

Economic Development, Transport and Tourism Scrutiny Commission
25th October 2018
Putney Road Link Road scheme: Submission from Putney Road Say No

Introduction

The Putney Road link road scheme has two main elements – the creation of a link road, and the creation of a new junction to enable the link road and improve local access to the business area from Aylestone Road. It is through these two elements that the scheme functions.

The link road scheme is said to remove congestion from the inner ring road, create faster shorter journeys, reduce rat-running, reduce emissions and create a number of other benefits. However, in looking at the claimed benefits of the scheme it is important to separate out the contribution and impact of the two different parts, because they differ very significantly. It is shown below using evidence from the council's traffic modelling that all the benefits of the scheme are created by the improved local access and not by the link road.

It is recognised that the traffic modelling is a prediction of what will happen when the scheme is built. It is to test the design and obtain a measure of the benefits to be created. It should inform decisions about whether to proceed or not. The road scheme obviously is not already there to test. The results of the modelling, though, must support the scheme for there to be confidence it will function as intended. Roads cannot be built in order to see what happens and if they work. The role of the modelling is to remove the uncertainty about development decisions.

The request we made for a call-in gave four reasons why we believed a call-in was necessary. The call-in was made on the basis of the discrepancy between the public record and the actual consultation, and that will be the starting point of this submission. However, each reason is closely linked with the others and it will help the Committee to fully understand our concerns if all are included in this submission.

1. The public record of the consultation has been altered to remove claims about reduced rat-running in Clarendon Park

The discrepancy between the public record of the consultation on the Putney Road scheme and the actual consultation documents was only identified on Sunday October 7th. It emerged by chance during an examination of claims made about reducing rat-running throughout the duration of the Putney Road scheme. There was a memory of specific predictions in the consultation, but these could not be found in the official record in the consultation report. A search of hard copy documents from the consultation revealed that these predictions had been in the consultation, but they were not in the record in the consultation report.

The public record of the consultation is annexed in the report on the consultation. It shows the leaflet, and it lists the frequently asked questions, which were available in printed form at the drop in sessions and in the online forms for online submissions. One FAQ is not recorded accurately.

The original FAQ reads:

What will be the effects on Victoria Park Road and Clarendon Park Road?

'We expect to see some limited redistribution of traffic from residential roads in Clarendon Park onto Victoria Park Road. There is predicted to be a reduction of 200 cars in the morning peak hour on Clarendon Park Road (approximately three less per minute) and an increase of 100 cars on Victoria Park Road (almost two more per minute). In the afternoon peak period Clarendon Park Road is expected to reduce by 50 vehicles (one per minute) with no increase on Victoria Park Road.' (Copy of original in Appendix 1)

The same FAQ in the consultation report reads:

What will be the effects on Victoria Park Road and Clarendon Park Road?

'We expect to see some redistribution of traffic from residential roads in Clarendon Park onto Victoria Park Road, which will see an increase of around 10%. This will compliment Clarendon Park's status as a destination, not a through route.' (Printed copy of original in Appendix 2)

This was a surprising and quite unexpected thing to find. Taken in context it appeared quite serious as it changed the consultation FAQ and brought it more closely into line with the statement made in the Executive Decision report.

The executive decision report states:

'An increase in traffic using Clarendon Park as a rat run is undesirable, although modelling suggests the impact on this area will be neutral. Traffic using the area will be monitored before and after the scheme to establish if there are negative impacts and if mitigation is required.'

Up until the Executive Decision report the council had maintained that rat-running would be reduced in Clarendon Park, they said the evidence showed this, and had made the specific predictions for Clarendon Park Road. There are many statements including press releases that make these claims, and they were made in the consultation. They are detailed in the following section of this submission.

At the final stage, the Executive Decision report, it is said the evidence of the traffic modelling shows something different – it is neutral for rat-running. Rat running in Clarendon Park will not be reduced, and it might increase, therefore it will be monitored and mitigated if it becomes excessive.

