

12 Forcefield Road
Cullompton
EX15 1QB

1 March 2014



Local Plan Review Options Consultation

Objection to Policy CU14 Eastern Relief Road.

The Core Strategy 2026 document (adopted July 2007) proposed "completing a relief road system" (COR 14 paragraph d). The subsequent Allocations and Infrastructure Development Plan Document (AIDPD) dated January 2011 Policy AL/CU/14 has defined this relief road as being the Eastern Relief Road through the CCA fields. It is not clear on how this relief road route was established as there appears to have been no other consultation on the issues.

There are many reasons why a route through the CCA fields is unacceptable, including:

1. The fields are, (or could be with added enthusiasm from the Town Council), one of the few real assets of Cullompton. It is an area of relative tranquillity and safety for the many daily users, dog walkers, exercisers, pram pushers, cyclists and the like. It is not possible for such an environment to be maintained with a major road crossing it;
2. The only available route which would avoid crossing the fields is adjacent to the railway line and this would require the removal of both the cricket and football fields;
3. The development proposals contained in the draft Local Plan would justify increased provision of green space, not the loss of existing space;
4. The proposal (AIDPD paragraph 6.79) to close the road during floods must not be taken seriously. The events of winter 2013 and 2014 should be sufficient to push this idea into the long grass. During flood events alternative routes would have to be available and this would prevent the imposition of traffic management measures in the town centre required to encourage (or force) vehicles to use the route. In addition roads which flood require substantial additional maintenance and can you imagine the media coverage when Cullompton's nice new road is inundated. The Romans were well aware of the need to keep road foundations above water and the science has not advanced.
5. A hard paved surface increases surface water run-off and any requisite SUDS storage system to reduce flood risk downstream will not work with the CCA fields high water table.
6. The route would not be attractive to drivers north of Colebrook Lane and certainly not to drivers north of Knowle Lane, substantially increasing their distance to the motorway junction. As the current and proposed major development is north of Knowle Lane and north of Tiverton Road it is unlikely that the route will attract much, if any, traffic from the town.

7. There is no viable development along the route that could potentially provide part of the infrastructure. To achieve the route by the year 2026 through developer contributions elsewhere in the town would require a contribution in excess of £11,000 per property in addition to contributions for other essential infrastructure (option 1: 78 market dwellings per year). To achieve it earlier, which must be assumed if the need is already established, would cost much more per property. Justification for such a contribution from developments which would never potentially use the route would be unlikely.

The reasons given (AIDPD paragraph 6.81) for not pursuing alternative routes are flawed:

1. A western relief road has effectively been scuppered by the failure to link Swallow Way to Tiverton Road with an all purpose road without frontage development. One must assume this was not a deliberate policy to enhance the justification for the Eastern Relief Road, merely a mistake in judgement by planners. It may be possible to rectify the situation by creating a route through the westward development extension but the further out the route goes the less will be its attraction.
2. An additional M5 junction is accepted as not viable.
3. A road to the east of the M5 is certainly a viable option and has several merits:
 - a. It would avoid the flood plain almost completely;
 - b. It could be part provided by the development of East Culm Farm;
 - c. It could potentially be part provided by further development in the CU11 area;
 - d. It would link with the industrial area at Week Farm;
 - e. The motorway bridge is adequate and strengthening of the railway bridge and realigning the approach would be compensated by the lesser length of new route;
 - f. It would reduce traffic pressure on Station Road and the difficult approach to the M5 junction over the railway bridge.
4. Traffic management measures could substantially improve the town situation in the short and medium term. Restrictions on loading hours and the services of a traffic warden would remove most of the congestion during the day, and with it the poor air quality. Removal of on street parking in Tiverton Road would aid bus movement. Much greater improvement would be achieved by spending a small part of the potential £10.7 million cost of the Eastern Relief Road on the purchase and removal of the ex HSBC Bank and adjacent four cottages and the construction of a decent junction with space for a town centre feature (or even parking). Removal (and rebuilding) of the disgusting public toilets and widening of Station Road on the junction approach would improve capacity of that junction. With a good link from Swallow Way to Tiverton Road it would then be quite feasible to restrict traffic in the town centre.

M Helliwell, (Mr)
B.Eng., C.Eng., M.I.C.E.