

Edge Lane West Public Inquiry

Summary of Evidence from Liverpool Friends of the Earth

1. Introduction

Liverpool Friends of the Earth is a community group, holding regular advertised meetings and membership is open to any member of the public with an interest in environmental protection and sustainable development. Under the terms of its partnership agreement with Friends of the Earth (England, Wales & Northern Ireland) it is the sole group authorised to use the name 'Friends of the Earth' in the city of Liverpool area. Friends of the Earth groups are concerned with matters of policy and practice that have both local and global impacts on the planet and on communities.

This evidence will be presented by Frank Kennedy, a member of Liverpool Friends of the Earth in his private capacity, who is also employed by Friends of the Earth nationally as Regional Campaigns Coordinator for North West England. He is very familiar with the area, having been a resident homeowner (off Holt Road) from 1991 to 1997.

2. General

The proposed scheme is presented as a regeneration and environmental improvement scheme. However Liverpool Friends of the Earth has serious concerns as to whether the scheme, as proposed, could succeed on either of these grounds.

Liverpool Friends of the Earth wishes to express its sympathy with a number of other Objectors' arguments in this Inquiry, particularly in relation to the adverse effects of the proposed scheme on local people and the failings of measures taken by Liverpool City Council to involve residents fully in planning the future of the area. In our view, for the Compulsory Purchase Orders and the entire Edge Lane West development scheme to be justified, the net impacts of the intended demolition and construction work would need to be demonstrably beneficial in terms of the Earth's finite resources – including carbon dioxide emissions, as acknowledged in Government targets – and the quality of life of individuals and communities affected.

However, given the time restraints on a voluntary group such as ours, and the desire not to repeat the evidence of other witnesses, this representation will concentrate on the traffic-related impacts of the proposed changes to the Edge Lane roadway, which have directly prompted LCC to seek the CPOs. It does overlap to some extent, and is intended to complement, the evidence of Professor Lewis Lesley.

3. Increasing Capacity to Reduce Congestion

A major justification for the road aspects of the proposal is the need to reduce congestion. It is argued that increasing road capacity will reduce congestion. However this takes no account of the phenomenon of 'induced traffic'.

Induced traffic is traffic which, without the proposed alterations to a route, would not be there - for example, car drivers who respond to perceived or actual improvement to driving conditions by making more or longer journeys.

Some traffic engineers have questioned if the phenomenon of induced traffic exists. The Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment (SACTRA)¹ investigated the issue in 1994 and concluded:

“Considering all these sources of evidence, we conclude that induced traffic can and does occur, probably quite extensively, though its size and significance is likely to vary widely in different circumstances”.

SACTRA also examined the question of *“where and when does [induced traffic] matter most?”* One of the categories of roads they identified was urban roads, concluding:

“The categories of road where appraisal needs to be most careful are improvements to roads in urban areas...”

Thus any increases in capacity provided by the scheme could be filled by induced traffic leading to no overall reduction in congestion negating one of the most important benefits claimed for the scheme. Clearly then the scheme should not be allowed to proceed until a detailed study has been undertaken to determine the effects of induced traffic.

Furthermore when considering the effects of induced traffic SACTRA also stated:

“These studies demonstrate convincingly that the economic value of a scheme can be overestimated by the omission of even a small amount of induced traffic. We consider that this matter is of profound importance to the value for money assessment of a road programme”

Thus not only could the scheme fail to secure reductions in congestion but also the economic case for the scheme could be undermined by induced traffic. This provides another argument why the scheme should not be allowed to proceed until the study proposed above has been undertaken.

4. Transferring Congestion

Even if the scheme had the flow-of-traffic improving effect the City Council and others claim for it, it would only move the congestion further toward the city centre. This is important because no consideration has been given to the effect this displaced congestion would have on the area where it occurred. For example there are community severance, road safety and air pollution issues that should be considered. Air pollution, in particular, is one of the shared priorities that the Government require to be considered in the production of all Local Transport Plans {LTP}. However these issues are likely to be further exacerbated because, as has been discussed above, the scheme itself will generate increased traffic making the congestion even worse in the new location. The scheme should not be allowed until the effects of such congestion have been identified. [See also 6 below.]

