

Auldearn Community Council



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Director of Major Transport Infrastructure Projects
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Dear Sirs

A96 Trunk Road (Inverness to Nairn (including Nairn Bypass)) Draft Orders 201[] - Consultation feedback.

Auldearn Community Council wish to make the following comments on the proposals for the construction of the dualled A96, as defined in the draft road orders, and associated documents.

a) Nairn East Junction

The design of the Nairn East junction is a matter of major concern.

Having been relocated to take account of potential flooding considerations, it will be a highly visible construction, in a rural landscape.

While previous designs showed the junction to be of a similar scale, the fact that it was located in a cutting helped it to be much better integrated into the landscape. This would have substantially reduced its impact on the visual amenity, limited issues with lights from the vehicles being highly visible at night and resulted in lower noise levels in the area, more particularly, the nearest noise sensitive dwellings.

A junction with a lower elevation would also reduce the need to transport in massive quantities of material that would be needed to construct the road at the elevation shown on the current drawings.

We consider the positioning and elevation of this junction is unacceptable, and that a better considered engineering solution should be adopted.

b) Noise

Detailed noise reduction and shielding measures are not included in the proposed design of the road and, with some dwellings expected to be exposed to increased noise levels in excess of 10dB, which would see a doubling of the perceived volume, it has to be understood that many people are extremely concerned about the impact on their enjoyment of their amenity and quality of life, when compared to noise levels experienced at present.

Understandably, serious concerns have been raised about the lack of detailed mitigating measures being offered to reduce the impact of increased noise levels on affected dwellings. With such increases in noise levels, mitigation and screening must be an integral part of the scheme, and the details must be made available, prior to the project proceeding. It is entirely unreasonable for those affected to be offered the promise of mitigation, without any details as to the form those measures would take.

c) Design of the access road to the dwellings at Courage

The junction of this new access road will join the de-trunked A96 approximately 150 metres to the west of the centre point of the flyover which will carry the road over the dual carriageway. This is a stopping point for the school bus collecting and dropping off children. It is also a location for waste collection vehicles to stop whilst collecting, for large unwieldy farm vehicles turning and for domestic and commercial traffic leaving the Courage access and turning eastward across the main road. The design of the junction at present does not show any consideration for the safe completion of any of the above manoeuvres.

The obvious concern is that traffic heading west, crossing the new flyover, could be unexpectedly presented with a stationary bus or slowly turning vehicles on the road ahead of them and, even if they managed to stop in time, following vehicles would have reduced scope to do so, with possibly serious consequences. We feel that this junction could be better designed.

d) Junction near Hardmuir Toll, allowing access via de-trunked A96, into Auldearn from the east.

The meeting recognised the importance of ensuring that access remains into Auldearn from the east but the positioning and design of the junction is a cause of concern. This type of junction is similar to some on the A9, at the end of overtaking lanes, and there were very well publicised issues with one of those junctions, which resulted the newly constructed overtaking lane having to be modified to reduce the risk of accidents with vehicles crossing the carriageway in front of oncoming traffic.

The design brief for dualling of the A96 offers all grade separated junctions, so it is difficult to understand how consideration has been given to the construction of a junction that will see vehicles crossing the carriageway, from stationary, within a few hundred metres of the point the dual carriageway returns to single carriageway.

e) Impact on amenity and property values

The project will have a substantial impact on the enjoyment of the amenity of a great number of people, with increased noise levels and impact of the visual amenity and, while they will be affected by the road during the construction phase and when it comes into use, many would not be entitled to any compensation, even though the value of their property may be impacted as a result. No one should experience any net detrimental effect to their environment, without recourse to seeking compensation for the loss of their amenity, or reduction in the value of their property.

Roger Milton

Chairman