



## BIRSTALL PARISH COUNCIL

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14 August 2020

Mr Ian Vears  
Assistant Director – Development & Growth  
Environment & Transport  
Leicestershire County Council

Dear Mr Vears

The Parish Council write to make a strong representation on behalf of the Councillors and residents of Birstall in respect of the untimely imposition of the works which commenced on the A6 on the 20 July 2020. This has caused much confusion and anger amongst the residents of Birstall whose lives are going to be adversely affected.

The Parish Council did not receive any information about these works until after the work had begun. The first communication was by way of a Leicestershire County Council standard issue of a press release dated 21 July 2020, the day after the works had begun.

On the 24 July 2020, the Clerk received an email from a Leicestershire County Council officer asking if we would allow the use of Parish Council owned land for Leicestershire County Council to arrange and hold an event to promote the cycle lanes. The Clerk responded to the email expressing her despair about the whole of this project and the retrospective information about it. She also disclosed that feelings were running high with the residents. The Leicestershire County Council officer replied that she would forward the email onto the relevant department.

On the 27 July 2020, the Clerk received a general notification email from Leicestershire County Council informing us of roadworks in the area, this was a round-robin email sent to all Parish and Town Councils in Leicestershire. The notification for Birstall informed us of retrospective roadworks relating to the cycle lanes that had already begun one week before on 20 July 2020.

On the 31 July, the Clerk received a reply in respect of the queries raised with a Leicestershire County Council officer on 24 July 2020. The response was from Laura Shepherd, Assistant Engineer, Asset & Major Programmes Team.

Laura Shepherd states in her email that local councils were invited to bid for the first Tranche of DFT funding. Surely this indicates that it was an invitation to undertake works and not an instruction or a requirement for Leicestershire County Council to do these works, therefore, a conscious decision has been made by Leicestershire County Council to proceed with submitting a bid for funding without any engagement or undertaking a public consultation.

The Parish Council are requesting copies of the minutes of all meetings where this has been discussed that led to a Leicestershire County Council decision being made to proceed with this untimely application for funding and that has subsequently chosen to ignore the feelings of the residents of Birstall by not engaging with them or holding a public consultation.

To enable the Parish Council to know how much time has been spent or lost on this project they are asking for the dates of when any negotiations inside Leicestershire County Council took place, for instance,

- i) What date did Leicestershire County Council receive the invitation to submit a bid for funding?
- ii) When and how was it considered at Leicestershire County Council whether or not to apply for the funding?
- iii) When and how long did it take Leicestershire County Council to draw up the scheme and the plans that would have to be submitted with the application?
- iv) What date was the bid for funding submitted?

The residents of Birstall, the Parish Council and the County Councillor for Birstall should have been considered, engaged with and notified prior to any plans being made in order to give them the opportunity to voice their opinions, share local knowledge and be able to express their feelings and/or objections to the proposed works. Instead they feel that this is something being done to them rather than for them.

Proper engagement or a public consultation would immediately have brought local knowledge of the area to the forefront and alerted the planners to the issues and the adverse effects on people's lives and properties that some of their restrictions is going to cause.

Leicestershire County Council expect for consultations to be undertaken for the smallest of things, so why is it deemed acceptable for Leicestershire County Council to ignore their own policies and procedures that they insist upon, to then proceed with this huge project that will affect 1000's without the need for engagement or public consultation.

The Parish Council are asking to be provided with a copy of the bid that was submitted by Leicestershire County Council because they would be very surprised if it didn't contain criteria to evidence that a full public consultation had to have taken place, particularly with a project this large.

Laura Shepherd's email states that Leicestershire County Council notified key stakeholders including local councillors, residents and businesses along the A6, A47 and Kettering Road. This is simply not true.

Local councillors were not notified. There isn't a Kettering Road in Birstall, is this referring to a similar project in Market Harborough. Unfortunately, this just demonstrates the lack of thought, and the due care and concern shown to the residents of Birstall by Leicestershire County Council. This is not acceptable, the residents of Birstall deserve consideration and require answers.

The Parish Council are working with County Councillor Iain Bentley and wholly support the actions he has taken. They will continue to support him in any future actions on this matter on behalf of the residents of Birstall.

