

The A274 Sutton Road has been largely ignored concerning the **future impact** on local air quality from the proposed development in Langley, the surrounding Parishes and further afield.

The current residents who live on the **Sutton Road**, including those who live in **Langley**, are already ingesting dangerous emissions from the diesel that fuels the thousands of passing lorries every day, without adding the toxic load from vehicles that would be generated by the proposed urban extension and all the homes being built in Headcorn, Staplehurst, Coxheath and Tenterden, that will use this arterial route to reach our County Town in future.

Of particular concern, is the number of residents who have developed **asthma and more serious chest conditions** since moving to the area, including young people.

Neither has consideration been given to emissions that will be generated from the process of constructing the 2,600 houses, including the additional lorry movements involved. Unless the Sutton Road is **effectively bypassed in future by a new road from Headcorn to the A20, with another motorway exit near Lenham on the M20 to accommodate the traffic from its development**, any proposed Langley/Leeds 'bypass' or 'relief road' is unlikely to do what is says on the tin.

**A dedicated bus lane along Sutton Road to Maidstone East Railway Station** could help to encourage modal shift, whilst improving air quality. Provided the bus transport was reasonably priced and offered a frequent service, it is likely that it would be used by the many London commuters living in Langley, Otham and Sutton Valance. Also, by residents visiting/working in the town centre, where parking is inadequate and increasingly expensive.

Maidstone East has faster train services to London (50 minutes) and fares are lower than stations further east, therefore, theoretically, given a dedicated bus lane, would be a better station to travel from than Bearsted, Hollingbourne or Headcorn. Plans for proposed redevelopment at Maidstone East Station site (Baltic Wharf) discussed at the Inquiry, clearly indicate that this will become an even more important transport hub in future.

**Park & Ride schemes.** Maidstone needs several more Park & Ride (possibly smaller) sites, in addition to the dedicated bus lane and cycle lanes. I note that MBC Head of Planning Rob Jarman confirmed at an Inquiry Session about Transport & Infrastructure in November that Park and Ride sites, previously dismissed by MBC as 'underused', are **now being used by more people in Maidstone**. Given the traffic and high parking charges in town, it's hardly surprising.

In response to the Inspector's question about a Park and Ride site on the H110 site, it could be supported by Langley Parish Council, if the housing number was substantially reduced, provided the Park & Ride site was built on the **Golf driving range, which forms part of the development area of the site**, next to Langley Park West and Park Wood, **NOT on the Rural Buffer**, which would result in the loss of much needed green space, needed to help absorb some of the pollution created.

A Park and Ride site is badly needed at or near **Linton Hill on the Loose Road**, one of the most congested traffic routes into Maidstone from the south west, to help relieve congestion

at the Wheatsheaf Junction, an air pollution black spot, which, according to KCC cannot be fully mitigated, even by a Langley Leeds Bypass.

**North East Maidstone** is suffering from increased traffic and air pollution on the **Sittingbourne Road** generated by the popular retail development at Eclipse Park, Vintners Business Park and the new Kent Neuro Village at Junction 7 of the M20, and it can only get worse with the proposed Waitrose Store and other sites. Much of it originates from the Medway towns North of Maidstone, including those who work/ shop in our County Town.

Building a Park and Ride site **to the north of the M20 motorway, close to the border with Chatham and Aylesford**, would help alleviate traffic and parking problems at Junction 7, on the Sittingbourne Road and in the town, and improve air quality.

### **Langley/Leeds Bypass**

More roads bring more traffic and air pollution, we need modal shift. Traffic fumes are already a problem for many residents in Langley Heath, hemmed in between by two main roads, the Sutton Road and the Leeds Road. **A third road major road near Langley Heath, would turn it into a traffic island and our remaining fields and orchards would quickly be in filled with houses.**

A bypass/relief road would not fully mitigate traffic congestion on the Leeds Road or the Sutton Road, as it would direct even more traffic to our area. Most of the traffic comes from the south and west and motorist would still use the Sutton Road to reach our County town, as it's the shortest, most direct route, unless there is modal shift to other forms of transport.

Any Langley/Leeds 'bypass' if it has to be built must be just that, a **'bypass'**, **NOT a road through the middle of Langley Heath, or anywhere near existing homes in Langley.** The same applies to any 'relief road', it must relieve, not add even more traffic emission already endured by residents in Langley Heath, the Leeds Road Langley and Sutton Road Langley.

Once any bypass route is announced, it will bring massive development in its wake, unless environmental controls are put in place now, given the appetite for our green fields from building community. If the spread of development is not held back in South East Maidstone, we will need a **'bypass' to bypass the 'bypass' within 10 years to deal with the additional traffic and its emissions.**

Building new roads is not the solution the Maidstone's air quality issues. **A reduction in the number of houses on the Sutton Road South site in Langley would reduce the traffic impact and improve air quality** locally and at the Wheatsheaf Junction and would be supported by Langley Parish Council

The Local Plan Inquiry gives an opportunity to provide for greater environmental protection, including a **Green Belt**, which is essential if we are to plan any new roads away from existing homes through South East Maidstone, whilst seeking to improve air quality. Unless, robust protection is provided, the countryside of South East Maidstone will become a town within 10 years, choked by traffic fumes, a toxic legacy for our children to inherit.

The Inspector will already be aware of Langley's Landscape of Local Value Designation application, which covers not only Langley, but all the adjoining Parishes. If accepted, it

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could provide South East **Maidstone's Green Belt**, its **Green Lung**, a breathing space between urban Maidstone and rural Langley, Otham, Boughton Monchelsea, Leeds and Sutton Valence, even parts of Bearsted and Thurnham. It would provide greater environmental protection and put the brakes on infill development and air pollution, if there is a Langley/Leeds bypass/relief road in future.

In its Neighbourhood Plan, Langley Parish Council will be supporting the development of **cycle paths through the remaining countryside** to encourage modal shift and improve air quality in Maidstone. We hope to be able to extend **our network of footpaths**, which starts from the Village Hall in Horseshoes Lane and goes through Langley's Fruit Plateau and farmland to neighbouring Parishes, to provide a safe pedestrian route into town, an alternative to the car, for local residents.

A **'Quiet Lanes' policy** is also under consideration by the Parish Council, in a bid to improve air quality. We hope that if Langley leads the way, other Parishes will follow we will have a **network of Quiet Lanes throughout the Borough**. Country lanes identified and considered suitable would be resurfaced, allowing a maximum traffic speed of 10 mph, signposted green, as if in a National Park, alerting motorists that the area is used by pedestrians, cyclists and horse-riders, including children.

Sir, I hope the above answers some of your questions and assists you, even in a small way, as you seek to mitigate the serious Air Quality issues we face in our Borough. Your efforts are much appreciated by the Parish Council.

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