

## CHESTERFIELD AND DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY

### Response to Derbyshire County Council's proposed extension of the Hipper Valley Trail

#### SUMMARY

- 1 In general the Civic Society welcomes highway improvements that encourage more people to cycle, but not at the expense of the safety and convenience of other road-users, including pedestrians and drivers of private motor-cars and light and heavy goods vehicles, who are all far more numerous than cyclists.
- 2 We are dubious that the benefits of this scheme will be commensurate with the cost (£320,000 per mile), and would have preferred to see a similar sum spent on the better maintenance of roads generally in Chesterfield.
- 3 The Civic Society is very strongly opposed to the creation of a cycle 'superhighway' along Chatsworth Road between Holymoore Road and Storrs Road. We have set out detailed reasons why this would severely damage an attractive street picture, interfere with residents' access to their driveways, make movement by pedestrians along and across Chatsworth Road difficult and dangerous, and impede the safe movement of motor vehicles along a very busy road which forms part of a major interregional freight corridor. We consider that this scheme has been devised on the assumption that cycling is by definition 'a good thing' and that the wishes of cyclists must therefore be given priority over those of other road-users. We do not share this view. We would like to see the proposed 'superhighway' replaced by conventional one-way cycle lanes on either side of Chatsworth Road.
- 4 At the eastern end of the proposed route we support the permanent closure to motor vehicles of the upper section of Crow Lane (at present temporarily closed under Covid emergency legislation) but also wish to see the lower section closed as soon as the proposed link road between Hollis Lane and the railway station is opened. This will bring to an end the undesirable use of Piccadilly Road and Crow Lane as a short-cut to the station.

# CHESTERFIELD AND DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY

## Response to Derbyshire County Council's proposed extension of the Hipper Valley Trail

### General

- 1 The Civic Society welcomes the opportunity to comment on this scheme, which we note from a statement issued by Destination Chesterfield is estimated will cost 'just over £1.6m.', borne entirely by an earmarked grant from the Government. We trust that the work will be completed for this sum and that no cost will fall on the council taxpayers of Derbyshire. It is possible to have differing views as to the wisdom of spending this sum on a scheme of benefit to only a small number of people, when public finances are under extreme pressure. The stated cost works out at £320,000 per mile, which many might regard as excessive, especially as the central portion of the route was created in its present form only a few years ago at a reported cost of £1m. The society is also concerned that nothing appears to have been said about a revenue budget to maintain the proposed new route.
- 2 The society consider that the benefits claimed for the project are exaggerated. Most people at present travel to and from Chesterfield railway station by motor vehicle (i.e. private car, taxi or bus) and we are certain that they will continue to do so, however much money is spent on providing better access on foot or by cycle. Most of those who work at the Royal Hospital, and probably virtually all those who attend for treatment, do likewise. The same is true of the vast majority of people who travel to and from the town centre for work, shopping or entertainment. The idea that this scheme will transform the habits, much less the health, of more than a handful of residents of Chesterfield can at best be described as misplaced optimism. Spending £320,000 a mile on repairing pot-holed roads around the town would bring far more benefit to far more people.
- 3 We have nothing particularly to say about the proposed improvements to the

existing Hipper Valley Trail, the section between Walton Road and Boythorpe Road (Bobbin Mill Lane and Goyt Side Road), and the existing route through Queen's Park and beyond to the railway station (i.e. sections 2, 3 and 4 as defined in the consultation), except to observe that at present section 2 suffers from lack of maintenance and on occasions pedestrian--cycle conflict as it is too narrow. A wider trail is to be welcomed. However, it will have the appearance of a road cutting across a public park. A brown surface treatment would avoid this problem. As this is the main pedestrian route, the cycleway ought to be the subject of a speed limit as is the practice elsewhere. That ought to extend to Walton Road, as there are pinch points without safe refuges.

