

**Salisbury Campaign for Better Transport**

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Jacqui Ashman  
Network Planning Manager  
**The Highways Agency**  
2/19-E Temple Quay House  
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January 14<sup>th</sup> 2008

Dear Mrs Ashman

**Re: Solstice Park Planning Application, SDC Ref: S/2007/2518**

We were surprised to see that the Highways Agency have submitted a letter to SDC in respect of the above planning application indicating that *"we are content that the proposed development will have no adverse impact on the Strategic Road Network"*. [HA letter ref: HA004/001/004015 dated 7.1.2008].

This seems at odds with the Highways Agency's appraisal of the state of the A303 back in 2003. Referring to the section of the A303 through the World Heritage Site (WHS) and past Stonehenge they stated that:

*"In the summer, principally at weekends, traffic builds up along this section of the A303 and is often at a standstill. Residents of Winterbourne Stoke suffer from the A303 running through the village. On average, between 22,000 and 33,000 vehicles, many of which are large lorries, travel along the road each day. This is more than a single carriageway road can cope with satisfactorily, so queues are a regular and predictable sight. Congestion is inconvenient, but traffic accidents are the other inevitable outcome of roads under stress. There are accident blackspots on the approaches to Winterbourne Stoke and at the junction with the A344 at Stonehenge Bottom."* [A303 Stonehenge Improvement Explanation of the Scheme and Non-Technical Summary of the Environmental Statement, Highways Agency, June 2003.]

A more recent report from the Highways Agency specifically refers to *"two particular junctions on the A303 (Longbarrow Crossroads and Countess Roundabout) where congestion is a material factor"* and refers to *"the congestion problems that will arise along this section of the A303 as a result of the general growth in traffic"*. [A303 Stonehenge Improvement – Scheme Review Partial Solutions – A303/A344 Junction Clouse, Highways Agency, September 2007]

Given the cancellation of the A303 Stonehenge improvement scheme in Dec 2007 there is now no prospect of the current single carriageway road being upgraded. We note too that the Highways Agency has also put work on the A303/A358 South Petherton to M5 Taunton scheme on hold while the implications of the decision to cancel the Stonehenge scheme are considered.

The proposed Regional Distribution centre at Solstice Park is predicted to add approx 3.5% to traffic peak hour flows (ES, Table 5.10). **The Highways Agency seem to be of the view that there is already more traffic than the A303 can cope with on the single carriageway section of the A303 to the west of Solstice Park so how can they feel that the additional traffic, especially HGV traffic, generated by this development will lead to “no adverse impact”?**

The Transport Assessment provided by the developer does not appear to model the effect of the additional traffic generated by this proposal on the delays at Countess and Longbarrow roundabouts. Since the Highways Agency have expressed particular concern about congestion at these junctions it would seem prudent to attempt to quantify this effect. The cancellation of the A303 Stonehenge improvement scheme represents a material change to policies in the adopted Development Plan and we would expect the Highways Agency to have conducted a full assessment of the impacts of this proposed development on the strategic road network in the light of this change. **Could the Highways Agency please provide data which models the effect of the increased traffic from this proposal on the A303 at Countess and Longbarrow roundabouts?**

The Highways Agency are members of the Stonehenge World Heritage Site Management Group and presumably therefore committed to the objectives of the World Heritage Site Management Plan, which includes Objective 23 “within the WHS ... to reduce traffic movements and congestion, improve safety and enhance the historic environment”. **How does the Highways Agency feel that the sanctioning of proposals which will introduce additional traffic, much of it HGV traffic, through the World Heritage Site fits with this objective?**

Finally, we note the proposals for Andover Airfield (Test Valley Borough Council application ref 07/01951/OUTN) would also generate very significant volumes of traffic and HGV movements on the A303 some 10 miles to the east of Solstice Park. **Can you confirm whether the Highways Agency have considered the impact of the Andover Airfield scheme in combination with the Solstice Park proposals, and whether both have been considered fully in the light of the cancellation of the A303 Stonehenge improvement?**

We would welcome the Highways Agency’s comments on these points, and feel you should also copy your response to Salisbury District Council’s planning officer (copied on this letter) in view of the relevance of these matters to the determination of this application.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Willmot  
Salisbury Campaign for Better Transport

Copy: Mr A Bidwell, Development Control, Salisbury District Council