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Please ask for: Anne Brereton

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Dear Mr Wilson

Berkswell Parish Council's View on Idea of a Balsall Common Bypass

Thank you for your letter dated 18th April 2016 regarding the above. Firstly, I must offer my sincere apologies for the delay in responding to you.

It is useful for your Council to have set out in clear terms what its views on the potential for a bypass are.

It is important that this issue is not considered in isolation and should be part of a debate as to what the vision is for Balsall Common, as part of the Local Plan Review (LPR) and emerging neighbourhood plan (NP), ie as a place, what should it look like by 2033? Then it should become clearer as to what may be required to achieve this vision.

Of course, at a detailed level, one of the starting points is the conclusion from the 2013 Solihull Local Plan which noted with regard to the by pass lines the following:

"Bypass Improvement Lines

Three longstanding bypass improvement lines, at Knowle, Hockley Heath and Balsall Common, were retained in the Council's Unitary Development Plan 2006 pending further analysis of the M42 Active Traffic Management (ATM) Scheme and an understanding of progression of potential widening of M42. The Council has reviewed, in liaison with the Highways Agency and Warwickshire County Council, the need to retain the three improvement lines within this Local Plan.

Active Traffic Management (ATM) of the M42 through the Borough has proven highly successful in reducing congestion and delay to motorists whilst increasing journey time reliability; and, whilst land remains safeguarded, potential proposals to widen the M42 have progressed no further since the publishing of the UDP.

It is apparent however that the focus of transport investment has shifted significantly since initial consideration of the bypass lines. Given the impact of the current economic climate, and the drive to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, it is considered no longer appropriate to deliver large scale, costly transport improvements in the form of new roads. Transport policy is now focused more towards the management of travel demands, encouraging a shift away from car use and towards public transport, walking and cycling.

Furthermore, the principal purpose of the three bypass improvement lines would be to remove traffic from Knowle, Hockley Heath and Balsall Common centres; and it is therefore conceivable that the implementation of such bypass lines could be detrimental to the vitality and viability of the centres. In the light of the national commitment to sustainable economic growth, measures to increase footfall in centres and to manage the various different needs of a centre in a cohesive way that encourages its sense of place, would be more appropriate.

As such, the Council considers that priorities for transport investment, particularly in relation to local centres, have altered significantly since the initial safeguarding of bypass improvement lines at Knowle, Hockley Heath and Balsall Common; and therefore that the need for their retention no longer exists."

Both the LPR and NP should consider whether, and to what extent, the wider context has changed since the SLP. For instance this will include the arrival of HS2 and the need to plan for additional housing growth not envisaged by the SLP. One of the recurring themes to emerge from the Scope, Issues and Options consultation, is the need to consider what infrastructure requirements there may be as a result of additional development. This will need to be evidenced, and this will be true for what ever level of development may be considered appropriate for Balsall Common. Both the LPR and NP will need to be based on a sound and proportionate evidence base.

I am particularly pleased that both Berkswell Parish Council and Balsall Parish Council have joined together to bring forward a neighbourhood plan. As and when the Council develops its evidence base for the LPR, I will ensure it is shared with others as soon as possible so that they too can take it into account as they develop their plans.

Yours sincerely



Anne Brereton
Director of Managed Growth

cc Councillor David Bell
Councillor Ian Courts