

Chesterfield and District Civic Society

Public Meeting, Brookfield School, Thursday 11 November 2021.

Chairman's opening remarks

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. On behalf of the Chesterfield and District Civic Society I'd like to welcome you to this meeting, which we have called to enable local residents to discuss the proposed East–West Chesterfield Walking and Cycling Route. I particularly wish to welcome our local MP, Mr Toby Perkins, who has kindly agreed at short notice to address a public meeting on this issue.

The Civic Society is a long-established, non-political voluntary organisation dedicated, as our motto says, to campaigning to make Chesterfield a better place to live. This is a public meeting, at which both members and non-members are welcome, but if, after attending in tonight's meeting, anyone would like to join the society, we would be very happy to enrol them as members.

I will begin by briefly explaining the Civic Society position's on this issue, which I believe has been misunderstood in some quarters.

First, the society supports greater encouragement of cycling and walking in Chesterfield, including the upgrading of the existing Hipper Trail.

Second, it does not support the western extension of the route along Linden Avenue and Chatsworth Road, which we consider would be very damaging to Chatsworth Road as part of a major through route. We believe that instead renewed efforts should be made to upgrade the existing public footpath between Greendale Avenue (off Holymoore Road) and Somersall Lane to use as a western extension. This we consider to be a much better alternative route.

Third, the Civic Society supports the 711 local residents who have signed a petition opposing the permanent closure to motor traffic of part of Crow Lane as part of the eastern extension of the Hipper Trail between the railway station and the Royal Hospital.

Finally, the society deprecates the continuing refusal of the county council to accept that their consultation exercise over this scheme, conducted last March, was fatally flawed. The county council stated that it was their intention to deliver a circular letter to 4,041 households on 117 streets on or close to the route of the proposed scheme. The Civic Society has clear evidence that this circular was not delivered to at least twenty of those streets. This evidence has been presented to the county council. We therefore find it regrettable that the county council continues to make claims concerning the consultation which can be shown to be untrue.

The Civic Society also takes the view that the shortcomings of the consultation are so serious that the conclusions derived from it are an unsafe basis on which to proceed with the scheme.

In a moment I will hand over to Mr Perkins, who will give us his latest thoughts on the scheme, following his intervention in Parliament two days ago. I will then call for questions and comments from members of the audience, beginning with any elected members of local authorities who wish to speak.

Because of the large number who may wish to speak, I intend to limit contributions to a maximum of three minutes. I hope, therefore, that all speakers will be as concise as possible.

Can I also please remind everyone that in this country we conduct political discourse in a civilised way, without engaging in personal abuse, and allowing everyone to have their say without interruption.

I will be chairing the meeting on that basis, and I will try to ensure that all points of view are heard. I now invite Mr Perkins to address the meeting.

ENDS.