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## Draft Transport Strategy Consultation

Bapchild Parish Council would like to make the following observations with regards to the consultation of the Transport Strategy Document.

### Road Network

The strategy document states in regard to the proposed A2/M2 link road that

“to examine opportunities for the further development of Sittingbourne town centre, the A/M2 link road will need to be considered in detail”

“this will provide Sittingbourne with a new access to the M2 and relieve the A249 interchange”

And also with regard to the Northern Relief Road that

“once the NRR is completed from the A249 to the A2 then there is likely to be an increase in the amount of traffic using this section of the A2”

The above are, all sighted as the reasons why we must have an A2/M2 link road. However we can find no mention of how the A2/M2 link road was selected as the solution in the first instance, it appears to have simply appeared on the back of a twenty year ambition by Swale Borough Councillors to create an orbital ring road around Sittingbourne.

Surely what we should be asking of any future feasibility study, is that it should, examine all possible options for relieving the extra traffic generated by the Northern Relief Road and not simply be a study of one possible option.

There appears to be little evidence that the results of first feasibility study, which cost the tax payer £300,000, have been taken into account. This study which took place less than 18 months ago, concluded that the A2/M2 Link road was not a viable option.

The Highways Agency has already dismissed any notion of a new junction on the M2, and quite rightly so, as the use of a Motorway to solve local transportation issues is a non-starter. And we firmly believe that rather than relieving traffic from the A249 interchange, it will merely change traffic patterns as we see an increase in traffic from the M2 as a result of the new road. This could possible even result in queues forming on the M2 itself.

It is our belief that this road is inextricably linked with the Kent Science Park and the primary reason why it is the only solution even being considered. Swale Borough Council has stated that:

“The road would provide opportunities identified within the Borough Council Draft Economic Development Strategy by facilitating development **around** the Kent Science Park.”

“It is crucial to the delivery of a step change in economic performance that access to Kent Science Park is improved, in a manner that enables a **significant expansion** of the site.”

We have some serious reservations about the merit of producing another feasibility study at this stage. It is our view that any study conducted now will only be limited use as the full extent of the NRR impact, the way in which this venture is to be funded and the exact scale of growth allowed at the Kent Science Park are all, at this time, unquantifiable. We have serious misgivings that the Kent Science Park is to fund the feasibility study and consider this to be a major conflict of interest.

The previous stretch of the Northern Relief Road to gain funding was only one of four projects in the entire UK to do so, and yet the Borough Council is proposing that both the final section of the NRR and the A2/M2 link road are to be funded from central government. While we would agree that all major infrastructure should be paid for in this manner, it does seem rather unlikely in reality.

It is our concern that any feasibility study conducted on this premise will ultimately be worthless.

Building another relief road as a solution to the congestion that might be created by the Northern Relief Road not only goes against policies laid out in this very document, but shows that the NRR has either been a complete failure before it has even been implemented or that the surrounding land will be so over developed that it negates the very purpose for which it was conceived. Essentially all the Northern Relief Road does is displace traffic from the town centre and open up new development opportunities which add even more traffic.

## **Rail Services**

We are concerned that little information has been made public with regard to the major changes that will be introduced in 2009 when the CTRL domestic services are launched. We are not convinced that the direct link between Faversham and Sittingbourne to St Pancras Station will be as well received as you obviously believe it will be.

The loss of services to Victoria and in particular Cannon Street, which operate only a limited service anyway, will not prove popular and create unacceptable levels of overcrowding. Commuters from Swale will be and large already be employed in locations within close proximity to either Victoria or Cannon Street. Many of those working in the city would also not purchase tickets which include tube travel.

This isn't a case of creating more options with a high speed service to London, but one of removing existing choices and replacing them with a higher priced service which will warrant additional journeys on the tube.

It is therefore questionable whether for example someone working in the city would ultimately save that much time, but it is certain that it will be a great deal more expensive.

With reduced services from stations such as Newington and Teynham it may encourage increased traffic and parking problems for Sittingbourne as some commuters commute into Sittingbourne to catch a train.

There is also some danger in this strategy in so much as its success would actually create an increase in the popularity of Sittingbourne as a commuter haven.

Yours Faithfully  
Andy Hudson  
Chairman, Bapchild Parish Council