- 4 The Civic Society does, however, wish to express its very strong opposition to the plan for the western extension of the Hipper Valley Trail between Linden Avenue and Holymoore Road (section 1), and to suggest a more radical approach to changes at the Crow Lane end of the route (section 5)

**Section 1: A619 Brookside Cycle Superhighway (0.9 mile)  
Baslow Road, Chatsworth Road and Linden Avenue**

- 5 The Civic Society is unhappy about the way in which the public consultation has been devised and executed. Residents of Brookside (who include the society's immediate past chairman) were not notified by flyers delivered to individual households, even though they are directly affected, whereas people living off the route (including the society's current chairman) have been. National advice is that amenity groups such as the Civic Society should be consulted on shared surface cycle/pedestrian routes. This has not occurred.
- 6 The scheme was devised and submitted to the Department for Transport in 2020, following consultation with the Chesterfield Cycle Campaign. The proposals were only released into the public domain following a Freedom of Information Act request and then on an obscure website. The county council

website for the Chesterfield cycle route shows a link to Greendale Avenue, off Holymoore Road, not the superhighway now proposed. Money was spent to provide a new bridge to extend the trail and so that is where most visitors to the site would believe the trail is to run. Only very recently has a separate county council website been created, showing the current proposals for the public consultation process. The published information lacks balance and makes unsound claims about improving pedestrian safety. The plans are not well presented and there is no evidence that an environmental assessment of the impact of the proposal has been carried out. The tone of the consultation is that cycling is a good thing, there is government money for this project, and therefore you should support it.

### **Need**

- 7 A 'cycle superhighway' (sometimes known as a 'cycle motorway') of the sort proposed for the A619 through Brookside is designed for higher speeds than normal cycle lanes as it is intended to provide an alternative to the car in commuter traffic. Section 1 has been designed for this purpose and to a standard that is normally associated with long radial routes into and across cities where there are high levels of commuting. Section 1 serves one suburb (Brookside) and a village (Holymoorside) and is only 0.9 mile long. Cycling is not the only mode of transport which is available, and so at any one time there will be few cycling commuters. As proposed, this scheme is unwarranted.
  
- 8 The new cycleway is also intended as a route to the National Park for leisure cycling. This aim is open to question as the cycle lanes will discharge onto an unlit, national speed limit section of one of the busiest roads across the National Park. The A619 carries a variety of heavy goods vehicles (mostly full-size lorries), wide loads, visitor traffic and motorcycles, and is a preferred route for emergency vehicles. Yet it is tortuous and in places steep; passing is restricted and often difficult to negotiate as the carriageways are modest. Historically, the A6 was de-trunked and the A619/A623 became the corridor for heavy traffic, releasing other roads and lanes for other modes of transport.

Improvements to the A619 near Baslow and the Stockport by-pass reinforce this commitment. The current proposal runs contrary to this principle and is not in the interests of traffic safety. The justification for the segregated section along Brookside is precisely why cyclists ought not be encouraged to use this unsegregated, derestricted route when safer ones exist.

### **Impact on the neighbourhood:**

#### **(a) Townscape**

- 9 The section of Chatsworth Road along Brookside has a charming arcadian character which is an asset to the town. Drystone boundary walls are complemented by gritstone kerbs. On the north side there is a line of protected mature trees in the verge, which are supplemented by garden trees and shrubs on both side of the road, against a backdrop of mainly Edwardian houses. In some towns this would be a Conservation Area. The area is far more attractive than the Chatsworth Road Conservation Area, which has been heavily degraded by traffic and under-investment. The Somersall Lane Conservation Area extends onto Chatsworth Road. Somersall Lane is also attractive and is popular with walkers. The boundary wall of the former lodge to Somersall Hall which stands at the junction of Somersall Lane and Chatsworth Road has suffered collision damage on at least two occasions.
  
- 10 There is no environmental impact appraisal. The submitted drawings lack detailed specification but it appears likely that the stone kerbs on the north side of Chatsworth Road will be partly hidden by extensive use of tarmac, or even sacrificed to concrete. The chosen colour for the cycleway is green, but stone colour would fit in better. Additional traffic lights, bollards and signage are unlikely to improve the appearance of the road. The toucan crossing at the Storrs Road junction is a lost opportunity to regain a pleasant sense of place. Instead, a strip of grass, which ought to be landscaped to foil the telecom tower and a carpark, will be lost to tarmac. As designed, the cycle superhighway displays no consideration or respect whatever for the character of the area. Furthermore, cycle lanes have elsewhere become associated with verge and pavement parking, and widened accesses to permit gardens

to be used for off-street parking. Side streets take displaced parking. This will occur here.

