

1<sup>st</sup> December 2009

Open letter to residents of Lee Mill

Our Ref        TWG/402/0036/00350

Dear Residents

***RE:    PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF A RESOURCE RECOVERY FACILITY AT NEW ENGLAND QUARRY, LEE MILL - EASTBOUND OFF SLIP ROAD IMPROVEMENTS***

We write to provide an update on the work undertaken in relation to providing access to the proposed resource recovery development and to provide a back ground as to the current proposals.

As you may have been aware, and as presented at the recent public exhibitions, Viridor had considered providing an improved eastbound exit slip road, which would result in the closure of Western Road as an exit from the A38. However, despite best endeavours, we are unable to proceed with this solution at the present time due to land ownership constraints.

As an alternative, we propose to introduce some modifications to Western Road itself, which would result in the provision of a wider footway on the southern side of the road, plus some associated enhanced signage, including a “watchman” sign activated by speed. This proposal is referred to as Option 10, which we describe in further detail below.

***Alternative Options Considered***

Our consultants, SLR, undertook detailed assessment of options to provide a new slip road alternative to Western Road, which involved consideration of a number of possible layouts, which was then honed down to the two most viable options:

- Provision of an new full standard slip road from the A38 provided to the east of Lee Mill (Option 9); and
- Provision of a new County road to run south of Lee Mill and north of the A38 (Option 7).

SLR undertook detailed design work on these options, including detailed consultation with Devon County Council (the highway authority for side roads) and the Highways Agency (HA) (the authority for the A38).

Option 9 comprised the best option which could provide a wholly new exit slip road from the A38, whilst still complying with the HA’s very stringent standards with respect to building new slip roads onto the trunk road. Option 9 would have required the complete closure of the existing slip road. The Option would have led to the demolition of at least part of Beech Farm and leaving the remainder of the land-holding severed and undesirable.

Option 7 was a solution which retained the existing exit slip road from the A38, however bypassed Western Road by providing a new one-way road along the northern boundary of

the A38 and to the south of the properties. The advantage of Option 7 was that it would not require alteration of any element of the A38 trunk road, enabling less stringent design standards to be required. However, its disadvantage is that it would place a new road to south of existing properties, and it would also require the purchase of land from a number of properties.

As a further possible solution to bypassing Western Road, we considered introducing a routing agreement which would enforce all traffic accessing the proposed development from the west to exit the A38 at the next junction east at Ivybridge, and then come back west on the A38 to exit at the Lee Mill junction. This option was discussed with the HA and Devon CC, who objected to this proposal, as they considered it would be difficult to enforce and would only move traffic to another junction, which itself had capacity and layout issues. This option was therefore discounted.

### ***Other Considerations***

There are a number of existing businesses which are accessed from Western Road, which rely on its passing trade. This passing trade would be affected if Western Road was bypassed and, although some new signage could be provided to mitigate this, it is possible that solutions such as Option 7 (in part) and Option 9 could lead to these businesses being adversely affected.

If we were to pursue either of these options further, we would need to assess the affect in greater detail.

There is also a bus stop located on Western Road, which serves the eastbound bus routes from Plymouth towards Exeter. Whilst this could be retained without diversion under Option 7, for Option 9 it is likely that it would require the bus stop to be relocated further east to be in the vicinity of the Beech Road (Tesco and Industrial Estate) junction.

### ***Land Requirements***

Approaches were made to the relevant land owners with a view to establishing the appropriate land deals associated with Options 7 & 9.

Viridor were unable to reach a suitable settlement with the principle land owner affected by Option 9. In addition, a significant number of landowners affected by Option 7 were not prepared to negotiate in terms of selling land for the scheme.

It is therefore summarised that Viridor is unable to procure either option due to land restraints.

The only alternative method of obtaining the land would be under Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) powers. As a private developer, Viridor does not have such powers and this would therefore need to be pursued by either the HA or the County Council. CPO is a legal procedure, where it must first be demonstrated that there is a public interest need for the land to be acquired and that there is no suitable alternative.

In this case, the need relates to the need for road improvements, and not linked to the need associated with the RRC. As a rule, CPO powers are not used to facilitate private developments, even those in the public interest. The need for road improvements, therefore, needs to be assessed on the existing situation, ahead of the RRC development.

During SLR's consultations with the HA and Devon CC, their opinion has been that, whilst they would not object to developer funded slip road improvement options (provided that they were compliant with their standards), they consider the existing road arrangement to be

acceptable. Furthermore, they consider that the additional traffic generated by the RRC development would not materially change this.

