of Iver is covered in the Core Strategy and it is recognised that there is not good infrastructure nor facilities in Iver. The development of properties would make it a much more sustainable community. The High Street could be re-generated with shops away from the road so that they would not be affected by HGVs.

The pinch points in Richings Way were mentioned along with the fact that wing mirrors from lorries overhang the pavements in Thorney Lane North and people have been hit by these (although no serious damage yet). There should be speed enforcement of 15/20 mph in these areas.

Joyce Jones asked if at the very least there could be 20 mph speed limits outside the schools (Iver Village Infants near the Village Hall and Iver Village Junior).

Another resident asked for a pedestrian crossing or traffic lights in Langley Park Road near the blind bend near the shops.

One resident complained about the state of repair of the roads and flooding issues but was told that this meeting was not the place to discuss it.

Mrs Vigor-Hedderly said that people could contact her with road repair issues.

Traffic lights and vehicle activated signs needed if not a relief road. As many lights and pedestrian crossings as possible to try and slow the traffic down.

Mrs Vigor-Hedderly responded to that by saying that the Parish Council had purchased 2 temporary speed indicator devices which would be used around the village to try to slow traffic and hoped that they would benefit the whole parish. She also said that she would ask Bucks County Council to do some assessments for pedestrian crossings and traffic lights.

What developments are being mooted? How far along the line are they?

The chairman said that there are no planning applications in but that Kebbell Homes have put a proposal to the parish council for providing a relief road which would run from Thorney Lane behind Barnes Way and Dutton Way to Wingroves Farm. This may not be the right place and it would also be paid for by a housing development in the same area.

Another suggestion was to get the occupiers of the Ridgeway to move to the Colnbrook bypass where there is space and then build houses there. This would give more housing for sustainability and remove the HGVs.

The chairman said that Bardons want to move their site and put housing there (Thorney Mill Lane).

Derek Jones said that in South Bucks District Council's original plan some years ago there was a by-pass mentioned which would go from the back of the Ridgeway to south of Wingroves Farm. The District Council has eliminated this from the new plans.

The chairman said that the regeneration of the High Street with the removal of the workshops next to the Audi garage had also been part of a previous plan but the owners were reluctant to sell. He asked whether a relief road from the Ridgeway to Mansion Lane would help enough?

Nora Sanders said that settlements should not spread out into the Green Belt because the Green Belt prevents villages ending up being joined together. If Green Belt is lost then Greater London would end up being joined to Slough. It is of national benefit not just local to prevent erosion of the Green Belt.

District Council are not keen on playing into the hands of developers. This is a dilemma. If a 13 platform station (Heathrow Hub) or a waste transfer site are built in Richings Park then this would be on Green Belt. If we get lumbered with one such major project then the scheme should include a relief road.

What percentage of Green Belt are we talking about for a relief road?

Alan Oxley responded - 600 metres by 20 metres for a route from Ridgeway to Mansion Lane but no idea what percentage this would be.

Cost of a relief road?

Alan Oxley responded that a figure he had from some years ago was 5 million pounds.

Wendy Matthews said that the Bison site alongside the railway will be used as a temporary storage area whilst they are lowering tracks and demolishing Dog Kennel Bridge. They are also re-building the bridge at Market Lane (Chequers Bridge) and will be finished by 2017. There would be a possibility of using the existing track to Bisons and continuing this along the railway to Chequers Bridge and then across the new bridge to get traffic off the local roads.

The chairman said that other concerns from the Emerging Approach document are other sites put forward by owners or developers for development such as Project Pinewood, Iver Heath Fields (although this is an anomaly as it is owned by the District Council). Other concerns are the approval of Crossrail which will mean road changes and the loss of Dog Kennel Bridge; the potential for a Heathrow Hub – major rail station for access to Heathrow – will take Green Belt land and houses; 3rd runway for Heathrow and the use for the Bison site which has been sold to Step Property.