**(b) Traffic safety**

- 11 The footways are very well used by local residents, Brookfield School pupils and others for exercise and leisure, as it is an attractive environment which leads from the district service centre to Holymoorside, with links to public and concessionary footpaths. Social distancing requires the full width of most of the footways. Although the reduction of the speed limit is to be welcomed, the present limits are not well respected, and that will give rise to legitimate safety concerns where inter-visibility is limited. It is standard practice to segregate traffic lanes on busy A and B roads to channel traffic, reduce accidents and where possible enable safer right turns. Often 'keep left' bollards are added to aid pedestrians crossing and to deter unwanted overtaking (as for example at Loundsley Green). This describes Chatsworth Road west of the Storrs Road junction. To the east of Storrs Road there are a few bollards and ghost islands. This section has problems: lorries weave along the road and are often driven across the white lines; sometimes vehicles overtake at speed; right turners and service vehicles hinder or stop traffic flow; even left turns can be problematic; and pedestrians cross between traffic lights because they are too far apart.
- 12 As proposed, west of Storrs Road the ghost islands and right-turn harbourages and bollards are to be removed. Carriageway widths will be reduced and will be inadequate on bends, where trailing axles on large HGVs already bring wheels close to the kerb. East of Morrison's island, carriageways deemed to be wide enough in fact cause large passing HGVs to stop or run along the footway. This can be intimidating for pedestrians and deters walking. Pedestrian crossings will be reduced and, as described, will not necessarily be zebra crossings. There are no compensatory improvements for pedestrians at the junctions of Queen Mary Road and Somersall Lane, which are well used by pedestrians, and the latter will be more used. There are also additional safety issues:

- (a) As the superhighway is designed for faster cycling, the pedestrian crossings do not extend to the cycleway. Pedestrians, often with dogs, will be expected to stand on an unguarded island between passing lorries and cyclists.
- (b) The widening of the path at the toucan crossing near Brookfield School will help inter-visibility in one direction and protect the listed boundary wall of the lodge at the entrance to Somersall Lane from more accidents. But there are dis-benefits for pedestrians crossing from the west, even though inter-visibility is highly substandard and more people will have to use the crossing, since the bollards are to be removed. All will have to contend with cycles directed along the 1m. path which runs alongside the eastern lodge, contrary to best practice. This is very unsafe, as inter-visibility on the footway is restricted and right-turning vehicles entering Somersall Lane tend to skim past the kerb.
- (c) The cycle route at the Storrs Road toucan crossing fails to recognise that there is a large sheltered housing development nearby and that it adjoins a busy medical centre served by a pharmacy on the opposite side of Chatsworth Road and a car-park on the opposite side of Storrs Road, which are well used by the elderly and parents with young children. Reduced to 2m. wide, the footway is mean and takes little account of users, including the elderly with walking aids.
- (d) Regrettably Storrs Road is used by large HGVs avoiding the town centre. The intended 3m. lanes are in practice too narrow, since an HGV is 2.5m. wide excluding wing mirrors.
- (e) More traffic will back up beyond the well-used zebra crossing on Storrs Road. When this happens inter-visibility can be very poor. Sometimes northbound drivers ignore pedestrians crossing.
- (f) Chatsworth Road east of Storrs Road has unallocated roadside parking spaces. None will be provided on the west side, even though houses will have visitors', delivery and service vehicles calling. In effect the cycleway is sanctioning undesirable pavement parking on the south side. Presumably on the north side it will have to be verge-damaging

parking between the trees.

- (g) The cross-hatched ghost islands permit the overtaking of road-parked vehicles and allow vehicles to move out from cars waiting to exit drives. Their loss will extend the congestion which characterises parts of Chatsworth Road east of Storrs Road and decrease road safety, contrary to the county council's stated aims and obligations.
- (h) The side-road bell mouths allow service vehicles and visitors to undertake U-turns. Closing them is undesirable and unnecessary as they are lightly trafficked. A well-designed platform would be better, since this would permit U-turns and safeguard the stone kerbs.

Overall, what is proposed fails to look at the wider context. For pedestrians it is less inclusive, as some people will be deterred from using the footways as they would wish and could reasonably expect to do.

