

**A5 – M1 LINK (DUNSTABLE NORTHERN BYPASS)
PUBLIC INQUIRY**

PROOF OF EVIDENCE

**JOHN ROWE
REPRESENTING**

**THE CHILTERN SOCIETY
(Rep 11)**



We care for the Chilterns

Fox Meadow
Water End Road,
Potten End,
BERKHAMSTED,
Herts. HP4 2SH.
Tel: 01442-862619.
6 January 2012

The Inspector
Dunstable Bypass Inquiry
C/O Mr. Graham Groom
Persona Associates Limited
2nd Floor (East Suite),
Barclay House,
51, Bishopric,
HORSHAM,
West Sussex. RH12 1QJ

Dear Sir,

**A5-M1 Link (Dunstable Northern Bypass)
Representation of the Chiltern Society to the Public Inquiry**

1/. Introduction

There follows The Chiltern Society Rights of Way Groups' representation to the inquiry.

The Chiltern Society is an amenity society whose objectives are 'The care of the Chiltern Hills', The area covered by the Society stretches from Goring on Thames north east along the Chiltern escarpment to Hitchin and includes most of southern Bedfordshire as far north as Toddington and Barton-Le-Clay. The Rights of Way group is one of a number of active conservation groups of the Society. Our objective is to keep the Chiltern area rights of way open and in good condition and to encourage their use so that people may enjoy the Chiltern countryside away from towns and traffic.

The Society has around 7500 members, both individual and corporate, the latter being primarily local authorities and parish councils.

I am one of two Area Secretaries of the Rights of Way group looking after the area of southern Bedfordshire covered by our Society; my part of the area includes the whole of Houghton Regis Parish.

2.0. DUNSTABLE NORTHERN BYPASS A5-MI LINK

I made the comments below by email on March 1st 2010 on behalf of the Chiltern Society Rights of Way Group on the side roads orders in the Environmental statement. I received a response from Karen Green, project manager C8 on the 20th April.

ISSUE 1.

2.0.1a. Informal Road Crossing Figure 4.1.2 (Outline Statement of Case, Nov 2011)
 We are concerned about the informal road crossing, shown crossing the A5120 south of its junction with the new Bypass. The online diagrams do not seem to show a central reservation. We believe a central reservation is essential for the safety of walkers from Footpath a11 and also cyclists crossing this road to use the diverted paths to cross the new bypass on the Icknield Way over bridge (Structure No. 2 on Figure 4.1.1, Statement of case) near the line of Footpath 13. Many walkers may hesitate to use the long diversion anyway, but if they have to cross the A5120 on a crossing without a safe central reservation, they will almost certainly prefer to continue across the bypass on the level.

2.0.1b Ms. Green confirms in her reply of the 20th April 2010 (ref:HA 065/032/00075) that no central reservation is proposed at this point. We believe that this is not acceptable. Ms Green states that an island would impact on the frontage of The Orchard, but looking at Figure 4.1.2 it would seem to be possible to move the crossing further north away from The Orchard property. Locally the Redbourn bypass has informal crossings with no central reservations and there have been fatal accidents to walkers crossing on these and we believe the A5120 to be a busier road.

ISSUE 2,

2.0.2a. Icknield Way Over bridge (Structure No. 2 on Figure 4.1.1 Statement of case)
 We are puzzled as to why the bridge, which is called the Icknield Way overbridge is not nearer the line of Footpath 40 and hence the Icknield Way. The Icknield Way would seem to be the most important route crossing this bridge. Moving the Bridge westward would make little difference to the cyclists and the diversion for walkers using Footpath a11 is already so long, that most walkers will probably continue their walk on Footpaths 13 or 40 anyway.

2.0.2b Ms Green gives four reasons for the position of the Icknield Way Overbridge in her reply of 20th April 2010 (ref:HA 065/032/00075).

1. Diversion distances for Footpath 40 (Icknield Way)
2. Diversion Distances for Footpath 13
3. Diversion Distances for users of Footpath A11 and the A5120
4. The vertical alignment of the proposed A5-M1 link.

The position was apparently chosen from a balance of the first 3 items and the vertical alignment. We would suggest that the position should be chosen from the position of item 1 (The Icknield Way footpath) and the vertical alignment (item 4), ignoring items 2 and 3. We would hope this would move the bridge closer to Footpath 40 (The Icknield Way)

ISSUE 3.

2.0.3a. Figure 4.1.1 (Outline Statement of Case) Houghton Regis Footpath 29:

We think that the fact that this path joins the roadside fence at an undefined point and then follows the fence to a set of steps up the embankment to use Thorn Farm overbridge is unnecessary. It would be better to divert it in a straight line from the A5 to the bottom of the steps up the Thorn farm overbridge embankment, as illustrated on Figure 1 attached. Otherwise in future, the definitive line of the path is unlikely to be used, as walkers crossing the open field would aim for the visible bridge and steps. It would also be more pleasant for walkers not having to walk alongside the new road for some distance. It has also been our experience in other locations that the farmer prefers to mark a path on the shortest route which is a straight line from the A5 to the steps.

2.0.3b. In her reply of 20th April 2010 (ref:HA 065/032/00075) Ms Green refers to a meeting at Chalgrove Golf Club. Unfortunately I was on holiday then, but our Society has been putting forward the view that Footpath 29 should be moved to a straight line from the A5 to the steps ever since the initial consultations. Ms Green says she is prepared to raise the issue with the landowner, I hope she will. She also states that if the outcome is positive for the diversion, Central Bedfordshire Council could promote an order. We think it extremely unlikely that Central Bedfordshire Council would promote an order, due to the cost, as they are short of funds and also because their definitive map officers are already overloaded. Some years ago when a similar situation arose with the M25, the then Highways Authority promoted an order themselves to straighten a footpath in a similar situation.

