

[Mr. Peter Viggers]

on the Portsmouth side, and to visit the museums—the submarine museum, the Priddy's Hard museum, the interesting museum of naval medicine at the Royal Hospital, Haslar, which should make us all grateful that we live in the 20th century and do not go to sea, and the Gosport museum.

The point of the millennium project at Portsmouth harbour is to show our naval and military heritage. It backs the local features of HMS Victory, HMS Warrior 1860—I declare an interest as a director of HMS Warrior 1860—and the Mary Rose, Henry VIII's magnificent ship. It is the artefacts relating to those military and naval museums that cause me concern.

Priddy's Hard museum has the best collection of torpedoes in the country. It has a Whitehead, a mark 8 torpedo, one of the type that sank the Belgrano, a type 46 torpedo and a Tigertfish torpedo: in fact, it has the full range of naval torpedoes. It also has a ship-based Exocet missile and a complete range of guns from Tudor cannons to Victorian guns, world wars one and two guns and later ships' weapons, including a "red beard" nuclear bomb that was carried by fixed-wing aircraft.

The museum has magnificent artefacts, but the concern is that it is not as easy for museums to get artefacts from the Ministry of Defence as it should be. I give one example.

About eight years ago, two 4.5 in guns were sold by the MOD for scrap for about £500. Those are unique in history; they are the early model 4.5 in mark 6 turret gun. Priddy's Hard museum is so anxious to obtain one of those guns that it has paid £8,500 for one, and is paying £3,000 today to have it transferred from Pound's shipyard in Portsmouth harbour to the museum. Therefore, somewhere, somehow, someone has lost out on a large amount of money, and it has been difficult for the museum to gain this and other artefacts that will be of significant importance and interest to local visitors to the millennium project in the Gosport-Portsmouth area.

Some time ago, my constituent, Mr. Bill Adnitt, came to my constituency surgery and drew my attention to the fact that Priddy's Hard museum is trying to obtain type 6 gyro sights, gun sight telescopes, open sights, cleaning gear, special stripping tools and books of reference, which, as he pointed out, are all required to give the whole picture of naval and military equipment through the ages.

I took the point up with the Under-Secretary of State for Defence in a letter written on 17 March, in which I asked him whether he agreed

"to make a policy statement that Service-related museums such as Priddy's Hard Armaments Museum and the Royal Naval Submarine Museum in my constituency could be given appropriate indication and opportunities to acquire redundant equipment in order to facilitate their important work of maintaining our naval heritage."

I have absolutely no complaint that I have not yet received a reply; I would not expect to receive a reply to a substantial request within two weeks or so. He and his Department have always been extremely helpful and courteous in responding to requests, but my point is that there is added urgency to the request.

Only yesterday, I was given information about a further item, called a valiant rig, which is currently at HMS Dolphin. Weapon-handling training equipment, it consists of a large steel rig, a dummy torpedo tube—a cut-away

version of an air ram—two consoles and various steel attachments. The total weight of that equipment is 20 tonnes. Priddy's Hard museum is anxious to obtain one small part only of that—the dummy torpedo tube.

The due date for tender for those items was 2 April, so it is urgent that the MOD considers my request that museums should be given priority treatment when military equipment becomes redundant. If special instruction is not given by the MOD urgently, the valiant rig, and no doubt many other features, will be sold for scrap for comparatively low prices. What my constituents would like is an instruction that they should be allowed to remove items such as the dummy torpedo tube from items that would otherwise be scrapped, and that they should be put into museums.

This may seem an item of special interest. It is, but it is of keen interest to a number of people in my constituency. If that urgent request is considered by the MOD without delay, it might be possible for artefacts and items of historical interest to be retained by the nation, rather than scrapped.

10.44 am

ASHBY BY ABB

Mr. David Taylor (North-West Leicestershire): I raise another local issue. My constituency lies at the heart of England, and is a transport crossroads for the midlands. At its centre is my home town of Ashby, which is battered, bruised and bewildered from the incessant heavy traffic. The need for some relief is overwhelming, and a town bypass is important for reasons that I will describe.