### **An alternative proposal**

- 13 The Civic Society believes that an extension of the Hipper Valley Trail from Somersall Lane to Greendale Avenue is a much more desirable option. It is not clear when this option became undesirable to the county council. As this option is not permitted within the government grant, the section along Chatsworth Road should be redesigned to consider the needs of householders. Conventional kerbside cycle lanes on either side of the carriageway would be better for pedestrians, drivers and people exiting their property and side streets, who are far more numerous than cyclists. It would enable a safer arrangement for pedestrians along the more heavily used south side of Chatsworth Road and at the Storrs Road junction. Toucan crossings at the Holymoore Road and Somersall Lane junctions could better serve traffic flow and safety.

### **Conclusion**

- 14 Taking into account the large numbers of full-size HGVs and wide loads using this route, the road is being under-designed to allow space for the cycle route. No consideration whatever has been given to how this proposal will affect

those who live on or close to its route through Brookside, nor the harm that will be done to an attractive and busy entrance to the town. The claims for pedestrian safety are spurious and there is decreased safety for motor vehicles. All this is being proposed for an unnecessary cycle superhighway which will in part encourage leisure cyclists to use a busy, tortuous and difficult road. Adopted plans are for an extension to the Hipper Valley Trail, for which preliminary work has been implemented, which would be less expensive, more environmentally friendly and away from motor traffic. It would meet a known need and overcome many concerns. We feel that this scheme has been abandoned in the face of abundant government funding for the cycle superhighway, irrespective of need or the impact on others. No weight has been given to the interests of those who have to use the road and footpaths; but undue weight has been given to those who choose to cycle along the route. Walking and cycling do need to be promoted but this scheme does little for either the cause of sustainable transport or for local government as an enabler.

### **Section 5: Crow Land and Wetlands Lane**

- 15 We believe that this part of the scheme must be considered alongside the Borough Council's recently published Master Plan for the redevelopment of the station approach, on which the Civic Society has submitted detailed observations. A copy of our submission is for this reason annexed to this paper.
  
- 16 The Master Plan includes provision for a new link road between Hollis Lane and Malkin Street, running between the railway and the A61 Inner Relief Road. It also envisages retaining Crow Lane as a road open to all traffic, running east from a new junction with Brimington Road generally on its present alignment, past the junction with the north end of Piccadilly Road and continuing uphill to its junction with Wetlands Lane.

- 17 The Civic Society strongly believes that the building of the new link road to the station provides an excellent opportunity to close to motor traffic the lower section of Crow Lane between the junction with Malkin Street (or in the future Brimington Road) and the entrance to Tapton golf course. Piccadilly Road would as a result become a cul-de-sac, providing access to frontagers, the Riverside Estate and a handful of properties on Crow Lane (i.e. Rose Cottage, the golf course and the two pairs of semi-detached bungalows which stand between the entrances to the other two).
- 18 The reason why we wish to see Piccadilly Road and the lower section of Crow Lane closed to motor traffic is that both are ill-suited for their present function as a short-cut for drivers going to and from the station who wish to avoid using the Holywell Cross roundabout, Durrant Road, Brewery Street and Malkin Street. Piccadilly Road is largely built up, partly with older houses without off-street parking; it is also used for commuter parking for the station. This makes it difficult and at time dangerous for moving vehicles to negotiate. The safe use of Crow Lane is impeded by two railway bridges, which have limited headroom and are built in such a way as to create a reverse bend, requiring the use of traffic lights and single-line working. All this could (and in our view should) be got rid off by closing Crow Lane as soon as the new link road is built.
- 19 We strongly support the permanent closure of the upper section of Crow Lane between the golf course entrance and Dobbin Clough Farm. Whilst we consider the suggestion that, during its temporary closure, more people are using this route to walk or cycle to the Royal Hospital to be little more than a pious hope, we entirely agree that the lane has become a much pleasanter place to walk or cycle along, and safer for horses. We have also noticed the almost complete disappearance of the litter which previously disfigured it. We conclude that most if not all the litter was thrown from moving vehicles and that pedestrians, cyclists and horse-riders generally do not drop litter.
- 20 Set against the undoubted benefits that would accrue from the closure of the

upper section of Crow Lane (especially if combined with the closure of the lower section), we can see little or no loss to anyone. Motorists could continue to travel to and from the golf course and adjoining properties on Crow Lane via Piccadilly Road, and Dobbin Clough Farm and the Paddocks would continue to have access to the outside world via Wetlands Lane, which is wider and flatter than the upper section of Crow Lane. It is obviously impossible to close Wetlands Lane to motor vehicles, but the small volume of traffic which now uses the road would drop further if Crow Lane was closed.