ISSUE 4.

2.0.4b. Figure 4.1.3 (Outline Statement of Case) Chalton Footpath 16:

This path suffers from a similar problem to Footpath 29 above, although much less severe. Again we think it would be preferable if this path was also diverted so that it joins Footpath 5 by the access to the overbridge bridge.

2.0.4b. In her reply of 20th April 2010 Ms Green suggests the provision of steps to enable users to take a direct route onto the approach ramp to the bridge. In this case this seems satisfactory, as the misalignment of the path is much less severe.

3.0. Summary.

Issue 1
We believe it is essential from a safety point of view that the informal crossing on the A5120 South of the Bypass has a central reservation. North of the bypass Pedestrians will be able to use the Pegasus crossing.

Issue 2
We believe it is desirable for the Icknield Way overbridge to be as close to the line of the Icknield Way footpath as possible.

Issue 3
We believe it would more convenient for all concerned if Houghton Regis Footpath 29 was moved to a straight line from the A5 to the steps for the bridge over the bypass. We would ask that the Highways Agency makes the order to achieve this, as it is very unlikely Central Bedfordshire Council would be willing to do so.

Issue 4.
We accept that the provision of steps as suggested will meet most of our concerns here.

Yours Sincerely



John M Rowe
Area Secretary
Chiltern Society, Rights of Way Group.

Documents referred to:

Karen Green's reply to my submission Ref: HA 065/032/000075
Outline Statement of Case (November 2011) Figures 4.1.1, 4.1.2 and 4.1.3.

FIGURE 1.

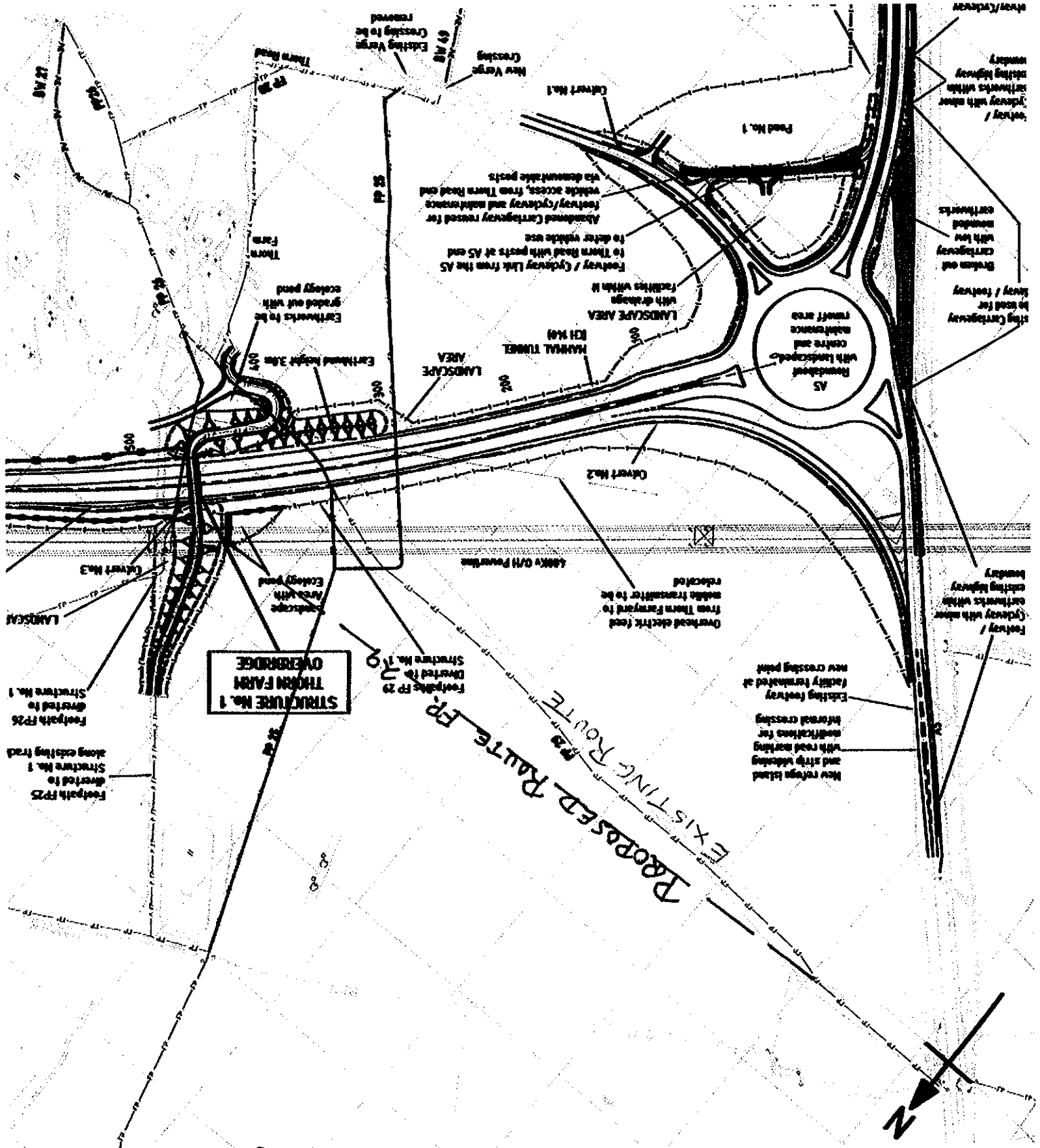


FIGURE 1.