The discrepancy in the record was not included in the first document on rat-running when it was first released. Further checks and time to reflect were needed. Checks were made on other documents which confirmed a change had occurred. It was also inspected to establish whether this could have occurred during transposition or in editing in order to create the consultation report. It is not uncommon to find transposition or editing errors, but these are usually characterised by incorrect grammar, missing words or wrong words in the text, or fragments of sentences. There is an example in one of the extracts from the bid document cited in this submission, for example. However, nothing could be found which would indicate that the alteration of this record was an accidental change.

This change may bring the record more closely into line with later statements, but it means the public record is not a true record of the consultation. Specific predications, which could only have been made from the detailed traffic modelling, were made during the consultation and they will have influenced its outcome. There were online exchanges in social media where people were speaking out in favour of the scheme precisely because of the benefit of reduced rat-running. The same occurred in personal conversations. People believed that the scheme would benefit the local area with reduced rat-running, and for this reason they supported it. They didn't necessarily use the consultation to register their support, but it meant there was no reason to object and oppose the scheme.

The fact that this record was changed highlights the importance of how reduced rat-running was presented to the public in the consultation. We found that the claims about rat-running were misleading, and were not supported by the available evidence. This is why we identified this as a second reason for the call-in of this scheme.

2. The consultation was seriously misleading about reducing rat-running

This section is based on a summary of the status of rat-running in the scheme documentation and how rat-running has been presented publicly. The summary was created on October 7th in response to a request following from email exchanges concerning whether or not the scheme would make a positive contribution to reducing rat-running in Clarendon Park. The intention was to achieve clarity, where possible, on what the scheme could achieve. It covered all known documentation from the initial funding bid to the Executive Decision report.

Funding bid document

The funding bid contained two references to rat-running:

Under Benefit/outcome

'vii) Reduced traffic impacts on less appropriate routes within the city and county;' (p5) 7th in a list of 8.

Under Risk/Uncertainty

'Initial modelling has suggested that there may be increased traffic on orbital routes that feed into the new link road. It will be necessary to ensure that traffic uses the most appropriate routes and that rat-running through inappropriate residential streets is avoided.'(p9)

Comment: To appear as a risk suggests that reducing local rat-running did not significantly inform the scheme design. The only orbital route feeding the new link road is Victoria Park Road. The modelling, therefore, is identifying a risk of increased rat-running in Clarendon Park. Although not stated, this can only be due to additional traffic using Victoria Park Road. If the additional traffic using Victoria Park Road creates a risk of increased rat-running, then the additional traffic cannot be traffic diverted from rat-running, it must come from elsewhere. This means the modelling did not show that the scheme will reduce rat-running in Clarendon Park.

Council Press Release 27th March 2018

'Traffic redistribution projections carried out by the council have shown that the proposals could lead to a significant decrease in rush-hour traffic along roads including Clarendon Park Road, Oakland Road, Knighton Fields Road West and Knighton Lane East. There would be a slight increase in morning rush-hour traffic along Victoria Park Road.

This would lead to a saving in carbon dioxide of 340 tonnes a year – the equivalent to 250,000 miles of driving by a heavy goods vehicle.'

Comment: This press release was previously unknown. It contains a link to the active consultation. It claims a significant decrease in rat-running in both Clarendon Park and on roads between Welford Road and Aylestone Road/Saffron Lane. This decrease is created by traffic using the link road rather than the alternative rat-running routes. The CO2 savings are also attributed to traffic using the link road rather than rat-running, These claims are not consistent with the traffic modelling reported in the bid document.

Consultation documentation 2nd March to 29th April

Extract from FAQ: What will be the effects on Victoria Park Road and Clarendon Park Road?

'We expect to see some limited redistribution of traffic from residential roads in Clarendon Park onto Victoria Park Road. There is predicted to be a reduction of 200 cars in the morning peak hour on Clarendon Park Road (approximately three less per minute) and an increase of 100 cars on Victoria Park Road (almost two more per minute). In the afternoon peak period Clarendon Park Road is expected to reduce by 50 vehicles (one per minute) with no increase on Victoria Park Road

Comment: There are other general claims about reducing rat-running and these very specific ones. This documentation was available during the consultation and pre-dates the press release seen above.