- 21 For all these reasons we generally support the report's proposals for this section of the new Trail, but also wish to see the lower section of Crow Lane closed to motor traffic as soon as possible. We would therefore regard the imposition of a 20 mph speed limit and the modification of the traffic light sequence on this part of the road as no more than interim measures pending its closure. We are in fact dubious of the benefits of altering the traffic lights, since observation suggests that most cyclists held up at a red light illegally mount the pavement and ride past the lights under the bridges. If the road was closed to motor traffic the lights could be removed and cyclists would no longer be tempted to break the law.

15 March 2021

## **Annexe**

### **CHESTERFIELD AND DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY**

#### **Response to Chesterfield Borough Council's proposed redevelopment of the station approach**

#### **SUMMARY**

The Civic Society committee generally welcomes the Station Masterplan but would like to raise a few mostly minor points.

We feel that there should be an alternative plan for landscaping on either side of the new link road from Hollis Lane, in case it proves impossible to go ahead with the proposed commercial development along this road.

We would like to be reassured that there will be adequate parking for this commercial development, independent of the multi-storey car-park for rail users.

We wish to be reassured that the gradient on the pedestrian and cycle path from the station to the bridge over the Inner Relief Road will not be so steep as to make access difficult for any type of user.

We would like the new bridge over the Inner Relief Road to be as wide as possible, for Corporation Street to be reopened to motor traffic on a limited basis, and for the area between Corporation Street and Spa Lane to be generally improved.

We would like the Borough Council to acquire Kilblean House, next to the Stephenson Memorial Hall, and to restore it for use as an annexe to both the Pomegranate Theatre and the Museum & Art Gallery.

We would like the present access to the station via Crow Lane to be closed to all motor traffic as soon as the new link road from Hollis Lane is opened, and for Piccadilly Road to become a residential cul-de-sac, with access retained to Tapton golf course.

## **CHESTERFIELD AND DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY**

### **Response to Chesterfield Borough Council's proposed redevelopment of the station approach**

#### **Introductory**

- 1 The Civic Society welcomes the opportunity to comment on this important scheme and was happy to assist by providing some historical information for the report which has been produced. Subject to the limitations imposed by the continuing lockdown, our response is based on email and telephone discussion amongst the committee, starting from a draft prepared by our chairman, Philip Riden. He himself should properly declare an interest as a local resident (of Owen Falls Avenue, on the Riverside Estate).
  
- 2 In general, the society strongly supports the Borough Council's proposals, which will transform the station entrance and the route from the station to the town centre. It will also greatly improve the use of adjoining parcels of land which are at present either vacant or occupied by buildings of no architectural merit. Combined with the Waterside Scheme, the new station approach will transform the appearance of the north-eastern edge of the town centre. This is important not just for the benefit of local residents but also because this is the part of the town which visitors arriving by train, or by car from Junction 30 on the M1, see first. It is not at present an edifying prospect.
  
- 3 We would like to make a small number of suggestions, some general, others more specific.

#### **General**

- 4 We understand that the scheme is to be financed from public funds and is not dependent on either a decision by the Government to proceed with the planned eastern arm of HS2 between Birmingham and Leeds or private investment. On the other hand, the scheme includes several buildings which are to be let to commercial operators, including factory, warehouse, office and retail units on the land between the new access road from Hollis Lane and the railway, at the station itself, and on part of the former Chesterfield Hotel site.

We obviously hope that tenants will be found for these buildings, preferably before construction begins, but we feel that the scheme should make alternative provision in case if it proves impossible to go ahead with some or all of them, either initially or ever. We would prefer to see definite plans for landscaping these sites if they are not built on.

- 5 The scheme includes a new multi-storey car-park which will contain more spaces than the existing surface car-park. We would like to be reassured that adequate provision has also been made for parking in connection with the proposed commercial buildings mentioned in the previous paragraph.
  