Historic Ashby is North-West Leicestershire's ancient market town, and it remains a focal point for shopping and commerce. It serves a growing number of town residents, as well as surrounding villages. Ashby boasts more than 150 listed buildings. Some of the historic passages, which are called "courts", off Market street have been converted into period shopping mews. A market is still held in the former town hall. There is a wide choice of licensed premises and places to eat, and a range of accommodation, hotel or bed-and-breakfast.

The bypass is crucial for tourism reasons. Thousands of visitors stop by in Ashby because of its convenient location, encouraged by A42 and M42 signs advertising local services. The town is a base for visiting nearby attractions such as Snibston discovery park, Calke abbey, Donington race track and the new national forest. English Heritage has reported a sharp rise in visitors to Ashby castle, the setting of the tournament in Sir Walter Scott's "Ivanhoe". The castle has become a popular venue for civil war and similar historical re-enactments. The spacious grounds below the castle offer great potential for hosting even larger public spectacles.

The bypass is crucial for environmental reasons. Ashby-de-la Zouch is just two miles from the oak tree marking the centre of the national forest. Westminster wood was launched in the Palace of Westminster only yesterday by the former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major). The wood is in the heart of my constituency.

Because of its features and amenities, Ashby has been described as

"the jewel in the crown"

of the national forest by a director of the National Forest Company, which predicts that the prestigious national resource will in due course attract 6 million visitors every year.

The bypass is crucial for education reasons. My town has five primary and two secondary schools. Many of the 2,300 students who attend Ivanhoe college or Ashby grammar school, a comprehensive of which I am a governor, must cross the A511, the road for which we are trying to obtain a bypass. The grammar school occupies two sites either side of the busy Leicester road, and there is a frequent flow of pupils between those sites. Both Leicester road and North street, past the entrance to Ivanhoe college, are heavily used by vehicles avoiding A511 bottlenecks. Burton road junior school, which has 270 children, is located right on the A511, next to a difficult and dangerous intersection.

A bypass for Ashby is important for employment reasons. The former mining areas of north-west Leicestershire and south Derbyshire, which surround Ashby-de-la-Zouch, have rightly become a focus of regeneration, helped by funding such as RECHAR. Improved access to motorways via Ashby's bypass will encourage business investment. Ashby's largest employers, United Biscuits and Ashby Dairy Company, account for almost 1,000 heavy goods vehicle movements per day. Other centres in the area are expanding, adding to the heavy flows of local and long-haul heavy good vehicles.

The bypass is also crucial for sports and leisure. Ashby's population growth has led to greater demands for sport and recreation. More indoor and outdoor facilities could be accommodated close to the town centre. The national forest is already adding a range of new activities in the surrounding countryside. Uncongested access in and out of the town is needed for the potential to be fully achieved.

The cause of the town's problems is not difficult to identify; it lies at the intersection of two major trunk routes—Birmingham to Nottingham and Leicester to Burton upon Trent. In 1988, before the Ashby section of the A42 opened, traffic levels reached saturation point, with more than 20,000 vehicles passing through the town centre during a 12-hour period.

Since then, housing and industrial developments, the emergence of the M42-A42 as a major traffic corridor and other factors have resulted in traffic levels climbing back from a low of 12,000 to a weekly average approaching 16,000 per 12 hours in Market street and 20,000 again on parts of Nottingham road. Even taking account of the recently completed Derby southern relief road, the county council predicts a further 3,000 vehicles by next year. In the absence of a bypass, vehicles will continue to use rat runs through housing estates and narrow lanes.

The effects of the incessant, injurious flood of traffic are manifold. There is an impact on congestion. The route of the A511 through Ashby involves complex junctions and 90-degree turns that are unsuitable for HGVs and baffling to strangers. The only so-called alternatives to Market street as routes through the town—North street and South street—are restricted to one-way flow because of bends, narrowness and the risk to buildings. Because the shopping and commercial facilities of the town are concentrated in that area, Market street is thronged throughout the day with pedestrians, delivery vehicles and parked cars.

