

## READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING & TRANSPORT COMMITTEE - 2 JULY 2018

QUESTION NO. 1 in accordance with Standing Order No.36

Councillor Josh Williams to ask the Chair of Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport Committee:

#### Kennet Mouth Community Sign

On the Horseshoe bridge at the Kennet Mouth is a sign erected by the community and Peter Hay, the founder of the fantastic Two Rivers Press. It reads:

*'Here Thames and Kennet meet. The River Kennet, upon whose banks the town of Reading grew, rises near Silbury Hill in Wiltshire. This was an important place in the days of water transport. On this site stood Earley Wharf, which may have been first used by the Romans to serve their town at Silchester, and in 1812 the Kennet and Avon Canal was opened through to Bristol. For generations people have come here to walk, play, and enjoy some peace and sanity. Long threatened by successive road schemes, Kennet Mouth was finally saved in 1993 after a prolonged campaign by those who love the Reading riverside.'*

Now the Council has decided to build a road in this place of peace and sanity enjoyed by generations of Reading people, does the Council intend to remove this sign, perhaps to put it in Reading Museum?

**REPLY by the Chair of the Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport Committee (Councillor Debs Absolom):**

I invite Councillor Page, the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport to make the response on my behalf.

**REPLY by the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport (Councillor Page):**

I thank Cllr Williams for his question.

There are substantial differences between the historic Cross Town Route scheme, proposed by the former Berkshire County Council which is referenced in this community sign, and the East Reading MRT scheme currently being promoted by Reading and Wokingham Borough Councils.

The key differences are:

- The Cross Town Route was for all vehicles, whereas the MRT scheme is solely for public transport, walking and cycling.
- The Cross Town Route was a dual-carriageway in each direction for general traffic over the River Kennet, whereas the MRT scheme is a single lane for public transport only in each direction which has been designed to reduce to one lane over the Kennet so as to reduce its visual impact on the setting of the confluence and the Horseshoe Bridge. This reduction in width will also prevent any attempt to convert the MRT into an all modes road cross town route.
- The four lane Cross Town Route would have required the removal of substantial open recreational space on Kings Meadow, whereas the MRT scheme has no impact whatsoever on the playing fields.
- The Cross Town Route would not have delivered the major environmental improvements to the area, including new ecological planting/shelving, new designated wooden moorings, and the long-neglected and forgotten community mosaic, celebrating the confluence of Kennet and Thames, will be cleaned and relocated into a more prominent position as part of the MRT proposals.

There are no plans to remove the sign on the bridge which, in any case, is owned by Network Rail.