- 6 With the increase in residential accommodation (principally flats) planned or in progress in the town centre there may be an increase in commuting by rail from Chesterfield to Sheffield and elsewhere. At the same time, the new Hollis Lane–Brewery Street road is likely to be busy, not only with traffic going to and from the station but also to and from Waterside, or heading north towards Brimington and Staveley, or merely avoiding the town centre by heading for Hoywell Cross roundabout. Both factors will place pressure on the point at which the footpath and cycle path from the station to Corporation Street will cross the new road. A footbridge here is presumably impossible, given the levels, but we wonder if consideration could be given to an underpass.
  
- 7 Conversely (and we appreciate that this may be a reason why an underpass is not feasible) we are concerned that the pedestrian and cycle route between North Midland House and the bridge over the Inner Relief Road may be too steeply graded to be easily manageable by wheelchair-users and pedestrians with push-chairs or trolleys. As far as we can see from the consultants' report, the rise between this building and the bridge will be about 5m. but no figure is given for the gradient. It would obviously not be possible to make this a stepped path and we would like to be reassured that the gradient will lie within normal design limits for a path that can be negotiated without difficulty in all weather conditions (including snow and ice) by all types of pedestrian user. If an underpass was built, access to the basement of the multi-storey car-park could presumably be provided from it, which would reduce or avoid the need

for pedestrians to cross the new road.

### **Corporation Street**

8 We are pleased that the Masterplan envisages incorporating (rather than bypassing) the upper section of Corporation Street, but with a realigned approach passing to the south of North Midland House, instead of the north. Corporation Street was Chesterfield Corporation's first essay in urban redevelopment, laid out as a grander approach to the Midland Railway's new station of 1870. The Stephenson Memorial Hall of 1879 forms a fine feature at the top of the road, and the buildings on the opposite side are well designed, if not especially remarkable, commercial architecture of about the same date. Since they have been cleaned and the ground-floor fascias tidied up the street picture looks much better. We are also glad that there will be a new bridge over the Inner Relief Road. What ruined Corporation Street was the decision to put a narrow footbridge at the end of the portion of the road which was retained when the Inner Relief Road was driven through (the consequent demolition of the buildings on the lower part of the road, other than North Midland House, was no loss). We would like to see the new bridge made as wide as possible, not merely to facilitate the safe and easy segregated movement in both directions of cyclists and pedestrians but also for aesthetic reasons, to get rid of the impression that Corporation Street is a dead-end with a small bridge at the bottom. If possible, we would like the bridge to be wide enough to take motor vehicles, even if it was not normally used for that purpose (it might be worth providing for emergency access to the station by this route).

9 We share what appears (from the press) to be the widespread local opposition to the county council's temporary closure of Corporation Street, which has unnecessarily inconvenienced the taxi trade and seems to have achieved very little. We see no reason why this road should not revert to being a taxi-rank, since it adjoins the Pomegranate Theatre and several bars with late licences, and is near the Winding Wheel, all of which generate a demand for taxis. To avoid the awkward right turn from St Mary's Gate, which obstructs traffic travelling north along that road, Corporation Street could be made one way, with vehicles allowed to enter only by turning left off Holywell

Street and required to exit via Station Road. Its use by motor vehicles could also be restricted to taxis, delivery vehicles, and drivers dropping off or collecting for the two theatres and the bars.

- 10 Although we appreciate that this area is not part of the present Masterplan, we would like to see thought given to improving the appearance of Station Back Lane, Station Road, Eyre Street and Spa Lane. This area was built up in piecemeal fashion in the second half of the nineteenth century, and has suffered from piecemeal demolition since the 1950s. We would suggest that this whole area needs re-planning, keeping some of the car-parking spaces, but redeveloping other plots to give it a more closely built-up urban feel in keeping with St Mary's Gate, the adjoining main road. At the moment much of the land seems under-utilised.
- 11 We wish to put in a particular appeal for efforts to be made to bring back into beneficial use the property adjoining the Stephenson Memorial Hall at its north-eastern end. This large three- and four-storey red-brick building was originally a doctor's house and surgery named Kilblean House; the ground-floor extension at its north-eastern end was presumably the surgery. The house lost its garden when the Memorial Hall was extended to become a theatre and as a result itself became a private temperance hotel. It was later a licensed club but has been empty for several years. It is not a building of outstanding merit and would not be eligible for listing, but it makes a handsome addition to the street picture and blends in well with the Memorial Hall.
- 12 We would like the Borough Council to consider acquiring the property and adding it to the Memorial Hall estate. We are not familiar with the current internal layout of the building (or what scope there is for altering the layout) but we can envisage several possible uses for it. If a large internal space exists (or could be created) it might be used as a studio auditorium alongside the Pomegranate and Winding Wheel main houses (for music and lectures as well as drama). Other rooms could be used as a gallery for temporary and permanent art exhibitions, which would, we feel, be a great improvement on the present upstairs room used for that purpose at the museum. For example,