The situation also causes delays. The intricate and crowded nature of Ashby town centre and the controls for pedestrian safety contribute to huge delays in traffic

progress. Peak period queues often stretch as far as one mile from Market street back to the A42 intersection. Long tailbacks also build up on the approaches from Measham, Burton and Moira. Residents along the A511 endure a ceaseless barrage of vehicles. Even at a quiet time of day, it can take 10 minutes for a resident to get out of their driveway. When traffic is at its heaviest, it can take almost half an hour to drive one mile across town.

There is an impact on health. It is increasingly recognised that exhaust fumes contribute to respiratory and other health problems. Idling or stop-start driving greatly increase fuel consumption, and therefore emissions. There are also safety considerations. There are three pelican crossings on Market street, with further crossings on Bath street, Derby road and Burton road, which are all within a short distance.

There are also considerations of damage. Ashby boasts many attractive period buildings, which are sensitive to damage from vibration. Properties suffer impact damage to walls or overhangs. A national firm of painting contractors which carried out some work in Market street recently described Ashby as the most polluted town in Britain. The county council estimates that almost 4,000 homes in the town would have substantially lower levels of pollution if traffic was reduced by a mere 25 per cent.

The situation also has an impact on development. Excessive congestion frustrates attempts to develop strategies to maximise the potential of the town centre. Current facilities for coach parties to alight and board are poor. Co-ordinating bus links with the planned Ivanhoe rail link is difficult. The volume of through traffic discourages walking and cycling.

Ashby-de-la-Zouch needs a bypass, but not at any price. Full-scale developer funding would entail a major additional housing development. Given the expansion of the town over the past 15 years, that would be inappropriate. At a recent public meeting, speaker after speaker rejected an offer of private funding from Wilcon Homes, which promised to make full construction costs available once it had built and sold a minimum of 450 homes, which were to be part of a green-field development on the northern side of the town. The eventual objective of that development is to build at least 1,000 further homes. Any proposal from any developer would undoubtedly be similar in scale. The momentum to fill the space available between the town and the bypass would be irresistible.

Construction of the bypass should not be conditional on developments of such magnitude. I am sure that other towns are in a similar situation. The increase in population resulting from such developments would over-burden the town's capacity to cope. That would have two consequences: extra local vehicles and pedestrians would cancel out the benefits of the bypass; and increased demands would lead to out-of-town shopping complexes, which would draw trade from the town centre. Both would jeopardise the town's future. If it developed beyond a critical size, the town's historic identity would be swamped by its suburbs. We want no further developments until the bypass is complete.

My birthplace is facing a crucial period. It must continue to fulfil its traditional local role as a focal point for residents and surrounding communities. It must also prepare to fulfil a new national role as a visitor amenity alongside the M42 at the heart of the national forest. The

[Mr. David Taylor]

removal of through traffic is essential. A bypass will make Ashby safer and healthier for residents and visitors, removing frustrating delays, and assisting the preservation and development of the town's amenities. Public funding of the bypass will bring about the necessary improvements without sacrificing Ashby's identity as an historic market town.

As with any road scheme, the environmental costs must be weighed against the benefits. The integrated transport strategy and roads review are considering those issues. The value of the town centre environment vastly outweighs the intrusion that a short bypass would make into the countryside. The projected route of the bypass crosses no sites of special scientific interest. In addition to the bypass, local campaigners strongly support the development of the Ivanhoe rail link to Leicester and Burton upon Trent as a vital component in a town transport strategy that will integrate with the national strategy.

Local people were dismayed that the problems of A511 congestion were not solved when the A42-M42 corridor was created. They will be outraged if they are denied their bypass now.

I congratulate the campaigners on their long efforts to secure a bypass to relieve the incessant heavy flows of traffic that pour through the heart of the town. The campaign has reached a crucial stage, with a submission soon to be made to the county council, which will look to the Government for assistance. The road is essential to reduce congestion, increase safety, decrease pollution and improve the physical environment for residents and visitors. The long-delayed project will deliver great social, economic and environmental benefits for all those who live in, depend on or care about our town.

