

Farnham with Stratford St Andrew Parish Council

Response to EDF Stage 2 Consultation



Introduction

Farnham and Stratford St Andrew are two small adjacent villages situated on and around the A12 in East Suffolk, three miles from the market town of Saxmundham. There are a total of 245 people and 123 properties on the electoral register. There is a small industrial estate in each of the two villages one of which includes a service station with a small shop. Farnham has several Grade II listed buildings some of which are on the main A12. Stratford St Andrew has a large community centre with a playground and amenity land.

Following detailed assessment Suffolk Coastal District Council has indicated there are higher than acceptable nitrogen dioxide levels in Stratford St Andrew caused by traffic. The report states;

Key contributors to NOx emissions are cars and HGVs. However, it is important to note that although HGVs and buses only make up 6% of the (current) traffic flow on the A12, their combined contribution to road NOx concentrations is disproportionate at 53.5%.

Any increase in traffic on this road, particularly HGV traffic, is likely to exacerbate this problem.

The key issue for the parish in this planning proposal is that relating to proposed changes to the A12 in order to 'provide mitigation at Farnham to improve traffic flow and safety through the narrow bend.' The main objective should be to lessen the impact of additional traffic volumes passing through both villages. This response therefore focuses on the options put forward by EDF for road improvements to the A12.

The parish council held a public meeting on 8 December 2016 and issued a questionnaire to every household in the two villages asking for residents' views on the four options for improvements to the A12 put forward by EDF. The majority of respondents said they preferred Option 4 – Stratford St Andrew and Farnham bypass (a two-village bypass) – and we have proceeded on this basis. We would point out that a two-village bypass will advantage many of our residents as well as the wider economic community. However, we acknowledge that this outcome would disadvantage some residents and we will be suggesting mitigations for these households should this option be taken forward.

Results of questionnaires

87 completed questionnaires were received.

The questionnaire asked if the respondent agreed or disagreed with each of the options put forward by EDF.

The table below shows numbers of boxes ticked (some people ticked more than one yes or no box) and the percentage of the number of questionnaires received.

Option	Agreed		Disagreed	
	Number	%	Number	%
1	6	7.3%	68	78.2%
2	6	7.3%	69	79.3%
3a	19	21.8%	56	64.4%
3b	15	17.2%	55	63.2%
4	67	77%	18	20.7%

We have looked at each of the options put forward and discussed their advantages, disadvantages and possible mitigations for the negative impacts.

There is still a lack of information in the consultation document with regard to the amount of goods that could be brought in by sea and rail, this will affect the traffic numbers that will consequently have to bring goods in by road. We would like to see more detailed modelling of these transport options.

At present there is a lack of information concerning the exact route a two-village bypass would take. We have made suggestions in this response concerning the route but, in any case, we will require a more detailed examination of any proposed two village bypass route and assurance of appropriate mitigation of any negative impacts on affected properties.

The parish council's preference is for Option 4, a two-village bypass.

Option 4 – Stratford St Andrew and Farnham bypass (a two-village bypass)

The parish council supports this option.

This option provides for a substantial reduction in traffic flow for both villages. This will lead to a subsequent improvement in air quality and safety as well as a reduction in damage and noise to properties adjacent to the current A12.

There will be improved access to the main road from Great Glemham Road and Hill Farm Road and the Farnham industrial estate. There is also the potential for an improved junction where the A1094 meets the A12 at Friday Street. This is currently a confusing and dangerous junction.

Emergency vehicle and bus access to the two villages will be retained as now. This option provides for an alternative route if there is a major problem on either road. Some businesses will see a positive impact with regard to access.

A two-village bypass would be a faster route with fewer holdups than the current route as there will be no junctions along its length. Also a new road could handle an increase in normal traffic as well as increased Sizewell traffic.

The two villages of Farnham and Stratford St Andrew would remain connected.

There would be the opportunity for new housing although any plans would need to be appropriate to the size and nature of the villages.

