

I am writing with observations and questions in response to National Highways Submission : A417 missing Link TR10056 8.3 Responses to Relevant Representations Volume 8 December 2021 – in particular relating to sections 2.5.6 Noise Impact on Cowley; 2.9.4 2.15.2; 2.15.16 to 2.15.20 Cowley Wood Lane.

2.15.16 – 2.15.20 Cowley Wood Lane

Highways response to this item raises various concerns for some Cowley residents:

2.15.16

This section reports on how, plans for *“provision at Cowley junction for access between Cowley and the A417 via Cowley Wood Lane ... highlighted concerns that there would be an increase in traffic and ‘rat running’ on Cowley Wood Lane, and that an increase in traffic would cause disruption in Cowley village”*

This section fails to report that Highways were told by many local people that Cowley Wood Lane is a single-track lane, with a national speed limit, that is frequented by walkers, cyclists, and horse riders; it has a lot of wildlife on it; has very few passing places; and has a water course running down and across it that freezes up and ices over in the winter making it very dangerous. Consequently, directing traffic onto this road poses significant safety issues for both drivers and other users of the lane.

I was personally told by one of the advisors at one of the consultations in Cirencester that Highways did not travel this road or assess its suitability prior to the design of Option 30.

2.15.17 – 2.15.20

This section responds to questions regarding how National Highways intend *“to amend the design of the junction to prevent vehicles from access (sic) Cowley Wood Lane”*. It seems from their response that National Highways now intend to only allow a *“private means of access to local properties With the scheme in place, Cowley village would be accessed via Cowley Lane and join the A417 at the new Cowley Junction, or via the A435/A436/A436 Link Road and the new Shab Hill junction.”*

However, it is still very unclear if and how ALL Cowley villagers, and not just those who live on Cowley Wood Lane, will be able to access this junction.

Question:

Is the Inspectorate satisfied that ALL Cowley residents will be able to use Cowley Wood Lane and not just those whose properties are located on it?

2.9.4 Directing Traffic through Cowley via ‘Cowley Lane’

Furthermore, and very significantly, as a result of the route change described in 2.15.16 to 2.15.20 National Highways have not been open in informing or communicating to the village of Cowley, or to Cowley (and Birdlip) Parish Council, that they will be altering the design so that more traffic will be directed through Cowley village via Cowley Lane as reported in 2.9.4

“In Cowley, there is a forecast increase in traffic on Cowley Lane due to the proposed closure of Cowley Wood Lane Increase from 18 to 188 vehicles ... (a forecast of 23 vehicles in the 2041 PM peak).”

“Cowley Lane” is a name that is not known by locals and does not seem to appear on any maps. A Cowley resident contacted National Highways on 21.21.2021 for clarification on which lane they are referring to as Cowley Lane but as of 12.01.2022 National Highways have failed to respond. Therefore we can only assume, and base our response upon the assumption, that National Highways are referring to the lane that runs from the A419, through Stockwell and Cowley and out on the A435.

Question:

Can the Inspectorate please ask National Highways to confirm which lane they are referring to when they use the reference Cowley Lane?

This change is very significant because until now, we thought that this lane would be closed off at Stockwell. In fact, a Cowley Parish Councillor has communicated that the Parish Council was told by [REDACTED] that traffic using the Stockwell access would ONLY be farm traffic.

Questions:

- **Can the Inspectorate please be informed as to how National Highways’ re-design will direct traffic through Cowley, and if the Stockwell access will now be for all vehicle types and not just farm traffic?**
- **And if a re-design has changed vehicle usage at this junction have Stockwell farm and their representatives been made aware of this?**

By making this change without any forum such as the Consultations where everyone can view plans and make observations, and without informing Cowley village or its Parish Council, it seems that National Highways is not actually listening to the views of Cowley residents but is just trying to move a problem from one lane in the village to another. It is only because some residents of Cowley have made representations and have taken the time to read through National Highways Responses that this has been picked up on.

Questions:

- **Is the Inspectorate satisfied that National Highways have been transparent in making these proposed changes and assessing their impact?**
- **Is the Inspectorate satisfied that National Highways have been effective in communicating this proposed change of route to affected parties?**

Safety queries and concerns regarding use of ‘Cowley Lane’

The principal reasons local residents highlighted Cowley Wood Lane as a highly unsuitable and unsafe road for high volume traffic off the A417 are rat-running through Cowley, the unsuitability of the single lane, and consequent safety issues.