Local residents and town organisations believe that the scheme should not—I repeat, should not—depend on developer funding, because further expansion would be seriously counter-productive. It should be financed publicly. I strongly endorse that view. I am working with the Bypass Ashby Now Group to persuade the county council and my Government of the overwhelming benefits of that approach.

10.58 am

**Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon):** I am very grateful for the opportunity in this Adjournment debate to raise the issue of industrial workers suffering from lung diseases. I should like specifically to comment on the position of slate quarrymen and coal miners, although the issue may affect other industrial workers.

I find it somewhat ironic to be campaigning on that issue in this—possibly my last—Parliament. In my first Parliament, from 1974 to 1979, I was involved in a prolonged campaign to secure compensation for slate quarrymen suffering from silicosis and pneumoconiosis. The campaign led to the Pneumoconiosis etc. (Workers' Compensation) Act 1979, which has enabled about £50 million in compensation to be paid, not only to slate quarrymen but to other industrial workers who previously—because their employers were defunct—did not have a compensation vehicle. We seem to be facing a re-run of those earlier circumstances, which are now affecting quarrymen and ex-quarrymen suffering from emphysema and chronic bronchitis whose former employers are defunct.

A few weeks ago, an historic court victory by the National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers—on behalf of coal miners and ex-miners suffering from emphysema, chronic bronchitis and asthma—has placed a new focus on the issue. I pay tribute to Bleddyn Hancock, the general secretary of NACODS, who ran a 10-year campaign to win the victory, which should benefit 50,000—perhaps more—miners, ex-miners and their widows.

I want to press Ministers to clarify their response to the court case, and to receive from them assurances on implementing the compensation payments for coal miners that were implicit in the court settlement. The initial reaction to the case of the Minister for Science, Energy and Industry was that the Government would meet the settlement in full, and that the cost might be as much as £1,000 million or more. However, subsequent developments have caused some concern.

Interim payments of only £2,000 have been offered in each of 5,000 cases, for a total of about £10 million. I should like an assurance that the Government will settle all cases in full; that the Government will settle all cases of emphysema and chronic bronchitis; that the court's comment on asthma will be considered; and that not only workers but their widows will be compensated. I should like to be assured also that the Government will not nit-pick in each case, trying to make each individual prove his suffering. After those workers' long wait for recognition of their entitlement, it would be cruel to deal with their cases in that manner.

I specifically hope that the Government will move quickly, because those people have suffered for so long already, waiting for a settlement. There may be—I hope not—a vested interest among some lawyers working for the Government to try to drag out the matter.

I shall warmly welcome the Government's prompt and full settlement of the coal miners' cases. However, we are back to the position of slate quarrymen—and, undoubtedly, of other workers—whose suffering is just as great as that of the coal miners. Anyone who has seen those men struggling for breath appreciates what they are going through. Many of those who have not been diagnosed as suffering from pneumoconiosis or silicosis have precisely the same struggle to breathe, as they are suffering from emphysema and chronic bronchitis.

Slate quarrymen and coal miners experience precisely the same suffering. Anyone living in a slate quarrying community will have no doubt that working in dusty slate quarries or slate mines leads to suffering from emphysema and chronic bronchitis, just as working in dusty coal mines leads to other conditions.

Unfortunately, the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council has so far failed to acknowledge the link between working in the slate industry and the incidence of emphysema and chronic bronchitis. Statistical arguments are used against recognising the incidence of those diseases. Sadly, because the number of slate quarrymen is relatively small, it is difficult to prove the connection. However, the suffering is just as great in each case. We must urgently accept the fact that emphysema and chronic bronchitis are industrial lung conditions among quarrymen.

**Mr. Elfyn Llwyd (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy):** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Wigley:** My hon. Friend has many workers in his constituency, as I do, who suffer from those diseases.

## APPENDIX 2

14<sup>th</sup> January 2013

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Leicestershire County Council,  
Department of Planning & Transportation,  
County Hall,  
Glenfield,  
Leicester LE3 8RJ.

