

# **A12 CHELMSFORD TO A120 WIDENING SCHEME DCO EXAMINATION REPRESENTATION FROM CPRE ESSEX**

## **Introduction**

CPRE - the countryside charity - has worked for almost a century to support and promote the countryside. The comments in this representation are provided by the Essex branch of CPRE, which has its office located on Inworth Road, Feering. Given this and the local knowledge of the area, the main focus of this submission is on the proposals for junction 24.

CPRE recognises the pressing need for improvements to the A12 in this area and supports the objectives of the overall scheme. However, there are serious concerns about the proposed design and functionality of junction 24, which require particular scrutiny. These concerns can be summarised under three headings and relate to the likely adverse impacts on the local environment, heritage and road safety.

## **Environment**

One of CPRE priorities is to see more hedgerows planted and restored - not least, since they are important wildlife corridors which connect habitats across the countryside and are one of the best natural defences against climate change. With a significant amount of carbon sequestration on farms attributable to hedgerows, the role of UK hedgerows should not be undervalued in efforts to mitigate climate change. The organisation at national level is currently running a high profile campaign in support of the Climate Change Committee's call for a 40% increase in the extent of hedgerows by 2050 to help tackle the climate emergency.

In addition, hedgerows form a significant visual feature in the landscape and contribute to a sense of place. This is very evident in the lanes around the villages of Inworth and Messing. It is of concern, therefore, that the measures necessary to make the B1023 fit for purpose as an A12 feeder road will inevitably involve widening in places with the associated loss of mature hedgerows, leading to the destruction of important habitats for birds, insects and small mammals. New hedgerow planting to help mitigate the loss of habitat and provide functional screening takes many years to thicken and mature before it can be considered an adequate replacement.

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## **Heritage**

The proposals for junction 24 would have a serious adverse effect on two ancient villages, resulting in the communities of Messing and Inworth being severely and unnecessarily blighted.

### **Inworth**

The village is located either side of the B1023. There are 7 grade II listed structures and a grade I listed place of worship in the centre of the village. The proposed removal of junction 23 will mean that traffic from Tiptree to the A12 will have to use the B1023 to access junction 24, thereby increasing traffic through the village considerably.

Major increases in traffic flows will not only result in potential damage to the historic fabric but also increase severance, both actual and perceived, resulting in reduced social interaction within the village.

### **Messing**

The village is located between the B1023 and the B1022 and accessed by narrow lanes with very few passing places and a number of blind bends and junctions. The centre of the village is a Conservation Area with a number of listed buildings, some of which date from the 16th and 17th centuries. Many properties are directly on the street with narrow or no pavements. Some of the older buildings will have minimal foundations and will be more prone to damage from vibration caused by heavy traffic.

An element of rat-running through the village between the two B-roads takes place. The junction 24 proposal for the A12 slip road to terminate 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.

## **Road Safety**

The network of local lanes in this area are already struggling to cope with the significant increases in traffic seen in recent years, arising from new developments to the east and south. As it approaches Inworth, the B1023 narrows so that, at points, it measures only 4.7m - ie less than the width recommended for two rigid vehicles to

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pass. Through Inworth the road bends, at times quite sharply leading to visibility issues and problems with large vehicles passing each other.

The impact of this is evident in the extensive damage to road edges and verges, due to the lack of suitable passing places on much of the local network. In addition, a number of blind bends and a lack of pavements or passing places puts at further risk the safety of all users on the single track country roads, including horse riders, ramblers and farm traffic as well as local schoolchildren walking along the local roads to and from school.

It is considered that the plan for junction 24 is fundamentally flawed with inadequate and unsustainable links to the local road network and, if built as proposed, would need better connectivity for the lasting benefit and safety of all road users and the community.

### **Conclusion**

In the light of these serious concerns, CPRE would suggest that the current proposals for junction 24 are not fit for purpose and that further consideration should be given to investigation of alternative solutions. Instead of adding to the existing problems associated with capacity and safety, the solution should act to divert traffic away from Inworth and Messing villages, greatly reducing the problems associated with increased traffic through the two villages and surrounding rural lanes.