

Response

Proposed Mini-Roundabout Junction of Court Lane and Lake End Road

At the DPC meeting earlier this month, [REDACTED], drew attention to the lack of contact there had been with residents at Dent's corner regarding this scheme. As one of those residents for over 40 years we can confirm the truth of [REDACTED] statement and must express our astonishment that the current proposal should have been pushed through to the funding stage without the courtesy of our being approached or, in our view, a proper public review of the scheme's usefulness and effect on the village environment.

Answer:

DPC has to advertise both a meeting and an agenda and then minute said meeting both monthly and annually at the AGM. It has been minuted many times since 2009. Minutes are published in the Dorney Parish News and on the website. A member of the council, or occasionally a resident, frequently publishes a note on NextDoor linking to the minutes on the website.

As [REDACTED] has said, just because there is the money and means to install the roundabout does not necessarily mean that it should be done and he called for a pause until there was a detailed scheme around which there could be a proper consultation.

Answer:

There is no money! There is only an opportunity. DPC will receive no funds directly into its account. The parameters of the design are for the most part subject to H&S and TFB.

We have now obtained from Transport for Buckinghamshire (TFB) draft plans of the roundabout and details of the proposed lighting. None of it is encouraging and our objections are many:

Answer:

We are disappointed by this statement given that the design was created by professionals who were fully appraised of the positioning relative to a conservation area.

1. The new proposal is NOT the same as the 2012 Olympic roundabout

The 2012 scheme involved a painted button, minimal signage, no additional refuges or splitter islands and, most importantly, no new lighting or lighting columns. It was an arrangement, designed to deal with changes in traffic flow associated with the Games. It was not a response to more general safety concerns or the needs and traffic flow of the village today. It was temporary and, whatever its pros and cons, no one had to live with it for any length of time. These new proposals are a very different proposition and will urbanize Dent's corner in perpetuity.

Answer: Urbanisation can be good and bad. Traffic flows have risen enormously in the last 20 years as have car speeds and their ability to accelerate. The roads through Dorney have been widened over the years, adding to urbanisation and speeds. The design of the lighting has been particularly mentioned and is going to be of a more sensitive nature than normal.

2. New road lighting will erode privacy, disturb sleep and create light pollution

We are advised that there can be no new permanent roundabout without additional road lighting - at a time when Councils everywhere are being urged to reduce light pollution! The current scheme requires the installation of 9 new 5 metre high black lighting columns on the roundabout and its approaches. These will not only add significantly to the general light pollution in the area, but will affect [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. TFB have said they will position the lights and direct them so as to minimize the effect on adjacent properties. But it is completely impossible to avoid general light spillage and, since there are properties on all sides of the roundabout, some must face the lights directly.

Answer: Please see Answer 1. In addition we understand they have contacted local residents to discuss directly.

3. Proliferation of signage and street furniture

The roundabout scheme will also introduce additional illuminated signage, raised 'splitter islands' and reflectorized bollards further adding to the urban look and feel of the junction.

Answer: It is a package of safety measures that provide a greater level of safety than that currently in place. TfB have reviewed these bollards in the context of the conservation area.

4. Traffic pollution

The introduction of a roundabout will mean that traffic from whichever direction it arrives will potentially need to halt and possibly queue, thus significantly increasing traffic pollution at the junction. Retention of a simpler T-Junction arrangement would still, of course, mean that one traffic stream might need to stop, but this is clearly better than ALL traffic having to slow or stop at the junction and then accelerate away.

Answer: This statement therefore supports that there will be a break in the traffic flow and therefore a reduction in speed. Additionally, in the next 20 years cars are likely to be more electric and this will become less of an issue, although the issue of speed will not.

5. The old T-Junction arrangement was perfectly adequate

TFB has indicated to us that the roundabout itself is not required for the purposes of correcting any particular traffic flow or safety issue, but is

principally a result of pressure from the Parish Council and the local Community Board. TFB has further commented to us that, whilst a roundabout is one option at this location, it could equally be served by simple T-Junction schemes as previously.

Answer: There is a general policy in TFB to change T junctions to roundabouts given issues of safety. The biggest restriction to a larger rollout is lack of funds.

It has been mentioned that there have been accidents at the junction, but, as TFB has observed, all traffic junctions are subject to occasional accidents. Many years ago, cars frequently came off the road and through the fence at Dent's corner, but since the camber on Lake End Road was corrected as part of the enabling works for the Rowing Lake gravel extraction, this problem has completely disappeared.

Answer: Any accident is bad, a roundabout reduces the speed of collision and therefore the severity of the accident.

