



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
CHESHIRE

Mr. Steve Berry,
Roads Policy Division,
Department for Transport,
Zone 3/01, Great Minster House,
76 Marsham Street,
London, SW1P 4DR.

Sunday, October 17th, 2004

Dear Mr. Berry,

M6 EXPRESSWAY CONSULTATION

The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) Cheshire Branch is opposed to the concept of an M6 Expressway and would like to endorse the CPRE national response to the consultation.

This letter does not repeat the arguments made in that over-arching submission. It is intended to supplement it.

What the Expressway Would Mean to Cheshire

The existing M6 motorway dissects the entire length of the County of Cheshire and a rural part of Warrington Urban District (which CPRE Cheshire covers). As it enters Cheshire from the south at the three counties point of Madeley, the M6 is elevated on a viaduct. A new 'express' motorway attempting to mirror it would already have had to swing wide of the Keele service station and would still be a distance from the M6 as it crossed the Staffordshire/Cheshire border. Passing Madeley, the new expressway would need to be accommodated on a new viaduct. Between there and M6 junction 16 it would have to cross the B5500 Nantwich Road and Barthomley Road, almost certainly impacting on Domvilles Wood and two sites of special scientific and biological interest not depicted on the DfT's consultation document 'M6: Giving Motorists a Choice', quite apart from the Waltons Wood SBI which is shown.

Transport professionals in the North West region concur that a likely access point to the Expressway if it were built would be alongside M6 junction 16 where the A500 crosses it. This would involve substantially greater landtake than the express motorway itself in order to accommodate toll booths, new slip roads and roundabouts and existing highways over a considerable radius would suffer from a huge increase in traffic movements. Even if an access point was in North Staffordshire, there would be significant induced traffic movements in South Cheshire. North of M6 j.16 the expressway would need to cross the B5078 (Radway Green Road), the Crewe – Stoke-on-Trent railway line and the B5077 (Butterton Lane). It would pass through or near the SSSI of Oakhanger Moss and Hassall Pond and over the Trent-Mersey Canal and the Cheshire Ring Canal Walk. It would then need to swing around the Sandbach service area before circumnavigating M6 j.17 and crossing the A534 at the same time.

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The Campaign to Protect Rural England exists to promote the beauty, tranquility and diversity of rural England by encouraging the sustainable use of land and other natural resources in town and country.

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Between M6 j.17 and j.18, the Expressway would have to bridge the West Coast Main Railway Line and the River Croco and after swinging around M6 j.18 and crossing the A54 it would need to span the River Dane. North of there it would have to cross the B5082 Northwich Road and the B5081 Middlewich Road, impacting on the SBI of Shakerley Mere. It would then need to bridge the Peover Eye, Plumley Moor Road and the Mid-Cheshire Railway line. Just north of the railway line, the M6 abuts the Tabley Estate and passes close to Grade 1 listed Tabley House. If the Expressway were able to pass to this western side of Knutsford, it would have to negotiate – all in close proximity to each other – Tabley, Knutsford service area, the A5033 Northwich Road, M6 j. 19 and the A556 Chester Road. Almost immediately to the north of j.19 is the Arley Hall Estate and Big Wood. If it were possible to bring the Expressway to the west of Knutsford, it is likely its northern point would be in this vicinity where, as well as merging with the M6, there would be new access roads and toll booths and a build-up of traffic causing flow break-downs on the M6 over Thelwall Viaduct.

The Expressway would involve the bridging over, cutting under, diverting or stopping up of some 30 unclassified lanes between Madeley in the south and the Cheshire/Warrington border in the north. About 18 brooks cross or run adjacent to the M6, many areas are susceptible to flooding and there are a multitude of mosses, flashes, ponds and marshes for which Cheshire is noted and which abound with wildlife. Another feature particular to Cheshire is its small field system and an abundance of hedgerows. The scale of the infrastructure which would be involved in building a new motorway comprising four running lanes, two hard shoulders and a central reservation, along with a northern access point and probably another one in South Cheshire, would be physically overpowering. Existing severance caused by the M6 would be exacerbated exponentially.

Cheshire is under severe development pressure. The large swathes of unfarmable land which would be created would undoubtedly succumb to the pressure. This would be contrary to North West Regional Planning Guidance (RPG 13) which says development should be focused on the metropolitan conurbations of Merseyside and Manchester. RPG 13 also includes protection policies for North Cheshire in addition to Green Belt and Cheshire Structure Plan designations of 'Areas of Special County Value' which apply to much of the potential route. Not only landscapes but communities of all sizes and at least one school would be deleteriously impacted by the massive amount of new infrastructure which would be required and by the traffic which would affect their quality of life. People living in the central corridor of Cheshire would suffer more air, noise and light pollution. Rural livelihoods would be lost (much of the Cheshire farmland under threat from this proposal is good quality) and so would built heritage.

Cheshire CPRE rejects the concept of an M6 Expressway. It is unsustainable, environmentally unacceptable and would not achieve modal shift or reduce the need to travel - a key theme in the region's Action for Sustainability action plan.

Yours sincerely,

LILLIAN BURNS (MRS)

Branch Vice Chairman/ Chairman, Cheshire Transport Campaign Group.