

Dear Highways England,

Proposals for Junction 24, Kelvedon North, A12 Widening Scheme Preliminary Design

Questions 2g and 2h in the Consultation Response Form and Page 16 of the Consultation Brochure

Messing cum Inworth Parish Council is writing to express its deep concerns with the proposals for the new junction 24 proposed as part of the A12 widening scheme between the Boreham Interchange and Marks Tey. While we welcome the scheme overall, we are very concerned about three key flaws in the design which we feel will adversely affect both the success of your overall project and, crucially from a human perspective, the lives of local people.

1. Use of the B1023 Inworth Road

a. The sub-standard B1023 Inworth Road

As it approaches Inworth, the B1023 narrows so that, at points, it measures only 4.7 mtrs, less than the width recommended for 2 rigid vehicles to pass. Through Inworth the road bends, at times quite sharply leading to visibility issues and problems with large vehicles passing each other (see Appendix A). We have told Highways England that the road is sub-standard (see Appendix B) and that space for improvement is very limited through the village many times during the gestation of their current plans but they have chosen to ignore these reports and have gone to Consultation without carrying out a full evaluation. This leads us to believe that they will take whatever measures are necessary to make the B1023 fit for purpose as an A12 feeder road, regardless of the effect on the locality and without fully evaluating alternative possibilities.

The Parish Council has been told by HE that they are currently working on road improvements to Inworth Rd, however these improvements do not form part of the current consultation and will not be shared with the Parish Council until after the consultation has ended.

The Parish Council feel very strongly that a second consultation should be held once these improvements have been released to allow the Parish Council, Stakeholders and villages to comment.

b. Traffic volumes

Inworth Road is one of the main roads which drivers and HGVs use when travelling from parts of Colchester Borough and Maldon District, including the Tiptree, Tollesbury and Mersea Island areas, to connect to and from the A12. This creates high traffic volumes on a road that already struggles to cope with current traffic flows. The Scheme Assessment Report Addendum

(HE551497-JAC-HGN-S3 J24-TN-C-0001) acknowledges that the section of the Inworth Road south of where the A12 crosses over it would see a serious, and we believe, an unsustainable increase of more than 1,220 traffic movements in the peak hour as part of these proposals. This will add to congestion in this part of Inworth enormously as well as creating safety concerns where some houses have their driveways and entrances backing

onto the Inworth Road. Moreover, the figures that these statistics are based upon are several years old and a number of significant housing developments have been completed since then. In addition, there are major increases in housing planned in this part of Essex over the next 10 years and beyond. This includes increases in housing in Tiptree, Kelvedon, Feering and possibly more housing in Maldon District and Colchester Borough. As a result, this will lead to further increases in traffic flows over and above those envisaged in the Highways England figures, adding to the problems on the Inworth Road.

The proposed removal of J23 will mean that traffic from Tiptree to the A12 will have to use the B1023 to access J24 thus increasing traffic considerably.

c. Social severance

While baseline traffic flows on the B1023 are already relatively high, this major increase in flows will further increase severance, both actual and perceived within Inworth, which will result in reduced social interaction within the village.

d. Heritage buildings

There are 7 grade 2 listed structures and 1 grade 1 listed places of worship located an average of 12 metres from the existing road. Whilst the impact of the main A12 route on Heritage topics has been widely considered, this does not appear to be the case on feeder routes, and we have seen no evaluation of the effects of the proposals on Heritage structures along the B1023 (Appendix C)

2. Hinds Bridge

Hinds Bridge is a small grade 2-listed structure that carries the B1023 over Domsey Brook. It occupies a strategic position in facilitating traffic flows on a key local transport route. It is very narrow, being only wide enough for one HGV or bus to cross at a time. In 2018 Essex Highways reported that the bridge (which is an old brick arch construction) was in a worse state of repair than expected and in need of urgent strengthening work. While this work was being carried out a weight limit was imposed on the bridge but as many drivers ignored the limit the B1023 had to be completely closed for several weeks in the summer of 2018 until work was completed in October. The road closure caused chaos for local and through traffic.

The Highways England proposal is that all A12 traffic to/from Kelvedon, Feering, Coggeshall etc should approach the A12 by using Hinds Bridge. We believe that this structure is not fit for this purpose.

HE has released documents within their Consultation detailing water environmental figures and drawings (PEIR chapter 14 section 1 & 2) The Parish Council have concerns that the water level rise shown around Hinds bridge and the impact it could have has not been taken into consideration by HE.

Work needs to be carried out to ascertain whether Hinds bridge is able to cope with predicted traffic flows in both direction and it's structure is resilient against environmental changes.