Through Cllr Myers the council was requested to provide details of traffic counts, from which these figures would have to have been created. Counts were also requested for some other roads. These were not made available and the reply was 'I am not able to provide the level of detail you request'. (April 26th) These predictions no longer appear in the record of the consultation.

Scrutiny Commission 12th July 2018

Statements in presentation to Scrutiny Commission include:

'Predicted moderate increase [on Victoria Park Road] will remove traffic from more residential streets and provide shorter journeys'; 'Less traffic on residential routes'; 'Scheme Benefits — shorter journeys, More sensible, shorter east-west routes; Less traffic using residential streets'

Comment: Up to this point all known statements about the link road scheme, whether public or within the authority, identify a range of benefits including reducing rat-running, creating shorter journeys and also faster journeys. In some claims they are specifically connected to use of the link road, in others to the effect of the scheme. The claims appear to be inconsistent with the traffic modelling reported in the bid document.

Executive Decision document September 2018

There is no reference to reducing rat-running or equivalent as an intention of the scheme in the main document. It is mentioned as a concern of residents in issues arising from the consultation to which this is the response:

An increase in traffic using Clarendon Park as a rat run is undesirable, although modelling suggests the impact on this area will be neutral.

Comment: This is a very significant change. It contradicts every statement previously made about rat-running. It now says there is predicted to be no change in rat-running through Clarendon Park. This is not consistent with the initial traffic modelling, nor is it consistent with claims made through the whole period of consultation and approval. This change of view appear to have taken place sometime between July 12th, the date of the Scrutiny Commission presentation, and the Executive Decision report, which is dated September 2018.

Overview

The traffic modelling showed risk of increased rat-running through Clarendon Park when the bid was made. Later council statements over the period from the consultation through to the Scrutiny Committee approval made significant claims for reductions in traffic in a range of residential roads. Specific predicted reductions were given for roads in Clarendon Park, especially Clarendon Park Road, but these were later removed. At the final stage, the Executive Decision document, no reduction in rat-running is claimed and the traffic modelling is now said to show the impact on this area is neutral.

The traffic modelling is understood to have remained the same throughout this period. If additional modelling was carried out it would have to show changes from the initial modelling, and then it would have to show further changes back again to closer what the initial modelling showed. If it was further analysis of the same modelling it would have to show the same changes. It is difficult to conceive of how this is possible.

It is not clear how the conclusions from the traffic modelling about the impact of the scheme on rat-running could have changed so considerably over this time period, and no traffic modelling evidence was ever provided to support these claims. When evidence was requested, the request was not met leaving uncertainty over whether the evidence was available but not provided, or not available at all.

Conclusion

The current view of the council about the Putney Link Road Scheme appears to be that it will not reduce rat-running in Clarendon Park.

The opponents of the link road have always argued that it will not reduce rat-running but will do the opposite. Traffic on London Road already avoids the run-up to the Mayfield Road roundabout and Victoria Park Road because of existing congestion. Additional traffic on Victoria Park Road will lead to greater congestion and more delays. These will occur at the roundabout, and also at the known congestion points on Victoria Park Road. In these circumstances the incentive to avoid the congestion will be higher and rat-running will increase, not decline.

The council's answer has been to claim that the additional traffic is created by diverted traffic from rat-running because there is now a shorter faster route. However, they now they say there is no reduction in rat-running, but traffic on Victoria Park Road will still increase. If this is the case then that must be new traffic from elsewhere. Those are precisely the circumstances within which rat-running will increase.

Although there may be differing interpretations, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the impact of the scheme on rat-running has been reported incorrectly during the consultation and approval stages. It appears that claims regarding reduced rat-running were used to gain public support and aid the approval of the scheme, and then withdrawn. They will have seriously misled local people responding to the consultation, and may also have misled the scrutiny commission.

