

CHESTERFIELD AND DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY

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Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman
PO Box 4771
Coventry
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20 October 2021

Dear Sir,

Your reference 21 010 542: complaint about Derbyshire County Council Proposed Chesterfield East–West Walking and Cycling Route

I write to acknowledge your letter of 19 October, signed by Ms S. Robinson and received by email. I appreciate your prompt reply to my own letter, although it would be helpful to have an email address to which to write in future.

I have prepared yet another letter of complaint to the county council, and an accompanying memorandum supplying further details, as your letter requires me to do. I enclose copies of both. I am also enclosing a print of a recent email exchange with the county council, in case you consider that sufficient as a 'complaint and reply' for you to investigate this matter. It would be fair to say that all the objectors who received the county council's email of 15 October, and have since been in touch with me, have expressed disgust at the way in which their objections have been treated. It is possible that some may contact you themselves.

The petition with 711 signatories objecting to the eastern extension of the scheme was not the work of the Civic Society, and I have suggested to the organisers that they make an independent complaint to the county council, and in due course to you, about the way in which their petition has been ignored.

I appreciate that the law requires you to be satisfied that a complainant has first complained to the body complained about and that that body must be given a opportunity to reply. What concerns me in this case is that, as soon as the county council discovers that the Civic Society's decision to approach the Ombudsman was not an empty threat but a statement of intent, it will begin the construction of the cycle route in the hope that work will have progressed so far by the end of the twelve-week period specified in your letter that it will be impracticable to stop it.

Such action would in my view be grossly improper and undemocratic, and make a mockery of the process for which you are responsible. I wonder if, in the circumstances, you are able to caution the county council against taking any steps that would prejudice an eventual ruling by you against their proposal. If so, I would respectfully suggest that you make this point to the county council.

In view of the considerable local interest in this issue, which has been covered at length in the *Derbyshire Times*, the Chesterfield weekly paper, I am issuing a copy of your letter and my reply, and of the letter and memorandum addressed to the county council, to the press. I am also sending copies to the Divisional Member, Mr Toby Perkins MP, who I hope will take the matter up with the Secretary of State for Transport.

I will of course forward to you any reply I receive from the county council to my letter.

Yours faithfully,

Philip Riden
Chairman
Chesterfield and District Civic Society