There are many Health & Safety concerns raised by Parish Councillors and they are as follows:

- The A6 is an extremely busy road, which had difficulty coping with the volume of traffic before cycle lanes were installed. It is a very unsuitable road for this measure as it is used by very large lorries and buses which frequently travel at high speed, particularly between Station Road and Redhill.
- More queuing traffic due to the alterations and not just at peak times will increase the already high levels of pollution
- Residents already have to live with the fact that Birstall is bisected by the A6 and to make it more difficult for them to cross over by removing/reducing the size of the refuges is very dangerous. This includes extra difficulties for disabled and elderly residents and also for parents with toddlers and pushchairs.
- The refuges have been narrowed so that it is impossible for users to cross and social distance.
- The loss of the central refuge is dangerous and increases the risk to those wishing to cross the roads to get to the shops, to the bus stops or to the playing fields. It will be only a matter of time before we have a very serious accident involving pedestrians, especially if there is nowhere for people to cross safely. These central refuges will require additional protection around them (barriers) which will reduce the risk to those waiting on the refuge. Consideration should be given to children who need to cross the A6 to get to school. They need safe crossing points in close proximity to the schools to ensure their protection.
- How can residents who live on the A6 affected by the works expect to gain access to their homes? Just pulling up to enter their driveways, means bringing traffic to a stop and those who have to cross the centre line of the road have nowhere to wait. This will stop the traffic or potentially cause tailgate collisions.

- This whole project is being named as a temporary event but in reality, this means one of two things; the first is that if this is temporary, a lot of money is being spent on something which is going to get very little usage or you are looking to use the money for a permanent feature. The Parish Council are fearful that the second scenario is the most likely, which again raises the disappointment, concern and outrage from residents not being given the opportunity to have their say by way of a consultation about something that is going to have a huge impact and effect on the whole community.
- The strong feelings being expressed by residents on social media clearly shows their anger and the main point of their anger is that they have not been consulted, they haven't been given a voice or an opportunity to speak out about this imposition to many of their lives. They feel that this is something being done to them rather than for them and lets be very clear that this affects all residents of Birstall, not just the few that live along the A6.
- The installation of 'No right turns' into and from some side roads will force drivers onto residential roads, creating rat runs and increasing traffic and congestion within the village. This will increase the volume of traffic on small residential streets already congested due to on street parking to an intolerable and dangerous level and as a priority needs to be reconsidered. This could also cause problems for emergency vehicles.
- The introduction of a temporary 30mph speed limit will slow traffic along the A6 through Birstall. As a main artery route through Birstall, this will cause confusion and congestion. Simply saying you will install camera vans to monitor or police, is reactive and not proactive. It is not the answer to immediate dangers and concerns and will solve nothing. By reducing the speed limit or if traffic is slowed due to cycle lanes levels of nitrogen oxides will increase. Will you be installing/mounting testing stations to monitor this?

Over the last 30yrs, various safety measures have been put in place in Birstall, along the A6 corridor and overall, they have worked well. However, this ill thought through, rushed and unwanted project has removed all of those working safety measures and not replaced them with anything that can be considered as an improvement.

It is hoped that the use of cycle lanes will be monitored, and we expect that LCC will listen to the concerns of residents whose lives it will affect and undertake a full consultation before making any of this permanent.

To summarise:

The Parish Council have made clear their feelings and the feelings expressed by many of the residents of Birstall and await an urgent response for the following information.

1. The Parish Council request a copy of the bid submitted by Leicestershire County Council for the funding
2. The Parish Council request a dated copy of the correspondence received inviting you to apply for the funding
3. The Parish Council are requesting copies of minutes of all meetings that led to the decision of submitting the funding bid.

Birstall Parish Council cannot emphasise enough the impact these ill thought out and rushed measures will have on the residents of Birstall. It is very disappointed in the process and the lack of concern shown by Leicestershire County Council for the residents they serve.

The Parish Council look forward to receiving your response as soon as possible,

Yours sincerely



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Councillor Ann Marshall  
Chair of Birstall Parish Council



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Mrs S Coulson  
Clerk to Birstall Parish Council

For and on behalf of Birstall Parish Council