In our view it is simply not possible for this scheme to have any beneficial impact on rat-running. The reasons we say this will be explained through the analysis of the traffic modelling which follows.

3.The traffic modelling evidence shows the link road is not needed The traffic modelling evidence shows the link road does not work

These two further reasons were given for calling-in and re-examining this scheme. The evidence is in the traffic modelling carried out by the council.

The starting point for the examination of the traffic modelling is the following statement drawn from the funding bid document:

“In the morning peak the junction provided a through link for traffic heading from the east of Leicester to the west. Traffic using Putney Road from the west was predominantly directed towards businesses located within the Putney Road area.

In the evening peak both the majority of traffic using Putney Road was associated with the businesses located in the Putney Road area. Modelling showed there was very little ‘through’ traffic.” (Page 9 of the funding bid document)

These traffic flows can be illustrated in a table:

How Putney Road is used when the link road scheme is installed

Time Period Traffic Flow	Use of Putney Road	
	Local Access	Link Road
AM		
East to West	Yes	Yes
West to East	Yes	No
PM		
East to West	Yes	No
West to East	Yes	No

Of the four traffic flows across two time periods Putney Road was used for local access in all four of them. It was used as a link road for through traffic in only one, the east to west flow in the morning. The traffic modelling was based on the year 2021 allowing time for drivers to learn of the opportunity to use the road.

This does not provide convincing evidence of either demand for, or need of, a link road connecting Welford Road and Aylestone Road via Putney Road. If there was demand and need for this link road it would be expected that there would be four link road traffic flows. At the very least there should be two with one in each peak period. However there is no link road traffic in the evening, and only one in the morning peak.

This is why we say the link road is not needed. The evidence of demand, need, and use is simply not there.

Turning now our second statement which is that the traffic modelling evidence shows the link road does not work. A second extract from the funding bid document states the following:

“The results show that the travel-time benefits occurred in the evening peak, with the morning peak showing a very slight detriment.”

This is very important. In traffic modelling all benefits such as reduced congestion, lower emissions such as CO2, NO2 and particulates, and all economic returns, are calculated from savings in vehicle travelled time. This means for this scheme all the benefits are created in the evening, but there is a loss of benefit in the morning, because travel times increase during the morning period.

Looking back to the table above it shows that in the evening peak there is no through traffic, Putney Road is used only for local access. But the evening peak is when the benefits are created. This means that *all the benefits of the scheme are created by the improved local access to the business area from Aylestone Road*. It is the improved local access that reduces congestion, reduces emissions, and generates an economic return.

In the morning peak there is through traffic in one direction. The morning peak is also the period when vehicle travelled time increases, meaning benefits are lost. Congestion increases, emissions increase, and economic losses are incurred.

This is why we say the link road does not work. It reduces the benefits created by the improved local access.

The information about vehicle travelled time can be added to the table above and this is shown below. The vehicle travelled time is taken from the original scheme impact table, a copy of which can be found at Appendix 3.

Change in travel time when Putney Road link road is installed

Time Period Traffic Flow	Use of Putney Road		Change in Vehicle Time Travelled Time
	Local Access	Link Road	
AM			
East to West	Yes	Yes	Increased by 3 hours
West to East	Yes	No	
PM			
East to West	Yes	No	Reduced by 68 hours
West to East	Yes	No	

The association of local access and reduction in vehicle travelled time can be seen clearly, as can the increase in travel time when Putney Road is used as a link road.

It might be said that the additional travel time of 3 hours is small and of no real consequence, but this is to neglect two important points. The first is that for this scheme to be considered successful, and for the link road to deliver the benefits claimed for it, which is the reason for making the investment, the travel time **must** reduce, and ideally by a significantly large amount. Perhaps by a figure comparable to that achieved in the evening by the improved local access. This isn't the picture emerging from the scheme and this is what makes the planned link road very difficult to justify.

The second important point is that the benefit created in the evening by the improved local access would also be expected occur in the morning, and be comparable to that seen in the evening. This benefit has been eliminated altogether and the net outcome is negative – use as a link road has removed the expected saving of, say 68 hours, and added another three hours in addition.

