



My mum and dad have been working really hard to keep our footpath and where we go walking and spotting wildlife safe for me and my brother. It is not fair that everyone else in our village and them have to work so hard when they could just widen the existing road. It is dangerous for the children in our village when the cars come through and stop us from playing football on the road in the winter.

As a resident of Cowley I feel that the views of our village and community have not been asked for nor heard by National Highways. As a further note, my views as a parishioner of Cowley and Birdlip Parish Council have also not been conveyed equally, reasonably nor fairly by the Chairman of the Parish Council.

National Highways have ignored our village as part of the consultation process. There were roadshows at Star College, Birdlip and Elkstone however the community who will be most negatively affected by the proposed route were left out without any on the ground consultation. It beggers belief that such oversight occurred initially and given the fierce resistance to Option 30 within our community one can only assume no further consultation was offered due to our vocal opposition.

//Q. Can the ExA be appraised as to whether the views of Cowley residents, not as represented by the Parish Council, have been fairly and objectively consulted by National Highways?

//Q. Can the ExA understand why National Highways chose not to attend, communicate directly with, nor hold a roadshow within the village of Cowley?

National Highways Scheme Assessment Report makes a case for Option 30 and lacks in depth detail to fairly balance any other scheme against it. The scant detail for Option 12 clearly reflects the direction National Highways are marketing Option 30 to be the persuaded and singular solution. The very brand 'The Missing Link' suggests that something is missing which clearly it isn't as the M4 and M5 are already connected by the A417/A419 and have been since Roman times. The marketing spin throughout all literature has not provided a fair and open consultation process, it's biased and spun to the detriment of all solutions and obviously in favour of Option 30.

//Q. Can the ExA be confident that National Highways presented all options fairly, reasonably and without bias towards Option 30?

//Q. Can the ExA be confident that the relationship between National Highways and the Cowley and Birdlip Parish Council is purely professional without conflicted interest?

One can further read the factual manipulations that market Option 30 as the proposed route but there are alternatives that are far less environmentally destructive whilst also improving flow and safety.

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In the latest available figures published by Gloucestershire Highways (Glos Highways 2016-2020 Collision & Camera Map), the most fatal section of the Missing Link is between Brockworth and Air Balloon Roundabout where 17% of all accidents on the entire length of the A417 occurred. This is also the section of road least touched by Option 12 or Option 30. This is also the only section of the Missing Link with a 70mph limit.

//Q. Can the ExA be appraised as to whether such a high rate of fatalities on this section of the Missing Link will be mitigated in either Option 12 or Option 30?

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The Heads of the Valleys Road has had its speed limit reduced to 50mph from the proposed 70mph. The Welsh government said the proposed speed limit (of 50mph) was 'in the interest of safety' and to 'reduce the scheme's environmental impact'. It further states that 'traffic flow would be improved, journeys would be faster and safer, and there would be less environmental impact'. BBC News 28/06/2021

Safe spacing of vehicles is the solution to safety and congestion, not speed.

A car at 50mph needs less braking distance - 38m than a car at 70mph - 75m, therefore at a lower speed limit more vehicles can be accommodated on the same stretch of road.

//Q. Can the ExA be appraised as to whether National Highways can prove the necessity of a 70mph speed limit when a 50mph would improve traffic flow, make journeys safer and reduce environmental impacts?

//Q. Can the ExA be appraised as to how a 70mph speed limit will be in the interest of safety when stopping sight distance (SSD) is below the minimum desired, two sequential 510m radius curves are two steps below the desirable minimum and there's reduced visibility on approach to Cowley junction?

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Para 9.3.2

The Cotswold AONB will be unnecessarily decimated by Option 30. The landscape provides huge benefits to the local community but also further afield in Cheltenham, Gloucester and beyond where many visitors use the local bridleways and footpaths for recreation within easy reach of the larger conurbations. The design principles that are discussed clearly express that any scheme should adhere to three key elements and that any outcome should have more benefits than negative impacts.

//Q. Can the ExA be confident that Option 30 is the best fit for the landscape and for meeting and achieving these design principles?

The government National Policy Planning Framework, paragraph 176 expresses explicitly that 'Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues'.

//Q. Can the ExA be appraised as to how National Highways can prove that Option 30 will conserve or enhance the AONB?

Route development

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The Scheme Assessment Report (SAR) states that Option 12 was a 'landscape led design, by minimising new road construction in the AONB'. Option 30 cuts through the AONB.

//Q. Can the ExA be appraised as to why Option 12, the 'landscape led design' which minimised construction within the AONB was usurped for an environmentally destructive Option 30?

Ipsos MORI recently reported that the British people name Climate Change as their number one concern "over 40% - the highest percentage ever recorded. This statistic reflects a wide eyed

world with evolved thinking, working with improved technology, experiencing transformative working practices and placing immense value on communities. Times were changing pre-pandemic but in the past 21 months, ongoing restrictions and with the outcomes of COP26, these feelings have been cemented.

Figures and facts used at the bedrock of the Missing Link proposal are quoted from 23 years ago in 1998, the year Google was founded and the Ford Escort was still one of the best selling cars. The solution to the problem of congestion and safety on the A417 does not need to be as blunt, backward thinking nor designed with such cold contempt and destructive abandonment for the environment when the world around this scheme has become nimble and dynamic. A balanced outcome can only be achieved with balanced input and as a Cowley resident this consultation process has been flawed from the outset when National Highways have chosen to listen to those from whom they want to hear.