3. Messing

Messing is a small village lying between the B1023 and the B1022. Access to the village is via narrow lanes and the centre of the village is a designated Conservation Area. Currently, there is a relatively small element of the village being used as a 'rat-run' between the two B-roads. The Highways England proposal that the A12 slip road terminates directly opposite one of the Messing access roads, will undoubtedly lead to a strong increase in the traffic using Messing to travel between the two B-roads (see Appendix E). This is in direct conflict to one of the aims stated in their letter dated 22nd June 2021 that launched the Consultation:

“.....so that local roads aren't used as rat runs, affecting local villages and their communities”

It's clear that Highways England have not considered the impact on the Messing Conservation Area when formulating their plans and, even now, refuse to believe that they will be generating a Messing 'rat-run'.

We believe that the proposals that Highways England are currently consulting on are fatally flawed. We support the need for the overall A12 rebuild project but feel strongly that use of the B1023 is very much an expedient, short-term solution that does not contribute to the overall project aim of providing a local road network that can cope with the predicted increase in traffic from more jobs and homes in the area. In exploring mitigation, Highways England are now admitting that the road is not currently fit for purpose. Mitigation may possibly improve it to a level where it can handle current traffic, but the costs of carrying out this mitigation have yet to be made public and mitigation would not provide for the traffic growth that is expected in the area over the next few years.

There is, though, an alternative that Highways England have only partially considered but discarded for unspecified reasons.

2. Community bypass

We believe that the current flaws in the proposal can be resolved by providing:

- A link road to the B1023 north of the A12 (previously put forward by Highways England in document number HE551497-JAC-HGN-S3_J24-TN-C-0001)
And
- A short road from Junction 24, taking advantage of the disused railway line and joining the B1023 between Inworth and Tiptree

This proposal can be seen at Appendix F

The local Messing-cum-Inworth community have adopted this alternative proposal. It is also received widespread support, locally and nationally, including:

- Priti Patel M.P.
- Kevin Bentley – Leader of Essex County Council
- Tiptree Parish Council
- Kelvedon Parish Council
- Feering Parish Council
- Villages Transport Action Group (VTAG)

This would mean establishing a new additional link road along the former railway line from just north of Tiptree to the newly proposed junction 24 and includes the Highway England's original option E joining the junction at Threshelfords Business Park, which I endorse.

There are many advantages and benefits to this proposed link road. It would:

- divert traffic away from Inworth therefore reducing congestion
- remove Hinds Bridge as a point of weakness in the Highways England plan
- improve connectivity between Tiptree and south of Tiptree to the A12 with a modern purpose-built road
- support HGV traffic more effectively than the current road
- be safer, removing the threat of social severance introduced by the proposed traffic flow increase
- It would be more environmentally-friendly

- It would provide much-needed new road capacity to support future housing and business growth in Colchester Borough and Maldon District.

We believe strongly that the possibility of providing a Community Bypass should be fully evaluated alongside the Highways England proposals including mitigation if planned. It would be disastrous if this opportunity to ensure we have a new, safer, more effective connection to the A12 at junction 24 was missed.

I therefore strongly urge Highways England to revise the plans for junction 24 so that this new link road to bypass traffic away from Inworth is included.