5. Walking and Cycling

Walking and cycling are identified in the Merseyside LTP as key themes to be developed and encouraged.

¹ Trunk Roads and the Generation of Traffic, The Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment, Department of Transport 1994

Although the proposal has sections discussing these topics it is woefully short of practical actions to promote them and in fact would act to discourage them.

The scheme contains no proposals for on road cycle lanes and the extra traffic generated by the scheme would act as deterrent to cyclists. This is despite the presence of two obvious destinations for cyclists, Halfords and Quinns, on Edge Lane itself, within easy cycling distance of the city centre, Kensington and Broad Green areas. At times when this traffic is free flowing the increased lane width will promote higher speeds again deterring cyclists. The scheme proposes improved signage to cycleways and improved crossings. Thus the 'substantial improvements for cyclists' boasted of in the scheme seem to consist of sending them somewhere else (as yet undefined within this scheme). Surely this is not what is envisaged in the Merseyside LTP, which seeks to achieve a clear modal shift towards cycling. To uphold this would require all transport-related schemes within the LTP area to consider and incorporate the needs of both existing and potential cyclists, e.g. safety and security, as well as to actively promote cycling.

Experience of residents has shown that it is more difficult to cross the sections that are already dual carriageways. The extension of the dual carriageway and extra width proposed by this scheme will act in the same way to deter walking and make the street scene much less pedestrian friendly. As with cycling, it is the intention of the LTP that walking be promoted for health, social and environmental reasons. No evidence of encouraging walking is presented in this scheme.

That the scheme is not cycle or pedestrian friendly is implicitly recognised within the scheme proposal by the admission that the scheme will lead to a slight increase in accidents. This alone should lead to the prohibition of the scheme as reducing casualties is an important aim of the LTP and all schemes should seek a reduction in casualties. Even if this were not a requirement of the LTP a scheme that is promoted as an improvement for local residents that does not reduce the numbers of them getting killed and injured but in fact accepts an increase is surely seriously mis-described and, arguably, immoral.

6. 'Displaced' Effects

Liverpool City Council has declared two Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs), one in the City Centre and one at the end of the M62. Both of these AQMAs are as a result of vehicle emissions and the City is currently developing an action plan to improve air quality in both these areas, a major part of this is the need to reduce overall vehicle emissions.

Although this area is not in one of the current AQMAs, the extra traffic generated by the scheme will impact on both of them, thus working against the very action plan that the City is developing, and further increasing the gap between Liverpool's AQMA performance and the EU health standards they are required to meet. It is well known and, there is experience in Liverpool, of the overwhelming disincentive for car drivers to alter mode of transport once close to their destination, and city-bound Edge Lane traffic will not stop short of their city centre destinations.

As well as needing to reduce traffic levels in the city centre because of air quality, the implication of meeting greenhouse gas emission reduction targets in accordance with the UK's Kyoto Protocol obligations will be applied to all local authorities, which will have to "disincentivise" car travel. Drafts of the City Centre Movement Strategy prepared by Merseytravel indicate that there is an intention to increase substantially the pedestrian/cycle friendly nature of Liverpool city centre. A road scheme that will attract more car traffic close to,

and therefore right into, the central area will undermine our Kyoto obligations and those intentions considerably.

7. Summary

Liverpool Friends of the Earth is not in principle opposed to the improvement of the access ways to the City Centre and we recognise the need to regenerate outlying districts. Indeed, one of our criticisms of the City Council's regeneration policy is that it is too City Centre focused.

However we believe that this scheme will achieve neither of these objectives. It would appear that the scheme is too simple a transference of the Speke Boulevard, or other 'gateway' projects, to a different area with too little consideration of whether it is suitable for that area or its living and/or working population. To improve access to the City Centre and improve the area for residents requires a carefully thought out imaginative proposal that combines a clear recognition of the needs of the area with the latest thinking on traffic control and demand management not simply recycling existing schemes from other areas.

It is clear to us that the overall intention of this scheme is to attempt to improve the transit of out-of-town motorists into the City Centre and is thus arguably 'of a piece' with the Council's entire City Centre focused regeneration strategy. We do not believe, as we have shown, that the scheme will meet even this aim and we believe the proposal should be rejected and a scheme that combines the need to move people into the City with the needs and aspirations of local residents developed.