However, a new road would have a significant environmental and ecological impact depending on the agreed route. Foxburrow Wood is an ancient woodland used by many visitors and local people. If the new route is too close to the wood there is likely to be an impact on the quality of the habitat and wildlife. We believe that the bypass route currently indicated on the map attached takes the new road too close to the wood with a consequent effect on the habitat and wildlife.

There are also the issues of visual and physical impacts of a bypass on this rural landscape. These would include an increase in noise, vibration and possibly air quality. Some Rights of Way would be severed.

If the proposed roundabout is built on the existing A12 near Parkgate Farm it is likely that The Red House will lose part of a field currently used for horses. Consideration should be given to minimise the impact of this and appropriate compensation would need to be made to the owners.

A consequence of this option will be a reduction in passing trade for local businesses including the service station which also provides an important resource for local people. Consideration must be given to signage at both the Farnham and Stratford St Andrew ends of the new route directing traffic

to the services provided by local businesses which may be affected. Compensation to business owners may be appropriate.

The consultation document says that if this option is taken forward a lot more work needs to be carried out with regard to assessment of the route. The parish council must be included in any discussion about a more detailed route.

There are approximately fifteen properties in and around Farnham Hall and Mollett's Farm which would be directly and significantly affected by a new road as it will be closer to them than the existing road.

We understand that the exact route of a two village bypass is not finalised but the parish council strongly feels that the route should skirt the east side of Foxburrow Wood rather than the west. This would take the road much further away from the houses at Farnham Hall and Mollett's Farm and also from both Pond Wood and Foxburrow Wood thus reducing the negative impacts on them as well as the habitat and wildlife. This alternative route would also sever less Rights of Way. An annotated drawing is appended at the end of this document. This shows the route as shown in EDF's consultation document and an alternative route.

If this option is taken forward proper consideration should nonetheless be given to the use of road noise reducing materials, screening, planting and the use of cuttings as well as other appropriate measures. This, we believe, is of the utmost importance.

Option 1 - no change

The parish council does not support this option.

Although the businesses in Farnham and Stratford St Andrew would remain unaffected by this option and there would be no additional environmental or ecological damage caused, the negative impacts of this option far outweigh these potential benefits.

It is clear that the power station construction phase will significantly add to the traffic passing through the two villages, and HGV traffic in particular. Properties in both villages currently suffer ongoing damage to their structures including flooding, cracks in walls and dirt on brickwork and glass. Residents also suffer noise throughout the day and night as well as increased pollution levels exacerbated by the numbers of HGVs passing by. These problems will increase if no action is taken.

Access on to the A12 from Great Glemham Road is already problematic due to traffic volumes and will only become worse with more traffic passing through. There are no adequate alternative routes if this road is shut or blocked as side roads are narrow and unsuitable for heavy vehicles.

Road safety is an issue through the two villages, both for vehicles and pedestrians. The traffic measurement devices in situ have demonstrated that traffic consistently travels in excess of the 30mph limit and this makes crossing the road at busy times dangerous. The bollards in the centre of the road are regularly knocked down by large vehicles that cannot safely pass them. Additional traffic will exacerbate these issues.

EDF has suggested the use of relatively minor mitigation measures such as the installation of noise insulation but most houses along the A12 have already installed this. If this option was taken forward we would suggest soundproofing for adjacent properties, traffic calming and compensation for residents or the offer to purchase.

Option 2 – Farnham bend road widening.

The parish council does not support this option.

Widening the road by demolishing the Grade II listed Post Office Stores would enable HGVs to pass more easily on the bend. There will be less environmental impact than for options 3 and 4. Access to Hill Farm Road will be easier and some local businesses such as Farnham Leisure and Stratford Service Station will suffer no detriment.

However, the negative impacts of this option outweigh any advantages.

The demolition of any Grade II listed building requires permission from the Secretary of State, it is not clear if EDF has been granted any such permission. We are aware that EDF has purchased the Post Office Stores and is in the process of refurbishing the exterior. Its demolition will expose other properties to the road which are currently protected by it, they will then suffer additional noise as well as having the visual impact of a main road which they don't have at present.

There is also the issue of disruption during demolition to an already busy main road and neighbouring properties.