In 2.15.16 – 2.15.20 National Highways cite that they have listened to this and altered the design, but in doing so they are proposing to re-direct traffic to another single-track lane;

which also has limited passing spaces; which is also frequented by walkers, cyclists, and families; and which is also very unsafe and unsuitable for increased traffic. In addition, this proposed solution does absolutely nothing to reduce traffic or rat-running through Cowley - which National Highways cited as a reason for changing the Cowley Wood Lane design : 2.15.16. *“an increase in traffic would cause disruption in Cowley village”*.

In fact, this proposed route may make the risks of accidents much higher in the village for three reasons.

Reason 1: There is a stretch of lane (approx. ¼ mile) that is long and straight, which starts/ends at a “weak” junction in the centre of the village. Consequently, many vehicles travelling from west to east down this lane don’t stop properly at the junction and drive straight over, and at speed, into the centre of the village. There have been many near misses at this junction, which the local police have been made aware of.

Reason 2: When approaching the junction from east to west, it is situated on a corner, and many vehicles travelling east to west don’t stop and check for vehicles not coming around the corner from the left before they turn right onto the junction – again causing many near misses.

Questions:

- **Is the Inspectorate satisfied that National Highways have looked into all options before deciding to change this route?**
- **Is the Inspectorate satisfied that changing this route will reduce or stop rat-running through Cowley village – which is a key reason for changing the Cowley Wood Lane usage as per feedback gained at Consultations ?**
- **Is the Inspectorate satisfied that these changes will make Cowley a safe village for locals from Cowley and neighbouring villages, a safe place to walk, cycle, ride and for children to play – which was a key reason for feedback at the Consultations which National Highways has omitted from their reasons for the change in 2.12.16 to 2.15.20 re Cowley Wood Lane?**
- **I was told at a Consultation that National Highways had not travelled the Cowley Wood Lane route and assessed its safety (as a single-track lane with very few passing places as a route of the A417) prior to designing Option 30. The proposed Cowley Lane route is just as dangerous in parts. Is the Inspectorate satisfied that National Highways have driven along and taken video or photographic evidence, and that they have been thorough and robust in their investigation of Cowley Lane as a safe route to direct traffic and stop rat-running through Cowley?**

Traffic increase through Cowley village via Cowley Lane

National Highways have reported that this re-design will increase traffic on Cowley Lane from 18 to 188 a day, with 23 vehicles at peak time. I would like to question the validity of National Highways' data that only 18 vehicles use this road a day.

As locals who live by and on this lane, and who ride or walk on it, we know that far more than 18-vehicles use it daily. We therefore dispute that ‘only’ 188 vehicles would use it after the ‘Missing Link’ is built and that ‘only’ 23 would use it at peak times. In fact we

would argue that 18-23 already use it at peak times – it is a popular rat run for vehicles to speed through to cut through from the A436/A435 to quickly access the A417 at the Stockwell junction and is always busy with fast vehicles (particularly vans) at peak times.

Questions:

- **Has the Inspectorate been provided with data sources from National Highways regarding the count of vehicles on this lane? Over what period of time was the data collated – was it a long enough period of time to provide an adequate representation? Was it collected during a period when traffic usage was not reduced by Covid?**
- **Is the Inspectorate satisfied that the National Highways have not just solved one problem of safety and rat-running through Cowley lanes and Cowley villages by directing the problem onto another lane, and doing absolutely nothing to reduce rat-running through the village?**

Noise and Pollution Impacts of directing traffic via ‘Cowley Lane’

National Highways conducted and reported on Noise impacts on Cowley prior to changing the design to direct traffic down Cowley Lane and increasing traffic through the village.

Questions:

- **Is the Inspectorate satisfied that legal and adequate modelling has been implemented to accommodate for the increase in traffic through Cowley as a result of the design change?**
- **And would this be further impacted if Cowley residents’ concerns that National Highways’ traffic volume modelling is too low and actual traffic would be higher than they have forecast?**