

Active Travel Woodbrigde – Consultation Response

I am writing to you in response to the consultation on active travel in Woodbridge.

Many of my constituents have expressed concerns on the measures proposed in the consultation, many of which I share. While I think most people would be happy with the desired outcome of encouraging cycling and walking within Woodbridge, the proposals are somewhat detached from the reality of the life and role of an important rural market town and the focus should be on the core rather than some of the periphery.

My overall message is that the Active Travel should support those who want to walk and cycle more readily but should not be anti-driver. Pretty much every proposal fails to deliver and antagonises rather than encourages.

I suggest that the proposal should be ditched as it is and either be started again entirely with a key focus on the town centre or dropped entirely. Instead, effort should be made by the council to provide key crossing points for pedestrians and cyclists but most importantly of all, the surfaces of the pavements and roads need to be made good. If people end up tripping and being injured or feel they have to swerve to avoid injury, no amount of other modifications will come close to encouraging active travel.

Furthermore, I think that the consultation process has been poor. For example, in my discussion with the high school, the largest school by far in Woodbridge, their needs have clearly not been considered and they were not consulted prior to this detailed proposal being launched.

The survey to gather feedback is woefully bad. It does not set out clearly the different options being considered. I expect it would be deemed unlawful if taken to court. I would consider this consultation to be so bad that it needs to be done again, allowing people to comment far more readily on the proposals being made, including being able to keep a copy of the comments provided.

Proposals

- i) Old Barrack Road – including Sandy Lane, California, Ipswich Road, Grundisburgh Road and Hasketon Road.

The proposals to block cars simply do not work for most people living and working in this town. The multiple modal filters should be scrapped. All the measures suggested will add pressure and congestion at the Dobbies roundabout on the A12. This view has been expressed to me multiple times by constituents.

The planners appear to have no understanding of the current flows in and out of the town nor the expectation of greater traffic with Sizewell C construction, nor that it is part of the Major Road Network, nor that there are proposals for other major roadworks. Constituents have expressed strong concerns on the impact on Grundisburgh Road and the implications for vehicles using Hasketon Road today, including access to school and shops. A zebra or pelican crossing on Grundisburgh Road near the junction with Hasketon Road could make it safer for pedestrians and encourage walking to school.

As for Sandy Lane and California, there is no need for a modal filter at either end. If a priority filter were to be applied in Sandy Lane, as happens elsewhere in Woodbridge (eg Pytches Road) that could help with safety. Both modal filters would add considerable distance for drivers with homes or businesses in that area and would add congestion to the A12 and require more drivers to go through Martlesham village.

Crossing Ipswich Road can be problematic so a pedestrian crossing would be good. I would suggest a pelican crossing would be better than a zebra given the significant traffic flows. A mini-roundabout of the junction of Old Barrack Road to Ipswich Road could reduce congestion, improve air quality and would act as a further traffic calming measure.

ii) Birkett Road

Crossing the road should be made safer by the proposed zebra crossing. Narrowing of the road is not necessary nor is removal of on-street car parking. The parking already acts as a traffic calming measure.

iii) Peterhouse Crescent/Kyson School

I understand about 50% of the children already walk to school, which is to be welcomed. Data was not made available for the other schools so I cannot say if this is above average but I expect it is higher than most other schools in Woodbridge. The proposals are not set out in sufficient detail to give any further meaningful comment.

iv) 20mph zone

There are some surprising choices for the 20mph zone including cul de sacs and roads where it would be nigh on impossible to drive at 30mph already. In fact, I would suggest I recognise that feedback from constituents is more positive on this proposal than my instincts. That is because I think that the nature of the roads and the extent of on-street parking makes it very difficult already to exceed 20mph. Air pollution could be considerably worse.

However, how would it be enforced? There would be need to be significant increase in speed signs and I am concerned that would be to the detriment of pedestrians, and those with disability mobility vehicles and prams.

I strongly think the council should consider pausing any further work, should focus on improving road crossings, including new pedestrian crossings, improve the pavements and the road surfaces as a priority rather than closing off roads or undertaking speed changes. I would also use funding to provide cycling proficiency courses at primary schools and secondary schools.

Yours sincerely,

The Rt Hon. Dr Thérèse Coffey MP

Member of Parliament for Suffolk Coastal