

THE RT. HON. ANDREA LEADSOM MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Miss Elizabeth T Cox
Town Clerk
Towcester Town Council
Town Hall
86 Watling Street
Towcester
NN12 6BS

20th November 2017

Ref: AL/TG/1711

Dear Miss Cox,

Thank you for copying me into your letter to Yvonne Rees, Joint Chief Executive Officer at South Northamptonshire District Council, with respect of the Towcester Relief Road.

I trust that Towcester Town Council received my response, dated 10th August, to your earlier letter of the 21st July. I have attached a copy for convenience.


I don't recognise the Town Council's view that the Towcester Relief Road is nothing more than a service road for the Towcester Vale expansion. As you will know, my twin priorities for the Towcester Relief Road are for it to be built by 2020 and for it to become the main route for HGVs and through-traffic. These ambitions are shared by the District and County Councils, who recognise it is vital that we remove unnecessary traffic from the centre of the town to improve air quality and reduce congestion.

The relief road is designed with a 7.3m-wide carriageway with 1m-wide hard (tarmac) verges. Northants Highways have confirmed that this is the standard they would expect for a main A-road, and is the same spec as the Daventry Link Road (A45 Flore/Weedon bypass) currently under construction, as well as the new distributor roads/bypass around the western side of Northampton. The relief road has been specifically designed to handle all HGV traffic currently routed through Towcester, with a 40mph speed restriction, and has been modelled on traffic growth through to 2026 with the assumption that any increase from 2026 to 2030 would be minimal.

Furthermore, the traffic modelling in the Environmental Impact Statement for the Towcester Southern Extension has assumed a 20mph speed limit along the A5 through the town centre with a 7.5T lorry ban, and is expected to result in a 100 per cent decrease in HGV traffic through the town centre save for deliveries and local access. The Highways Agency, the predecessor to Highways England, was a consultee on the EIA and the corresponding Transport Assessment.

Along with the District and County Councils, I have been absolutely clear with Highways England that it is a fundamental issue to remove HGVs from the centre of Towcester, with Watling Street then having traffic calming measures imposed. At a recent working group meeting

Member of Parliament for South Northamptonshire



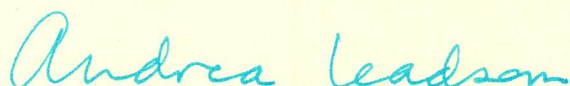
with the two councils, the developers, Northants Highways and Highways England, I said that the detrunking of this section of the A5 had been the objective all along; the District and County Councils agreed with this and it was highlighted to Highways England that they have known this through months and years of correspondence and meetings.

At the meeting, Highways England agreed to come back with a signing strategy for the Towcester Relief Road, and to work with the County Council to look at how the A5 can be detrunked.

As the Town Council has no statutory responsibility over planning or highways, it does not receive a standing invitation to attend meetings of the working group.

I hope that this letter will reassure the Town Council that we are all working toward our shared goals of building the Towcester Relief Road as soon as possible and the detrunking of the A5 Watling Street through the town centre. As always, if I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

With best wishes,



The Rt Hon. Andrea Leadsom MP
Member of Parliament for South Northamptonshire

[Enc.]

Cc: Ms Yvonne Rees | Joint Chief Executive | South Northants District Council
Cllr Ian McCord | Leader of the Council | South Northants District Council
Cllr Ian Morris | Transport Portfolio Holder | Northants County Council
Cllr Adil Sadygov | Towcester & Roade | Northants County Council

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Miss Elizabeth Cox
Town Clerk
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10th August 2017

Ref: AL/TG/1708

Dear Miss Cox,

Thank you for your letter on the Towcester Relief Road (TRR).

I completely agree with you that it is vital that, once the Relief Road is complete, the A5 Watling Street through the town centre is detrunked to take HGVs and through-traffic out of Towcester. The whole purpose of the TRR is to reduce congestion and to improve air quality, neither of which will be achieved if the local road network is not realigned.

I am continuing to work with all partners including the District and County Councils, the developers, Highways England, and the Department for Transport to explore how we can do this. My understanding is that, at present, Northants Highways would be responsible for the maintenance of the TRR and Highways England would continue to be responsible for this section of the trunked A5.

I have written to Chris Wragg at Northants Highways and the Minister for Transport, John Hayes MP, to ask whether it would be as simple as switching the responsibilities for the two roads, to point out that the A5 Watling Street must be detrunked as well as appropriate traffic calming measures imposed, and to see what other measures can be taken to ensure that the TRR is built to trunk-road standard. I have been completely clear that the developers must not be let off their financial responsibility to build the TRR, and have asked whether the recently announced Transport Investment Strategy (purposefully earmarked for improvements such as bypasses and relief roads) could be used to "top-up" the difference between a non-trunked TRR and one which would resolve the HGV / through-traffic issue.

I will update via my website (www.andrealeadsom.com) once I know more, and please do direct any interested parties to look there for more information in due course.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andrea Leadsom".

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