

**SUBMISSION ON BEHALF OF THE FEDERATED GOVERNING BODY OF OTLEY AND WITNESHAM
PRIMARY SCHOOLS.**

This submission is made on behalf of Federated Governing Body (the FGB) of the Otley and Witnesham Federated Primary Schools (the Schools) in opposition to the proposed Ipswich Northern Route (the INR).

The FGB's primary points of objection to the INR can be summarised as follows:

1. The Schools are set in quiet rural surroundings in immediate proximity to open countryside. Witnesham School is set between the villages of Witnesham and Swilland and Otley School is set in a quiet location in the village of Otley. Both Schools have had consistently Good Ofsted ratings since 2000.

Both Schools are dependent on out of catchment pupils to make up their published admission numbers (PAN) which are crucial for the sustained funding of the Schools. July 2016 figures show that 39% of Witnesham pupils came from "out of catchment" areas and 48% of Otley pupils came from "out of catchment" areas.

It is clear from completed surveys received by the Schools from parents of pupils at the Schools that the grounds and environment of the Schools are very important factors to parents in choosing the Schools for their children. The Outer and Middle Routes proposed for the INR are close to the Schools and will significantly damage the rural environments of both of them.

The Outer Route will increase use of the B1077, which passes directly past Witnesham Primary School, as a "rat run" for traffic coming off the Outer Route into the north of Ipswich. More cars passing the School will mean further safety concerns for the School especially during the peak periods when children come and go from the School.

All of the children who walk to Witnesham Primary School from Witnesham have to cross B1077 and all traffic coming to the School from Ipswich, Westerfield and Witnesham has to turn right across the road and so the increased "rat run" traffic will present additional dangers for both.

These factors can only erode the rural appeal of the Schools to "out of catchment" parents with a consequential impact on the PAN and therefore the funding for the Schools.

There is also cause for concern in the December 2016 Ipswich Northern Route Study Stage 1 Interim Report which would seem to indicate that the INR would be the catalyst for the building of a significant number of new houses in the north of Ipswich.

It is understood that one of the functions of the INR will be the delivery of around 10,000 to 15,000 additional houses across Suffolk. It isn't clear at this moment whether these houses are in addition to previously existing projections or part of those projections.

Whichever, such a significant amount of new houses will almost certainly require the building of a new primary school to service those additional houses which will "cannibalise" a number of the "out of catchment" pupils who would otherwise have gone to one or other of the Schools with the same consequential effect on the PAN.

2. The FGB's objections to the INR are also on health grounds in terms of the impact of the INR on the Schools and their pupils and on the surrounding environment.

Scientific evidence which shows that air pollution is a contributor to health problems is unchallenged. New roads serve only to draw increased levels of polluting transport into the areas in which they are introduced so causing substantial increases in carbon emissions. The major air pollutant of concern across much of Suffolk is nitrogen dioxide, the primary source of which is emissions from road transport.

While some road schemes (including bypasses such as the INR) may result in short-term improvements in air quality in bypassed areas, their long-term effect is to increase overall levels of traffic, leading to increased emissions of nitrogen oxides and particulates that are damaging to human health.

The proximity of the Outer and Middle Routes and to a lesser extent the Inner Route to the Schools and the certain resulting increase in carbon emissions must therefore be of significant concern to the pupils of the Schools and to their parents.

3. The FGB also have considerable concerns about the environmental impact of the INR on the immediate countryside in the area of the Schools.

The Outer Route passes close to a nature conservation site. This site and the surrounding fields are homes to a considerable amount of wildlife, many of which are protected. The Inner and Middle Routes cross the Fynn Valley. Consequently the Fynn Valley Special Landscape Area would be impacted to such an extent that the environmental damage could never be repaired.

As has already been pointed out in terms to the Suffolk County Council during the course of the current Consultation a July 2018 study commissioned by the Suffolk County Council itself and entitled Settlement Sensitivity Assessment: Vol 1 – Landscape fringes of Ipswich stated that:

"This study has demonstrated that the river valleys that lie adjacent to Ipswich play an important role as recreational and ecological corridors and as a setting to the town and smaller settlements. Higher ridges which remain undeveloped help to contain the river valleys and settlements beyond. These ridges are highly sensitive to development. Similarly some of the smaller rural settlements have been found to be highly sensitive to change in part due to their historic character and high quality landscape settings e.g. the rural villages of the Fynn and Lark valleys".

The prospect of a four-lane new road running straight through these landscape fringes and these "highly sensitive" ridges is very hard to accept in environmental terms.

Finally, the FGB can only wonder what the long term educational impact will be on the pupils of the Schools of their observation of the building of a new four lane road in such close proximity to their Schools and the consequent irrevocable damage to the surrounding countryside.

Both of the Schools have a strong environmental ethos and are active participants in the Green Flag awards and the RSPB Challenge. The children are encouraged wherever possible to walk to school and the Schools work hard to develop the children into good environmental citizens for the future.

Is it really a lesson that we want to give to those children that it is progress to drive dual carriage roads through our pristine, unspoilt countryside in the constant expansion of a car based culture? Is this not a generation that should be learning the value of sustainable policies for the protection of our rural and farming heritage and our Suffolk way of life?

To conclude, and for the reasons set out above, the FGB firmly oppose the plans for all three proposed Routes for the INR.