Yours sincerely,

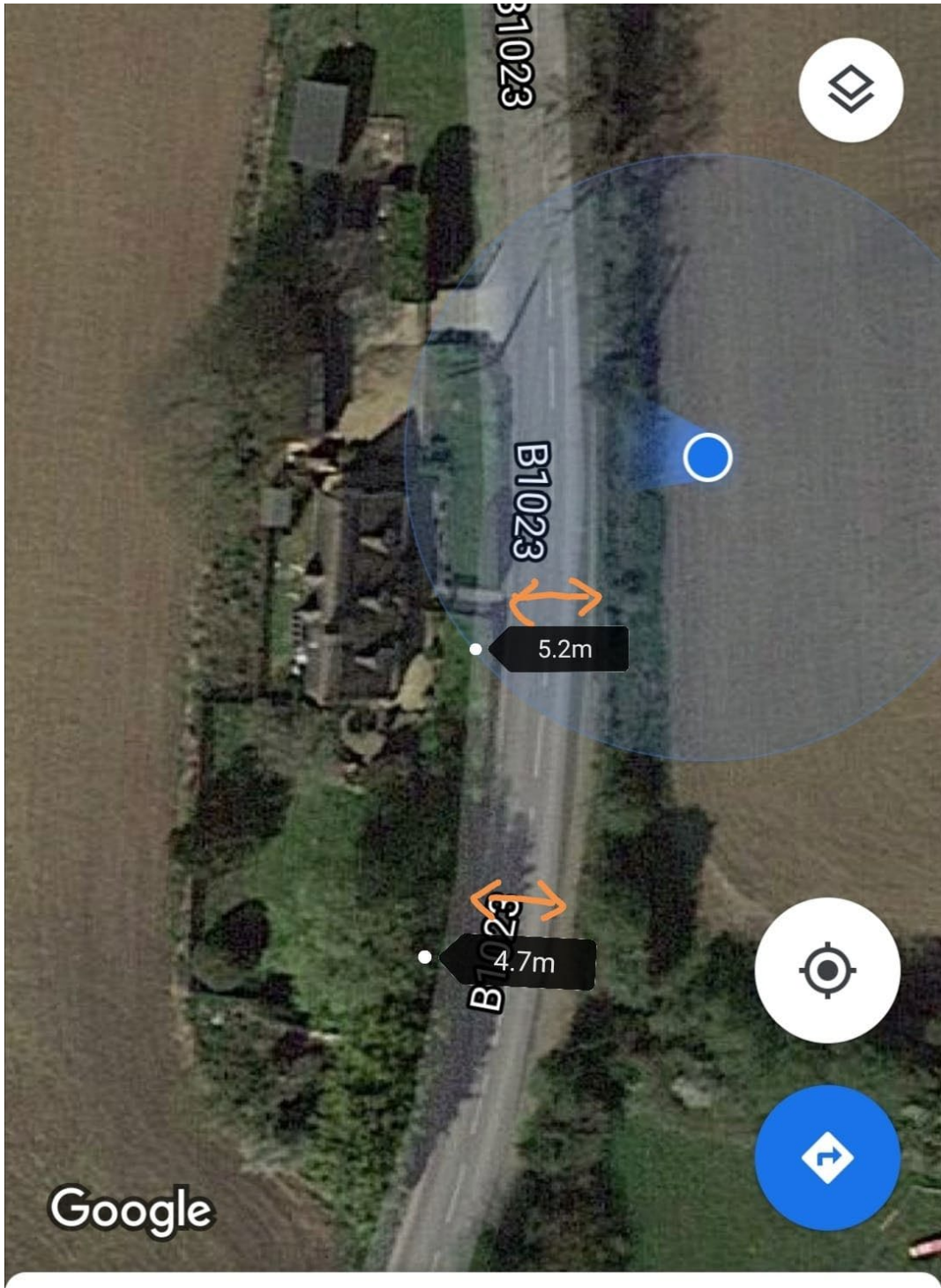
Messing-cum-Inworth Parish Council

Appendix A



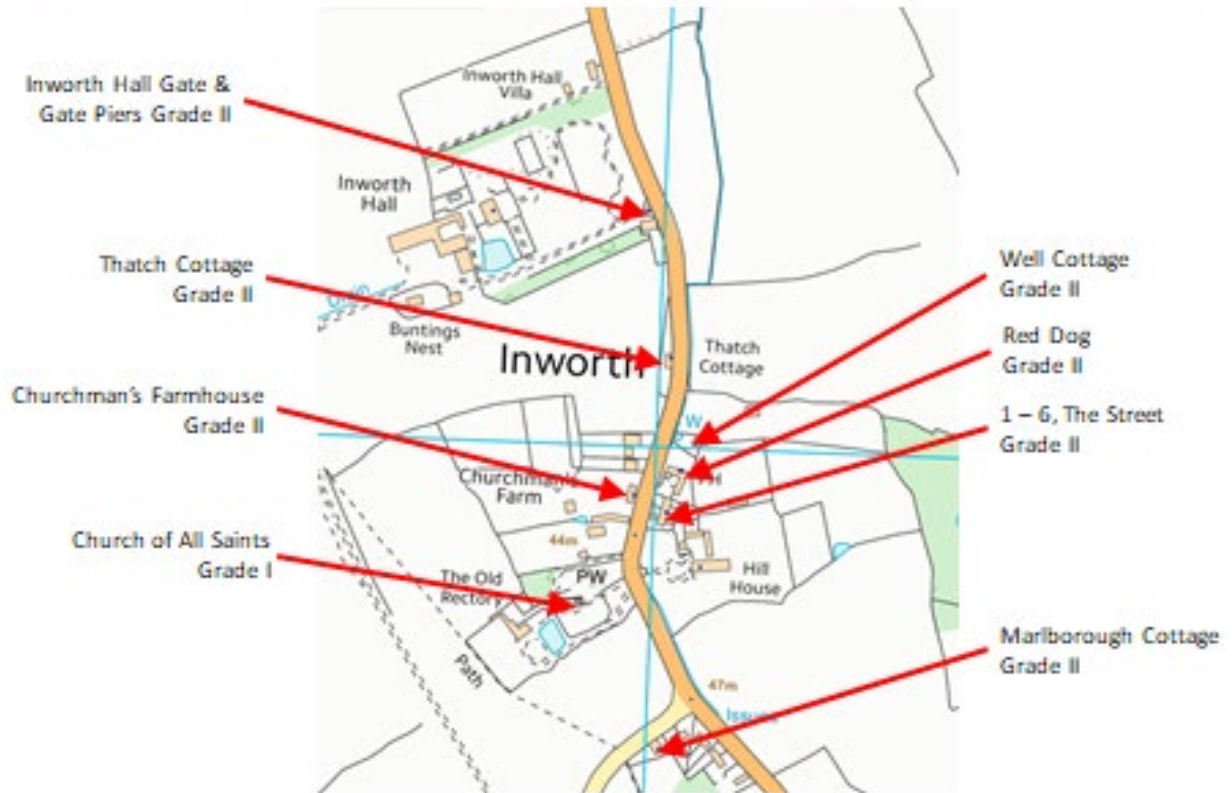


Appendix B