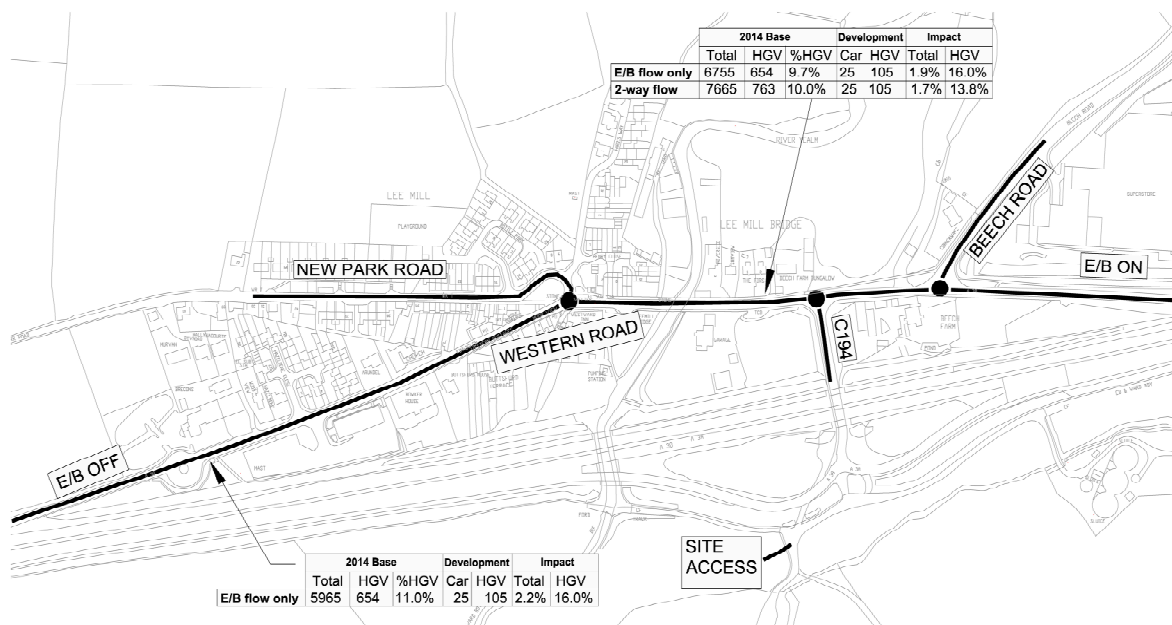
Based on this, no defined need for a slip road improvement option can be determined at this stage, and therefore the use of CPO powers to secure the necessary land may not be used.

This is clearly an emotive point, and one which local residents may not agree with. As a private developer, however, Viridor is unable to procure a scheme which would result in the bypassing of Western Road through Lee Mill. Notwithstanding this, we is aware of our planning obligations to attempt to mitigate the effects of additional traffic and have therefore considered improvements which may be made to Western Road to the benefit of local residents.

**Option 10**

As options to bypass Western Road may not be provided by Viridor, SLR has considered the effects that development traffic would have on the operation of Western Road.

The existing flow composition on Western Road, and the effect on it when taking into account predicted future traffic levels accessing the RRC development, is shown in the diagram below.



This shows that the RRC development would result in an increase in eastbound HGV traffic levels on Western Road of in the order of 16%, and an increase in total traffic volumes of in the order of 2%.

SLR has undertaken capacity assessments at the roundabout at the eastern end of the A38 exit slip road, and at the junction of Western Road with the C194 (underpass of the A30).

These assessments show that, whilst the junctions are clearly busy, they operate within capacity and they would not be adversely affected by the introduction of traffic accessing the RRC.

SLR considers, therefore, that the RRC development would not adversely affect the operation or current amenity of Western Road, and this has been accepted in principle by the HA and DCC. Notwithstanding this, Viridor propose mitigation works to Western Road, to seek to minimise the impact of additional traffic where possible. Option 10 has therefore been developed, which comprises:

- Provision of a “watchman” speed activated camera on both sides of the road, to alternate signs “30mph” and “SLOW DOWN”;
- Provision of a footway, 1.8m width on the southern side of Western Road;
- Enhancement of existing road signage and road markings, where required.

An outline plan of this scheme is attached to this letter.

These proposals have been put forward based on SLR’s highways design experience, knowledge of the local area and taking account of comments from the highway authority and Highways Agency. However, we fully understand that you may have specific local issues which we may be able to address in this scheme.

We are currently conducting further public consultation on our New England proposals and would welcome your views on other potential traffic improvements that could be made or other potential mitigation measures. To that end you are invited to attend a community consultation group meeting from **6pm – 8pm, Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> December at Smithleigh Hotel, Smithleigh, Plympton, PL7 5AX.**

In the meantime should you have any further queries or comments on this matter, you can find out how to contact us and get more information through [www.viridor-consultation.co.uk/newengland](http://www.viridor-consultation.co.uk/newengland).

Yours sincerely

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