

I live in Cowley village and only a short walk from the proposed Option 30 route. I am a frequent user of the A417 and like many, I want to see improvements to the road that resolve safety and traffic issues, but I cannot endorse carving through the Cotswold AONB, ancient woodlands and natural biodiverse habitats to achieve this. I strongly oppose Option 30.

I feel very concerned that Cowley as a community has been ignored and its voice lost in the process to date. It's very easy to believe a community wants something when it might not be true. The village has been served with a familiar narrative regarding the A417 road development, familiar phrases include 'it's a done deal' and 'there's nothing more we can do', which I have found to be both disempowering and disingenuous. Changes in population can often make a big difference to public opinion as can the passing of time.

The lack of communication from National Highways has been remarkable in its absence. As soon as we realised that there was a process in which we were entitled to engage to voice our opinions, concerns and questions regarding the proposed Option 30, we began working together as a community to find answers. We realised that we had quite deliberately been excluded from the process, perhaps our silence misinterpreted for complicity but at no point has this been verified by National Highways. As the community most affected by option 30, it seems as though we have been conveniently forgotten.

We have had to work very hard within an exceptionally short period of time to read, absorb and to try and understand the plethora of documentation in place for this process to catch up. This has not been an easy task but realising we had a mandate to do so with over 75% of our community opposing the proposed route, how could we do nothing? I am very concerned that any information in the public domain which directly references Cowley and Birdlip Parish Council or appears to have been submitted on behalf of Cowley and Birdlip Parish Council has not and does not represent the views of much of our small community. If I draw your attention to the submission made by Cowley and Birdlip Parish Council on 8 August 2021 you will note that the community of Cowley is not even mentioned.

This may be local politics at play and the ExA may choose to see this as power play between two villages, but the opinions expressed by Cowley and Birdlip Parish Council do not represent the views of over 75% of our community. If this is the ExA's stance then the consultation process should remove all documentation in the public domain submitted by the Chairman of Cowley and Birdlip Parish Council as it is fabricated and a non-representative view of our community. I may sound disenfranchised but that is because we as a village are disenfranchised as we have not been fairly consulted.

Further to the lack of communication from National Highways with Cowley as a village and community, the promotional material with regard the A417 'Missing Link' gives a false impression that there is no road there currently and that there is a desperate need to build one, this is no Severn Crossing, the M4/M5 artery has been there for over 2000 years. I also note with interest when reviewing historic marketing materials, maps etc that when comparing Option 30 and Option 12, Option 12 is often pitched as the poor relation with biased use of language upselling the merits of Option 30. I note that no flythrough video or detailed maps were ever made available for Option 12 however the outcomes achieved by either option would be the same but one with significantly less destruction to the environment.

I'd like to tell you a bit more about the infrastructure around our village, particularly our road

network which is made up of predominantly single-track roads which are poorly maintained with a listed bridge. Many houses are situated very close to the road and there is no space for large trucks to pass or turn. The roads around our village are used by many walkers, horses and the local alpaca herd which brings much enjoyment for locals and tourists alike but most importantly to me, my young children enjoy carefree play with their friends.

I accept that the A417 has a higher-than-average accident rate although the most recent figures show that Cowley to the Air Balloon roundabout is not the most dangerous section. I've never been able to understand why there is no signage highlighting the area as an accident blackspot.

QUESTION: Can the ExA question why over the past 23 years (1998-2013 figures) National Highways haven't installed any safety signage, accident blackspot signage or made road users aware of the fatalities as they do on the A48 from Over towards the Forest of Dean and on the A429 between Andoversford and Stow or has this been a cold tactic to build a case for a new section of road?

QUESTION: Can the ExA gain an understanding as to what would be sacrificed and in what order from Option 30 should it go ahead and if it was to go over budget?

The overall horizontal alignment of Option 12 includes several curves that are notably below the desirable minimum (1020m radius) for a 120kph design speed. This can be found in TR010056-000602-7.9 Technical Appraisal Report (February 2018) Page 154, Para 10.1.46.

QUESTION: Can the ExA be appraised as to where they all are, or are they part of the one curve by the Hot Air Balloon? Mitigation measures may include a mandatory speed limit of 50mph with appropriate enforcement measures. In view of the amount of fog that sits on the proposed route, this could be seen as a positive feature.

There are several safety concerns raised in respect of the overall alignment of Option 30 this can be found at TR010056-000602-7.9 Technical Appraisal Report (February 2018) Page 162, Para 10.1.89-92.

QUESTION: If a mitigation measure was a reduced speed limit, can the ExA be appraised of what impacts this would have on the overall journey times, and would they then be of the same order as Option 12?

The final nail in the coffin of Option 30 for me sits unequivocally with the unnecessary environmental destruction of Stockwell Farm and the AONB. Pre-pandemic and pre-COP26 environmental rhetoric and greenwashing were there to greensplain people like me who hadn't spent two years appreciating the countryside, the joy of nature and its diversity. Not all of us had taken on board the barrage of Climate Change facts and its realities. We couldn't miss the goals of COP26 and the committed outcomes from the government. Government policy does not support the destruction of the AONB. Grant Shapps is supporting Smart Motorways where flow is more important than speed especially during peak hours. The world has pivoted, thinking has evolved rapidly with the environment at the core of any decision. Transport demands have changed, and peak traffic flow has flattened. Option 30 is an outpaced solution that needs to evolve fast to meet the demands and drivers of the era we now live in.

QUESTION: Can the ExA be appraised as to whether Option 30 is still relevant?