Taking this further, if the scheme functioned as a link road in both peak periods the scheme would show no benefit whatsoever, and it would be wholly negative in terms of congestion, carbon and other emissions, and general air quality.

Although we have not had access to any detailed traffic modelling, it is accepted that the claims of reduced congestion and lower emissions for the scheme do occur. The new local access from Aylestone Road does create a shorter and faster access route to the business area and will remove the need for a longer journey round the inner ring road and entry through Counting House Road. But any claims that benefits are created by the link road are simply not supported by the evidence. They are created by improved local access.

As all the benefits of the scheme are created by the improved local access from Aylestone Road, it follows that any statements associating the link road with benefits such as quicker journeys, reduced emissions, or reduced congestion are incorrect. Any and all benefits are created by the improved local access.

The traffic modelling and rat-running

In the earlier examination of rat-running it was seen that it was claimed the link road reduced rat-running by creating faster and shorter journeys. Using the traffic modelling it's possible to look examine these claims more closely.

When can the scheme reduce rat-running?

Only the link road element of the scheme can reduce rat-running. It creates a new route which is claimed to be shorter and faster. The improvements in local access from Aylestone Road cannot effect rat-running. The access from Welford Road is unchanged so that cannot make any difference to rat-running. The traffic modelling shows that Putney Road functioned as a link road in only one period out of four. That means there is only one period in which the scheme can influence rat-running.

Are the journeys faster?

In the one period of link road use travel time increased meaning journeys were slower. If travel time increases it means congestion increases. If congestion increases then rat-running increases to avoid it.

Are the journeys shorter?

Using the link road there are hardly any journeys which are shorter. This is best seen from a map. Using Google maps it is possible to measure different journeys with a good degree of accuracy. Only one shorter journey across to Aylestone Road was found – from the Welford Road/Putney Road junction to Boundary Road, and the difference was slight. Every other destination was a longer journey than using existing routes, and the further away from the same junction, the greater the additional distance. It very rapidly became twice the distance or more if the link road was used. Every conceivable route across from London Road was shorter, and often substantially so, than using the link road. This is not to say that rat-running is acceptable. It clearly is not. But it is to say that neither the link road nor the scheme as a whole can contribute to reducing rat-running in these areas. The final expressed view of the council in the Executive Decision report appears now to recognise that.

Concluding Comments

These are the reasons why we requested a call-in for the scheme, and for it to be reconsidered. Having examined the presentation to the Scrutiny Committee, and the consultation report, we felt there was important additional information which would assist the Committee in arriving at a more fully informed judgement about the scheme. The main points had already been submitted through the consultation but were not included in the consultation report so the Commission would be unaware of our conclusions.


We recognise the difficulties which accompany our conclusions about this scheme. However we do believe there is no benefit in creating a scheme which doesn't function effectively and which has considerable negative consequences. These would in all likelihood lead to further significant costs in the future, but with little overall benefit.

It appears to us that there is an inherent conflict in the scheme which will be difficult to resolve. This is the conflict between local traffic accessing a busy and productive business area, and the planned link road taking traffic straight through that area. The modelling suggests that this one road cannot contain both functions, even under current traffic conditions. If the through traffic was to increase, as we have identified above, the situation would be much worse. This would have a significant impact not only on the immediate link road area, but also the much wider locality.

For all these reasons it is our view that the planned link road should not go forward for implementation. We ask the Commission to make a careful and considered re-appraisal of this scheme before arriving at a final decision.

Appendix 1 Scanned copy of original FAQs used at drop-ins and online during the consultation.

Putney Road scheme FAQs



What are the main benefits of the scheme?

By providing a link between Aylestone Road and Welford Road, the scheme will help to relieve congestion on the southern central ring road network, particularly the route around the Leicester Tigers Football Club ground / former Granby halls site and the approaches from Welford Road, Aylestone Road and Upperton Road.