This option does not address issues regarding safety, noise, pollution and damage to adjacent properties as set out under Option 1 above. Neither does it address the increasing traffic related problems experienced by residents in Stratford St Andrew as set out in Option 1 above.

If this option was taken forward possible mitigations may include soundproofing of properties, traffic calming measures, compensation, landscaping and additional protection for exposed properties.

Option 3a – Farnham bypass joining the A12 at Sweffling Road at a signalised junction

The parish council does not support this option.

In this option the old A12 into Farnham would be stopped up at the south western end. All vehicles wanting to access Farnham would have to do so by using the proposed new bypass. The existing A12 would no longer be a through road.

This option would improve traffic flow past Farnham and the old A12 through the village could become quieter and less busy. The Farnham bend and its associated problems will be avoided. There is therefore the potential for improved air quality and less damage and traffic noise at the front of properties along the main road in Farnham. The businesses on the Farnham industrial estate will have easier access to the main road. Businesses in Stratford St Andrew are unlikely to be affected by this option.

With this option residents and businesses in Farnham will have to access their properties by using the new bypass and signalised junction at Sweffling Road. Farnham Leisure is likely to lose any passing trade.

There will be a loss of local amenity land owned by the Riverside Centre, a charitable trust, which is used by many local people for recreation, car boot sales, additional parking for the centre and events. The playground sited at the rear of the Riverside Centre will be immediately adjacent to the proposed new road.

We already experience traffic delays through the two villages due to volume, vehicles turning into the service station, refuse collections etc. A signalised junction at the end of a short bypass may cause delays which will back up into Stratford St Andrew. In addition this option does not take any traffic away from Stratford St Andrew which already has an air quality problem that additional traffic plus a new junction will exacerbate. Vehicles turning south out of Great Glemham Road already suffer long delays, this arrangement will make that situation worse.

We are concerned about safety issues regarding access to Mollett's Farm on the A12 which is a tourism business attracting holidaymakers and caravan owners. The entrance to the site would be close to the signalised junction thus increasing the risk for drivers accessing the property.

There are issues about the proposed new road being built on an existing floodplain. This means the road will be raised 4m above the landscape and noise will spread outwards. Any walkways, cycle paths and agricultural vehicle accesses are likely to be prone to flooding thus making them unusable and cutting off access between the two villages. The consultation document acknowledges that further detailed work needs to be carried out regarding flood compensatory storage to avoid increasing existing flood risks.

There is also the visual impact of a road raised up above the current landscape. The construction period is estimated at 12-18 months with an

additional 100 HGV movements a day over a six month period, this would exacerbate the already busy A12 and its associated problems.

The area is a haven for wildlife with the river flowing through it which is home to many creatures including water voles, newts, muntjac, roe deer, owls, raptors and eels. Mitigation must be included to minimise disruption to these species.

If this option is nonetheless adopted we have considered various mitigations for the negative impacts. These include the provision of alternative amenity land including a new playground which EDF has alluded to in the consultation document. The new road should be built with noise reducing materials and there should be screening and tree planting to minimise noise to properties in both Farnham and Stratford St Andrew.

We would be concerned if the speed limit on the new stretch of road was to exceed 30mph as this would increase noise and give safety concerns especially at a signalised junction.

Consideration must be given to the issue of flooding under the proposed walkways and agricultural vehicle accesses to avoid the two villages becoming isolated from each other.

This may be an opportunity to improve the public footpath between Friday Street and Farnham which is currently in a poor state.

There is no potential mitigation for the loss of air quality in Stratford St Andrew and this is of great concern.

Option 3b – Farnham bypass with a south-west T-junction into Farnham village

The parish council does not support this option.

The potential positive impacts for this option are similar to those for option 3b above but passing trade for local businesses in Farnham will be less affected as there will be access to Farnham village via a T-junction.

The negative impacts are as set out above as are the possible mitigations.

Four Villages Bypass

There has been much discussion recently about the possibility of a four villages bypass which is not included as an option in the consultation document but which is the preference of the county council. If plans for a four village bypass are put forward by the county council it is vital that the parish council is included in preliminary discussions concerning the route and subsequent impacts and that action is taken at the earliest opportunity.