- 6. There is no evidence of general support for these proposals** The Beeches Community Board Funding Report published in the February 2021 DPN states that over 500 people have signed a petition supporting the installation of a roundabout. We can recall a survey of village opinion as regards traffic issues affecting the village, but are not aware of any petition that specifically sought views on the roundabout – let alone one that concerned the scheme as currently proposed. One must question, therefore, who these supporters were and, if such a petition exists, what questions were being asked and to whom was the petition distributed. Such evidence as there is on relevant Village opinion appears very much to the contrary, with Peter Bowman reporting in the November 2020 Parish News that an informal poll of 108 local residents on Nextdoor recorded 67% in favour of a return to the former T-Junction.

Answer: This is not necessarily a given – the informal poll was open to Dorney and Burnham residents. There have been various questionnaires/polls/petitions within the last 10 years, including the Dorney Traffic Working Group who ran open days to review their proposal. The petition DPC was asked to set up has been extensively publicised and is available online.

- 7. The roundabout is not the answer to Village speeding concerns** We understand that there may be residents who support the roundabout proposal because they believe it a good way of slowing traffic through the village. However, this notion does not bear close examination. Visibility on the approach to the proposed roundabout down Lake End Road is good and will be enhanced by the new lighting. Hence, when traffic is light, the roundabout will provide little incentive to reduce speed. Moreover, in the absence of any additional measures on the Eton Wick side of the village there will be no change to the speed of traffic approaching from the Common

(It might also be noted that the mini-roundabouts at the Gore Road and Stomp Road junctions with Lent Rise Road, Burnham, do little to slow speeds and hence the regular police traps set on that road!).

If we want traffic calming then surely we should adopt a solution that will be effective specifically for that purpose and achieves such for the entire village, rather than tinker with a junction that has operated perfectly satisfactorily for many years and which is appropriate to the character of the village,

Answer: Obviously the volumes of traffic have increased enormously. The good visibility southward gives confidence to drivers so as they enter Village Road they are often speeding. We would dispute your claim on the effectiveness heading north. Car acceleration has increased enormously in the last 20 years (a 1968 Aston Martin is actually no faster at 0-60 mph than a mid range Ford Fiesta). In the future electric cars (such as Tesla) are even faster at acceleration.

Regarding a full village solution, such as humps or chicanes – both of these solutions would require extensive additional lighting throughout the village, which would easily be interpreted as further urbanisation. In addition humps are agreed now as an issue with pollution. Additionally, the sound of cars going over the humps is a known issue within Eton Wick for residents on the main road.

8. Increasing Urbanization

Dorney is an historic Conservation village that has been subject to a creeping urbanization for many years as successive construction projects (The Rowing Lake, Jubilee River, etc.) have led to widening and straightening of the original winding tree-lined country lanes. This new roundabout together with the associated lighting and signage will be yet one more step along the way to degrading the character of the approaches to our Conservation village.

Answer: We agree. The sale of the land to build the rowing lake has resulted in a massive increase in traffic to the local area. It also caused the necessity of widening of roads through the village.

9. Disproportionate effect on a minority of residents of a scheme of unproven value.

There has been quite enough intrusion on the quality of village life over recent years without introducing changes of unproven value that will disproportionately affect a minority of residents. Because of their position on the haul way for the 12-year gravel extraction from the Rowing Lake and their close proximity to the Jubilee River works, the M4 widening and various bridge works, it can be fairly argued that the residents at Dent's corner have borne more than their fair share of the noise, dirt and disruption that the village has had over the years.

Answer: Thousands of motorists use Dents Corner daily and pass those properties in Village Road. The safety of those residents and those drivers also carries weight with the council.

It is understandable that the village is keen to take advantage of the 'compensation' that is being offered by Balfour-Beatty and Highways England, but it would be ironic if the legacy of so much recent disruption should be a scheme that further despoils our lovely village.

Answer: This isn't opinion shared by the Council, who have been dealing with the traffic issues raised in numerous meeting for many years.

We therefore ask you please not to jump at the first thing on offer, but rather consider the effect on those residents most affected and seek to apply any available funds to the things that are really most needed in the village, e.g. a lower village speed limit, traffic camera or other traffic calming measures, filling pot holes, resurfacing or perhaps funding post-Covid school needs. The substantial sums of money available from the various bodies involved in the roundabout proposals could go a very long way to realize many more worthwhile village projects without further urbanizing our lovely village or adding to the misery of the residents at Dent's corner.

Answer: There are no other "offers." Again, there is no money, only an opportunity to address an ever increasing problem. When compared with all other methods of traffic calming that have been brought before the council, this is the least invasive.