

As a resident of Cowley, I feel that our views have NOT been proactively consulted by Highways England, nor have they been represented by the Parish Council.

I strongly believe that as the only village to be negatively impacted upon by the proposed Option, it is inexcusable that Highways England have not held any public exhibitions within our village. From purely a public relations perspective I am very surprised that Highways England did not have the village of Cowley at the top of their list of stakeholders to consult, and to try and 'win over'. This has not happened and personally I feel that Highways England made a conscious decision NOT to consult with us directly. Is this how a local community that will have the biggest negative impact is consulted? I am aware of individuals requesting local consultations but getting no response!

Question: Can the ExA be appraised as to why it was deemed unnecessary to hold a public exhibition within the one community most affected by this proposal?

Question: Can the ExA be confident that the views of the residents of Cowley have been adequately consulted by Highways England?

I am also very concerned that our views that we submit to the Parish Council are being blocked, and we are not getting a fair hearing at the Examination. We spent many hours reading the Reports that have been submitted by Highways England, and we put together a list of questions with substantive evidence that we wanted the Parish Council to submit to the Inspectorate on our behalf. The 'Birdlip heavy' Parish Council held a vote, and voted not to submit any representations – how can that be right? We believe it is our right, as part of the Examination process, to be able to pass concerns / questions via our Counsellors to the Inspectorate!

Question: Can the ExA be appraised as to why the Parish Council felt it was his right to prevent the written representations submitted by the residents of Cowley from reaching the Inspectorate?

Question: Can the ExA be confident that the views of the residents of Cowley are being passed on to the Inspectorate?

I am confused as to why a new road that cuts through the AONB, carves up farmland, and dis-figures the area, can be seen as 'landscape led'! To me, a 'landscape led' design would minimise any impact on the landscape, and where possible, make best use of what is already there. Simply put, why on earth are we carving up virgin farmland, grassland, hedges etc when we could probably use 70% of the current A417 alignment, with changes required at either end, new junctions, together with a realistic speed limit to reduce the need for large curves in the road and to make it safer. To me Option 30 is being driven by a design speed of 70mph, and not the landscape.

Question: Can the ExA be appraised as to what 'landscape' issues were considered when designing Option 30. Did the landscape come first, or the speed limit?

Safety and reduced accidents are clearly major aims for the new scheme. The Hot Air Balloon roundabout and the Birdlip junctions are both issues now, and they must be addressed. I find it hard to understand why a 'landscape led' design could not incorporate a revised Birdlip junction under the existing stretch of road (upgraded to dual carriageway), and a revised layout down at the Hot Air Balloon. These changes, together with a reduced speed limit, providing a 'landscape led' design, that is safer than present, maintains flow rates, but DOES NOT impact virgin farmland, grassland, hedges etc.

Question: Can the ExA be appraised as to the analysis undertaken on a 'do minimum' approach which improves flow rates, reduces accidents, whilst preserves much of the surrounding AONB.

I believe the weather conditions were interesting when the ExA visited the area back in September! This is not unusual, and I believe Highways England referred to it as a “volatile microclimate”. My concern is that increasing the speed limit to 70mph will increase the chances of accidents, especially when the weather deteriorates. This will then lead to the speed limit being reassessed and reduced, thus negating the need for the large curve in the road, and the knock-on impact on the landscape.

Question: Can the ExA be appraised as to what design weather conditions have been used, and whether these conditions take account of the “volatile microclimate” Highways England recognise exists in the area.

Question: Can the ExA be appraised as to whether, in general, a speed limit of 70mph is suitable for an area subject to a “volatile microclimate”?

I am aware that Highways England have developed the design for Option 30 since the consultation stage. I would be intrigued to understand what work if any has been done with Option 12 to see if similar improvements can also be made. Considering the revised scheme now includes more junctions, additional feeder routes, I find it difficult to understand how Option 30 can still be cheaper to build! More junctions, more feeder routes, but a significant saving?

Question: Can the ExA be appraised as to what work was / has been done since the consultation period to see if major improvements could also be made to Option 12 that would reduce costs in the same manner as Option 30.