Dear Sirs,

**ref. North West Leicestershire District Council : Core Strategy, Policy CS37 – development strategy for Ashby de la Zouch: implications for A511 Ashby bypass.**

You will be aware that a group of would-be developers, the *Money Hill Consortium*, has presented outline proposals for 605 homes to the north of Ashby de la Zouch, between Nottingham Road and the A511 Ashby bypass. As part of their proposals they have suggested a link road to a new junction on the bypass. The precise location of this junction is not entirely clear but would appear to be at or near the summit of Money Hill. According to the *Consortium's* website, they hope to submit a planning application in March.

I was Chairman of the *Bypass Ashby Now Group*. I have already submitted an objection to Policy CS37. In the course of our campaign, backed by overwhelming public opinion and with support in Parliament from the late David Taylor MP, BANG successfully resisted a developer's offer to fund construction of the bypass at the sacrifice of 450 homes on Money Hill. The bypass was specifically designed and built with crawler lanes either side of Money Hill to cope with slow-moving vehicles from the roundabouts at either end. These lanes also provide one of the very few safe overtaking points on the A511 west of Bardon.

I would be most grateful to be kept informed of the Highways Department's responses to the *Consortium's* planning application, which would influence whether I lodge a further objection and/or apply to participate in any Public Enquiry.

Would LCC oppose any additional junction on Money Hill, e.g. on the grounds of disruption to traffic flows, or road safety, on a sensitive stretch of carriageway? If prepared to countenance a new junction, what sort of junction? Would a roundabout pose particular

risks or problems because of the overlapping crawler lanes? If the junction was simply an access/egress to the south of the A511, westbound, how much additional traffic from the new estate would still flow into Nottingham Road and through Ashby town centre? If a 'motorway-style' junction was stipulated, complete with underpass, would the developer be prepared to fund the consequent land purchases and slip roads? Further, long experience demonstrates that once an access road such as the *Consortium* proposes has been constructed (Marlborough Way might be one example) the pressure for further housing infill along that link road would become irresistible. If an additional junction on the A511 were to be considered, should it also take into account long-term potential additional housing?

*BANG* waged a long campaign for the Ashby bypass as is, and the town has gained immeasurable benefits from its construction. We would not want to see those benefits undermined.

Thank you in anticipation.

Yours faithfully,

David J. Price

# *A Bypass For Ashby de la Zouch*

## *BUT NOT AT ANY SACRIFICE*

Full scale developer funding would entail a major *additional* housing development. Given the expansion of the town that has already taken place, full-scale developer funding would be wholly inappropriate.

At a Public Meeting called by North West Leicestershire District Council, speaker after speaker from the floor rejected an offer of private funding put forward by Wilcon Homes. Under their proposal, full construction costs would have been made available once they had built and sold a minimum 450 homes. These homes were to be part of a green-field development on the northern side of Ashby (Money Hill), the actual objective of which was to build at least 1,000 homes. Any proposal from any Developer would undoubtedly be similar in scale. Once permission was granted for 450 houses, momentum to continue filling the space available would be irresistible.

## *Construction of the bypass should not be conditional on developments of such magnitude.*

If such a development were allowed to happen, the increase in population would overburden the town's capacity to cope and two consequences could follow:

- *the extra local vehicles and pedestrians would cancel out the benefits of the bypass;*
- *increased demands would lead to an out-of-town shopping complex which would draw trade out of the town centre.*

Either consequence would jeopardize the town's future. Beyond a critical size the town's historic identity would be swamped by its suburbs. An "historic" town centre which loses its busy local ambience is at least as unappealing to visitors as one that is log-jammed by traffic.

## *NO FURTHER DEVELOPMENT UNTIL COMPLETION*

Not surprisingly, all local Councillors and representative bodies supporting *BANG's* campaign are unanimous that no further developments should even be contemplated until the Ashby Bypass Stage II has been completed. Once its effects have been assessed, strategies for the town can be properly worked out.