

1. Please provide details of the member(s) submitting the request:

Committee Member:

(1) Name: _MOLLIE GROOM_ Signature: _Mollie Groom_

Or additional 4 Members if not Overview and Scrutiny Committee Member

(2) Name: _____ Signature: _____

(3) Name _____ Signature: _____

(4) Name: _____ Signature: _____

(5) Name: _____ Signature: _____

2. **What would you like scrutinised?**

(Please state the service Area, Council Activity or topic for scrutiny)

Croft Road/Hay Lane link to J16 (situated in the Parish of Lydiard Tregoz).

When Swindon Borough Council granted themselves planning permission on 24th January 2004 for the development of the Southern Development Area of Swindon, also known as the Front Garden, they departed from the transport route (the Southern Relief Road) which had appeared in the Swindon Transport Plan 1999-2000. SBC had previously argued strenuously for the SRR on the grounds that it was much needed to benefit the traffic in Old Town and the SDA would be a means of bringing it forward. The tunnel route does not benefit the traffic in Old Town and this aim has had to be deleted from the Swindon Local Plan.

We feel that this matter needs to be reviewed before it is adopted in the Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan for the following reasons:

1. The proposed road conflicts with government policies, Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan policies, to reduce dependence on the car because:
 - a) Journeys along the M4 are encouraged;
 - b) Local traffic is forced to use J16 of the M4 and so make journeys longer
 - c) The bottleneck at the Croft Road end is worsened;
 - d) The tunnel route fails to take the opportunity to have a public transport/ rail/road interchange, cross the railway and so benefit traffic in Old Town;
 - e) Fails to connect North and South Swindon which business and residents requested in consultations.

We feel that the traffic models should be challenged, bearing in mind that in 2004 just traffic entering and leaving the Motorway exceeds capacity at certain times of the day. The Police give continual warnings for caution to be exercised following accidents at J16. When Swindon Borough Council granted themselves planning permission (SBC are the administrative authority and own the majority of the land in the Southern Development Area) in January 2004 their Transport officer predicted an 89% increase in the volume of traffic.

The Local Plan Inspector at the SBC Inquiry commented that:

“ There does not appear to have been a comprehensive comparison of alternative road schemes for the SDA.”

3. **Why would you like this matter examined?**

(Please provide evidence on why you think this matter is relevant for scrutiny)

Following the work of Scott Wilson (consultants - who were engaged by a group of concerned local residents) there have been changes in circumstances since the planning meeting of January 4th and it is now recognised that:

1. **The rail crossing route (please see attached map) is technically feasible;**
2. **The greater crested newts are in the South West corner, not where the Great Western Way runs close to the railway;**
3. A bridge would not be so prominent in the landscape because at that point the road is some 3-5 metres higher than the railway;
4. **Local traffic would not be forced to go through M4 Junction 16 if the rail crossing route were used; and**
5. **There would be no ransom costs of the rail-crossing route.**

It would seem that the decision was based on false premises.

We also question a possible prejudicial conflict of interest on the part of Halcrow:

- i) Swindon-based Halcrow were authors of the SWARMMS Report (one third of which was occupied by the Swindon area);
- ii) It was the SWARMMS Report that first showed options 1 and 2 for Junction 16 and the tunnel route forms part of one of the options;
- iii) Halcrow work for Swindon (via DPDS I understand)
- iv) WCC commissioned Halcrow as consultants to do an **independent** assessment of J16.
- v) Why were Halcrow commissioned by WCC?

I understand we have a right to insist upon a full and detailed comparative assessment of all viable routes which should have been done by the promoters of the planning application or subsequently requested by WCC Development Control staff before they accepted the proposal.

We therefore request that the situation is reviewed and remedied.

4. **What action have you taken to investigate this matter?**

- Have you contacted the relevant service department / Head of Service
- Have you contacted the responsible Cabinet Member
- Have you undertaken any other correspondence on this issue

We have asked SBC to review this but they have refused.

The Cabinet member has been approached but does not seem to appreciate that WCC residents are looking to WCC to protect their communities - which are in the administrative area of WCC - from heavier rat runs through WCC villages, and an increased volume of traffic on J16 (in the Parish of Lydiard Tregoz, WCC) where tailbacks are a daily occurrence already.

It is very important to note that the part of Hay Lane from the junction with Wharf Road to the M4 is in Lydiard Tregoz, Wiltshire.

We can pass on masses of information relating to:

The EIP

Wiltshire County Council meeting of May 2004

The Local Plan Inquiry at SBC

Proof of Evidence of Scott Wilson with which SBC engineers and officers agreed at the Inquiry;

Letter to Countess Inchcape where Halcrow declined her invitation to act as consultants because they were working for SBC;

Video recordings taken at Public Meetings at Wootton Bassett and at Wroughton (where we learned that Police and Developers assessments of traffic (taken at similar times) showed a 28 and 32% differential and, in some instances, no traffic impact assessments were ever undertaken;

We therefore request is there is an audited due diligence done independently and, if so, may we please have sight of such papers?

Correspondence with SBC and WCC councilors, plus many others.

5. Is there any other information you wish to provide?

Please see attached maps, which demonstrate a missed opportunity to place a new intersection, which could clearly show integrated transport.

If the intersection were properly designed:

- a) There would be routes to both North and South and there need not be tailbacks;
- b) The Southern Development Area could be seen as an urban extension of Swindon and would not be viewed as further expansion, as shown in work for the RSS.