Google

Appendix C



10/08/2021

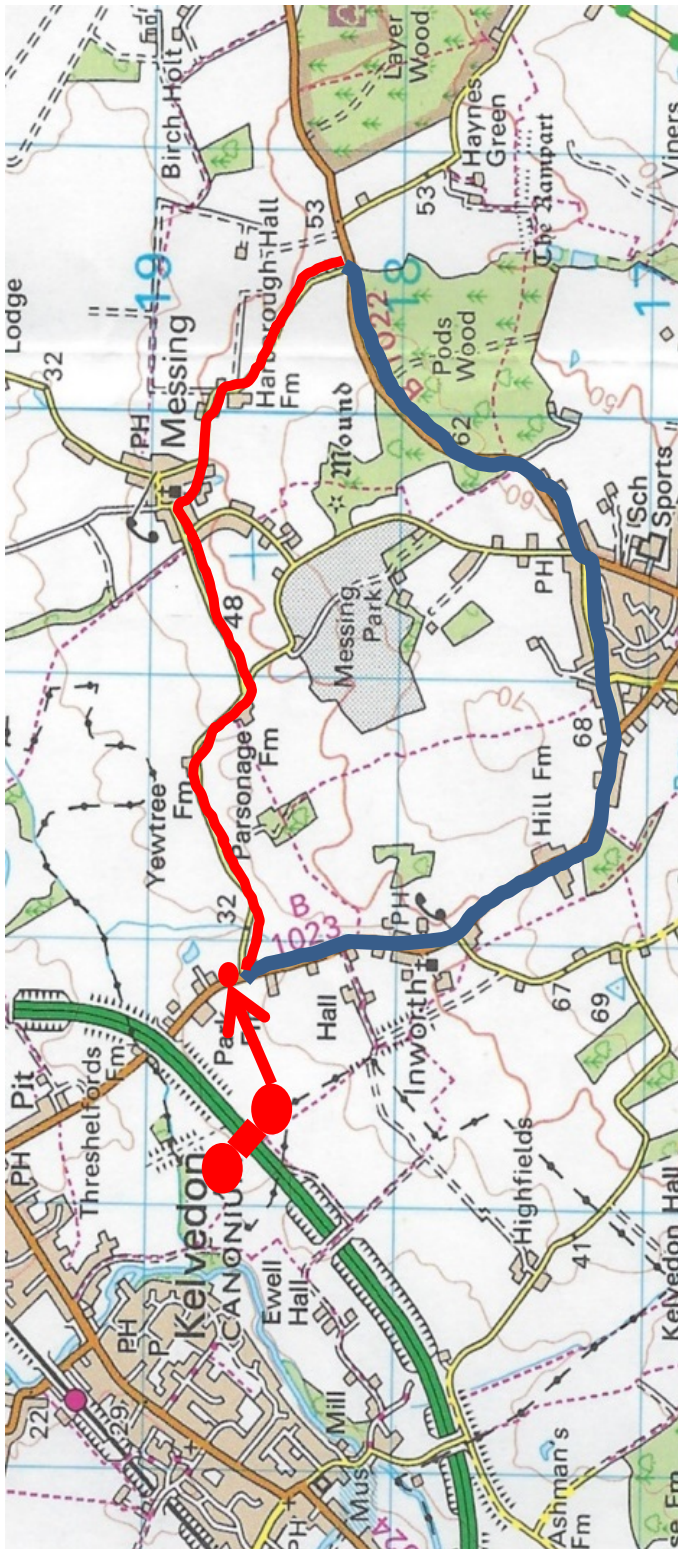
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Appendix D



Appendix E



Appendix F