This is a critical part of the city's highway network, providing access to both the city centre and wider destinations. The reduction in congestion will overall improve vehicle travel times and air quality.

It will support economic growth by improving access for the businesses in the Freeman's Common Industrial Estate. Access will also be improved to future development in the area, particularly at the University of Leicester.

Cycling and pedestrian facilities will be improved across the area, making it a more attractive route for users of sustainable transport.

What effect will the scheme have on air quality?

Overall we would expect to see an immediate reduction in pollution across this part of the city as the scheme creates shorter routes, more efficient distribution of traffic and shorter journey times. Air quality will be measured before and after construction.

What will be the effects on Victoria Park Road and Clarendon Park Road?

We expect to see some limited redistribution of traffic from residential roads in Clarendon Park onto Victoria Park Road. There is predicted to be a reduction of 200 cars in the morning peak hour on Clarendon Park Road (approximately three less per minute) and an increase of 100 cars on Victoria Park Road (almost two more per minute).

In the afternoon peak period Clarendon Park Road is expected to reduce by 50 vehicles (one per minute) with no increase on Victoria Park Road. This will complement Clarendon Park's status as a destination, not a through route.

2015
= 10% - 15% increase

How will it affect rat running?

The scheme creates a shorter route for traffic moving from east to west between the Welford Road area and Saffron Lane / Aylestone Road. It will provide an alternative to Knighton Lane East for example.

How will it affect me?

As previously stated, the scheme will improve movements to and from Aylestone Road / Saffron Lane, and there is likely to be an increase on traffic on Victoria Park Road. There will also be a slight increase of traffic on University Road as the scheme improves linkage from Aylestone Road to Regent Road. We understand that the University may wish to explore options for a potential scheme on University Road.

ANNEX F – Frequently Asked Questions

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The scheme creates a shorter route for traffic moving from east to west between the Welford Road area and Saffron Lane / Aylestone Road. It will provide an alternative to Knighton Lane East for example.

Appendix 3

Reproduced below is a table from the council funding bid showing the impacts of the scheme in 2021 once it is operational. The table shows the changes due to the creation of the link road scheme. The conclusions about the impact of the link road are drawn from the results shown on this table. The table itself is created by the council's traffic modelling of the Putney Road link road scheme.

Explanatory table from the funding bid showing scheme impact

Scenario	Input Data / Key Performance Indicators	Unit	AM Peak Hr	PM Peak Hr
			Weekday	Weekday
Do-Minimum	Number of highway trips affected	vehicles	35,374	37,760
	Total vehicle travelled time	vehicle-hours	3,305	4,523
	Total vehicle travelled distance	vehicle-km	75,987	83,783
	Highway peak period conversion factor	-	2.70	2.80
	Number of PT passenger trips on affected routes	passenger trips		
	Total PT travelled time	passenger-hrs		
	PT peak period conversion factor	-		
Do-Something	Number of highway trips affected	vehicles	35,317	37,749
	Total vehicle travelled time	vehicle-hours	3,308	4,455
	Total vehicle travelled distance	vehicle-km	77,180	83,756
	Highway peak period conversion factor	-	2.70	2.80
	Number of PT passenger trips on affected routes	passenger trips		
	Total PT travelled time	passenger-hrs		
	PT peak period conversion factor	-		

'Do-minimum' is traffic modelled with the existing road network.

'Do-something' is traffic modelled with the link road in place.

In traffic modelling the important figure is total vehicle travelled time. For a road scheme to have benefits and be supported by the traffic modelling evidence the total vehicle travelled time needs to reduce as a consequence of the scheme. All benefits of schemes are calculated from reduced vehicle travel times.

Changes in vehicle travelled time are calculated by comparing the 'do-nothing' total for the existing road network with the 'do-something' total for the road network with the link road in place. For the evening peak this is 4523 hours minus 4455 hours which shows a saving in journey time of 68 hours. For the morning peak the figures are 3305 minus 3308 which shows journey times increased by 3 hours. Benefits are created in the evening peak, but costs (negative benefits) occur in the morning peak.