

*The petition of residents of Basingstoke,*

Declares that urgent action must be taken concerning proposals for new Motorway Service Areas at Basingstoke; further that there is no need for any additional motorway service areas given that the existing services at Fleet and Winchester are only 23 miles apart; further that the development of any new facilities will be detrimental to the environment and traffic congestion; further that they are clearly not in the best interests of Basingstoke residents; and further that the two proposals that have been made to date, one at Junction 6 and one near Junction 7 are not acceptable.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges HM Government to ensure road safety and the avoidance of traffic congestion are given priority over any unnecessary new motorway service areas around Basingstoke; and further urges the Department for Transport to reinstate the requirement for there to be a minimum distance between motorway service areas.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Mrs Maria Miller , Official Report, 24 April 2018; Vol. 639, c. 849 .]

[P002139]

*Observations from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Jesse Norman):*

Observations on the petition [24 April 2018] submitted by Maria Miller MP on behalf of her constituents in Basingstoke, that the two proposed motorway service areas at Junction 6 and Junction 7 of the M3 are detrimental to the environment and traffic congestion, and are not acceptable.

The petitioners request that the HM Government to ensure road safety and the avoidance of traffic congestion are given priority over any unnecessary new motorway service areas around Basingstoke.

Motorway service areas and other roadside facilities perform an important road safety function by providing opportunities for the travelling public to stop and take a break in the course of their journey. Since 1992, Government policy has been that the private sector should take the lead in identifying and acquiring sites for motorway service areas and in obtaining the required planning permission from local authorities. The Government work closely with operators to ensure that the provision of roadside facilities is sustained and to seek ways to enhance quality so as to provide an improved service for customers.

Basingstoke and Dean Borough Council are responsible for the day to day planning of their area. The Government's policy is not to interfere with the jurisdiction

of a local planning authority unless it is necessary to do so. This is because local authority Councillors are elected to represent the views of local people and, in the main, it is these Councillors who are in the best position to decide whether a development should go ahead. In determining a planning application the local planning authority are required to have regard to all material considerations including the development plan, national policies and views expressed by third parties. It is, of course, for local planning authorities to provide whatever justification that may be appropriate to give for their decisions and procedures. The Government are committed to giving more power to councils and communities to make their own decisions on planning issues, and believe planning decisions should be made at the local level wherever possible.

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council have consulted Highways England on the proposal to construct a Motorway Service Area at land adjacent to M3 Junction 6 in November 2017 (planning application 17/03487/FUL). They are reviewing the proposal in line with Department for Transport Circular 2/2013 The Strategic Road Network and the Delivery of Sustainable Development in particular Annex B Roadside Facilities for Road Users on Motorways and All-purpose Trunk Roads in England. There is currently insufficient information to establish the potential impact to the safe and efficient operation of the M3 from the proposal therefore have not formally responded to Basingstoke with a final position. Highways England are currently working with the applicant to provide the appropriate information to enable them to determine if any potential impacts can be accommodated or if necessarily mitigated whilst maintaining a safe and efficient operation of the M3.

Basingstoke have previously requested EIA Scoping Opinion (16/02767/ENSC) in 2016 for a proposal for a Motorway Service Area on the M3 Southbound between Junctions 6 and 7. We are not aware of a formal application to Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council subsequently being made.

The petitioners also requests that the Department for Transport reinstate the requirement for there to be a minimum distance between motorway service areas. The current spread of service areas across the motorway network has evolved from a long-standing spacing criterion of 30 mile intervals between sites. This spacing criterion was set on the premise that drivers should have the opportunity to stop for rest and to obtain fuel at intervals of approximately half an hour. Current Government advice is that motorists should stop and take a break of at least 20 minutes every two hours. There are currently no plans to reintroduce a minimum distance in future revisions of the Circular as all issues regarding safety and congestion are already considered fully via the planning process.