Dear Sirs

**Proposed new A14 from Cambridge to Huntingdon**

In view of the strength of feeling here in Hilton to the new road scheme, Hilton Parish Council has taken the lead and in a series of public meetings has collected the views of our parishioners. With a clear mandate we are now campaigning for a better deal for Hilton.

We believe that Hilton will be significantly, and adversely, affected by the construction and operation of this proposed new road.

We are writing following the close of the initial consultation period to express our concerns over the handling of the consultation process which, we believe, has not been carried out in accordance with the “Planning Act 2008 – Guidance on the pre-application process”. It is certainly the case that neither the Highways Agency, nor Jacobs as their agent, were able to answer any substantive questions, nor were they able to provide important data which would be necessary to enable an informed view to be reached by interested parties.

**The choice of route**

In our view, there has been no serious consultation on the choice of route. The presentations we have seen are deficient in the following areas:

* They make no reference to consideration of whether rail has a part to play, particularly to alleviate the freight transport issue
* Although six road “options” were presented, all bar one are essentially the same route so it seems clear to us that the route had been pre-determined and there was to be no serious consultation on it, unlike the previous CHUMS scheme consultation where a variety of routes were considered.
* If the proposed route must be south of Huntingdon, no reasons have been provided as to why the route is quite so close to Hilton. We believe that the road could be constructed further to the north, without affecting adversely, other communities.

We believe that you should challenge the basis for selecting the proposed route as follows:

* A route to the north of the existing A14 has been proposed in the past (and, we believe, has the support of local communities such as Houghton and Wyton): HA should be required to explain why this did not even feature as an option during this latest consultation process, as over the intervening years much has changed in Cambridgeshire.
* Option 6, utilising the A428, seems to us to be the least disruptive option, yet the reasons for rejecting this option are unconvincing.
* The road could be constructed further to the north of Hilton and HA should be required to explain why they are not proposing this.

We also believe that HA should be required to disclose their assessment of why rail improvements do not form part of the overall considerations.

**Mitigation measures**

If the proposed route were to go ahead, the principal concerns of the Hilton community include the certainty of significant traffic intrusion and all forms of pollution; visual, noise, air quality and night time light. When we questioned Jacobs, they were unable to provide any data at all which would help us to reach a conclusion on the adequacy of measures to mitigate these issues before the consultation process ended. Since then we have received some drawings which confirmed our fears that the road will be elevated as it passes close to Hilton. In addition there are no effective mitigation measures shown, in particular bunding; essential to reduce noise or light pollution.

The “Planning Act 2008 – Guidance on the pre-application process” sets out a number of important criteria for an appropriate consultation process:

* “Consultees will need sufficient information on a project” together with “sufficient time to be allowed to consider detailed technical input, especially regarding impacts”. Jacobs have admitted that the technical inputs are still being compiled so it is clear that this guidance has not been followed.
* “Local people are particularly well placed to comment on what the impact of proposals on their local community might be, or what mitigating measures might be appropriate; people should have as much influence as is realistic and possible”, yet we were told by an HA representative that only the minimum mitigating measures would be put in place, (now confirmed by the latest drawings). HA has demonstrated that it has made its decisions and we can only conclude that it has no intention of acting on the consultation.

Therefore, we believe that HA should be required to:

* produce appropriate data to enable a considered review of their proposals and
* consult further with local communities and other interested parties once the latter have had a proper opportunity to consider the data.

**Next steps**

As we understand it, HA has not submitted its application, and does not plan to until around October, although it could do so before then. We would wish to register as an interested party in order to continue to contribute to future consultations and would be grateful if you would note this.

Given the number of questions still unanswered for Hilton villagers, we hope you will consider our concerns over the consultation process which, in our view, has not been carried out in accordance with Government guidelines and lacks clarity. We are keen to enter into a dialogue and continue the consultation process in the spirit in which the planning Act guidance originally intended. We look forward to your response to this letter.

Yours Faithfully,

Peter Balicki,

Chairman, Hilton Parish Council