

CHESTERFIELD AND DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY

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Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP
Secretary of State
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
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10 October 2021

Dear Secretary of State,

Proposed West–East Chesterfield Walking and Cycling Route

One of the projects proposed to be funded by your Department's Active Travel Fund (Tranche 2) at a cost of £1.68m. is a scheme to extend an existing walking and cycling route in Chesterfield.

This project has aroused very considerable opposition locally and little or no support, except from a vociferous and small minority of cyclists. It entails the closure of a minor road, which has been opposed by a petition signed by 700 local residents, and the building of a two-lane high-speed cycle 'super highway' along one side of the very busy (and relatively narrow) A619 as it approaches Chesterfield from the west. Residents consider this will make the road even more hazardous than it is at present. The Civic Society, while in favour of sensible policies to encourage walking and cycling in Chesterfield, opposes both arms of this scheme.

Perhaps most seriously, an online public consultation exercise conducted by contractors on behalf of Derbyshire county council earlier this year was, in our view, fatally flawed. The council stated that they had sent individual circulars to 4,041 residents living on 117 streets on or near the route. We have evidence that the circular was not delivered residents of at least eighteen of those roads, who therefore did not have a fair opportunity to comment on the proposals. For this reason we consider that the statistics produced by the county council in support of the scheme are worthless and not a safe basis on which to proceed.

The county council's cabinet intends to make a decision on Thursday this week to go ahead with this project and to ignore both local opposition and the obvious defects of its consultation exercise. A paper prepared for the cabinet meeting (and made public at very short notice, it must be said) makes no mention of either.

We assume that you have reserve powers to call in and reconsider schemes to be funded from the Active Travel Fund to which there is a significant local opposition, or where the sponsoring local authority has failed properly to consult, or which simply do not represent value for money. In the view of the Civic Society and that of a large number of local residents, the Chesterfield East–West Walking and Cycling Route qualifies on all three counts.

Could we please ask you, therefore, to pass the enclosed paper to the appropriate officials in your Department and ask them to look at this scheme. At the very least we believe that the county council should be required to undertake a fresh consultation exercise and to take notice of the results.

Yours sincerely,

Philip Riden
Chairman
Chesterfield and District Civic Society