

BEXHILL TO HASTINGS LINK ROAD PUBLIC INQUIRY

Closing Submission
from
Peter Poole
OBJ/114

I read my Statement of Evidence at the Inquiry on November 19 2009, and asked Counsel for East Sussex County Council four questions. They refer to the rebuttal evidence served on me by ESCC. My first question, to John Shaw, concerned regeneration: “Looking at 4.3, has East Sussex County Council failed to acknowledge that the *combined* benefits of the southern section of the scheme, through North Bexhill, plus the small section of the Green Route I suggest - would outweigh taking each alone, and that this *combined* benefit should be taken into account when judging my alternative proposal?”

The reply stated that the BHLR was part of a wider regeneration package, and was wholly integral to that. However, my question implied that this holistic principle was *not* being applied to smaller and alternative proposals. My two suggested sections of the scheme, to improve local road transport, were a potential concession to ESCC given the need for regeneration. This was ignored in the answer, which rigidly stuck to the full BHLR proposal. I maintain that the two sections of the BHLR that I suggested, which remove the need for a main section through the open countryside, would serve much of the stated need for regeneration if taken *together* as part of an alternative regeneration package.

My second question merged points on planning and transport, and was put to Tony Cook and Ian Johnston respectively. “6.2 mentions ‘transport’ as a possible beneficiary of development contributions. I note also 7.6, where relevance to buses between Bexhill and Hastings is made, although only along the A259 – which is some way from the new developments. What exactly is the word ‘transport’ referring to in 6.2 in terms of modes and transport corridors, with particular reference to my point raising the concept of public transport – i.e. buses – being routed along the link road?”

The reply stated that future public transport fell under the aegis of the Rother District Local Plan, and that this Plan would itself be the subject of later consultation. I accept this reply - although must add that, given the BHLR is being mooted within a regeneration package, surely such specific ideas for improved public transport could have been included within the package. It seems to me that ESCC have missed a trick here, as the BHLR has only been proposed as a route for private cars and commercial vehicles.

My third question, to Ian Johnston, concerned transport: “In 7.2, the stated benefits of the scheme imply a considerable amount of induced traffic. Has East Sussex County Council taken heed of the 1997 Road Traffic Reduction Act, which I understand requires local authorities to draw up local road traffic reduction plans?”

The reply stated that there would be an increase in traffic levels, through traffic induced by the BHLR. No specific explanation was given of any road traffic reduction plan, which I understand is required under the 1997 legislation. Looking at the ESCC publication, the *Bexhill to Hastings link road Newsletter No 1 - Autumn 2009*, page one, an ‘artist’s impression of the road 15 years after it is built’ depicts a sweeping curve of single carriageway through a richly forested area,

with just a single car and lorry on an otherwise empty road. As is stated on page four, the newsletter is sent ‘to people living near the route’ and ‘with a direct interest in progress.’ Does such idealistic imagery seek to manipulate this audience, who are given an unrealistically rosy image of the future BHLR? This would appear to be the case, given the admission that traffic levels are expected to rise through new traffic induced by the scheme. I would ask the Inspector to check the application of the 1997 Road Traffic Reduction Act, and the potential contradiction of how the policy has been applied with specific reference to the BHLR and its wider regeneration package.

My last question, to Matthew O’Brien, concerned air quality. “Looking at 10.3, could East Sussex County Council please clarify the relationship between levels of NO₂ stated within the Hastings Air Quality Management Area and those ‘other locations’ where it is admitted that NO₂ and PM₁₀ levels might rise should the scheme go ahead? Would the predicted levels at these unspecified ‘other locations’ equal or exceed those present in the existing Hastings Air Quality Management Area?”

The reply stated that NO₂ levels in these ‘other locations’ would not exceed those currently present in the Hastings Air Quality Management Area. I accept this reply, although with the concern that any future rise in traffic levels, above and beyond that already mentioned, would eventually equal and then potentially exceed these levels. Without a definite plan to manage traffic growth, the positive effects of the regeneration package could eventually be undermined.

I urge that the Compulsory Purchase Orders and Side Road Orders be rejected in this instance, and that the BHLR scheme be the subject of a reappraisal so that a more sustainable regeneration package can be instigated.

This ends my Closing Submission.

Thank you,

Peter Poole
24 November 2009

REF: OBJ/114
Mr. Peter Poole
PO Box 521
Hove
East Sussex
BN3 6HY

(01273) 888 591
super.eight@yahoo.com