Peak District Artisans, a group of professional artists whose membership extends as far east as Chesterfield (and also to Sheffield) has been looking for some years for a gallery in which its members could exhibit permanently, instead of having to rely on short-term exhibitions in hired rooms. There are similar groups in Sheffield and other cities within reasonable travelling distance of Chesterfield. It would presumably also be possible to offer catering for museum and more especially theatre visitors, perhaps including sit-down meals (which neither the Pomegranate nor the Winding Wheel has space to do), in a quieter setting than the bars on the opposite side of the road. There would be some passing trade for a café from people walking up from the station and the lure of food and drink might get more visitors into the museum, which it badly needs. The house is also big enough to provide extra office and storage space for both the theatre and the museum.

#### **Vehicle access to the station**

- 13 We wish to draw attention to a problem concerning the present arrangements for vehicle access to the station and the opportunity this scheme provides to get rid of the problem. We greatly welcome the decision to build a new access road from Hollis Lane through the old goods yard to the station, connecting with Brewery Street/Malkin Street and Brimington Road. Our view is that once this is built the lower section of Crow Lane (between the junction with Piccadilly Road and the station) could be closed to vehicles without any detriment to traffic flow and with considerable benefits to local residents. The county council has already closed (temporarily, but we believe that there would be widespread support for making the closure permanent) Crow Lane from the golf course entrance to Dobbin Clough Farm, and we would like to see both sections of Crow Lane closed as a motor road.
- 14 Crow Lane between Piccadilly Road and the station is a modern creation of c.1920. There was previously a footpath from the station which passed under the railway to give access to a cornmill on the Rother to the east of the line. Until shortly after the First World War Crow Lane ran on a different alignment from near the present golf course entrance, passing to the north of the adjoining bungalows and of Tapton Terrace, ending in a junction with Brimington Road near the northern end of the terrace. The original railway

bridge of 1840 over the Rother and the modern line of Crow Lane was joined by another when the Midland main line was widened, creating the present unsatisfactory layout, with poor headroom and a reverse bend, which requires light-controlled single-line working. The road presumably cannot be lowered to provide more headroom because of the proximity of the river, and could only be straightened at enormous expense, since it would involve rebuilding two bridges.

- 15 The use of Crow Lane to drive to or from the station brings a great deal of traffic onto Piccadilly Road, for which it was not designed. The road is now lined by houses on the whole of its eastern side (and part of the western side), and many of the older properties lack off-street parking. Although the county council has introduced a new parking scheme for the road, the fact remains that safely negotiating Piccadilly Road in either direction requires more than usual care and a good deal of give and take by drivers. The difficulties are aggravated during the morning rush-hour at certain times of the year by a low sun. Apart from the growth of traffic to and from the station, the road has carried a much increased load following the building of the Riverside Estate in the 1990s, since Wain Avenue, the main spine road through the estate, begins and ends in junctions at either end of Piccadilly Road. The junction at the southern end, near the traffic lights controlling the junction with Hollis Lane, Hady Hill and Spital Lane, becomes very congested during the morning peak.
- 16 For all these negative reasons, combined with the positive reason that a new road is to be built to the station, specifically designed for heavy motor traffic, with no frontagers or parked vehicles to get in the way, we believe that the lower section of Crow Lane could and should be closed to all motor traffic (including taxis). It could remain a pedestrian and cycling route to the station. Everything which the Piccadilly Road–Crow Lane route does at present could be done much better by the new link road and there would be a huge gain in amenity for residents of Piccadilly Road and the Riverside Estate. Piccadilly Road and a short section of Crow Lane would obviously remain open to give access to Rose Cottage, the nearby bungalows and the golf course, but above the golf course entrance we believe that it should also be closed

permanently to motor traffic. This stretch is narrow and is flanked by high banks on both sides. No frontagers would be significantly inconvenienced if this section was closed, since from the top of the hill Crow Lane is wider and flatter, and provides a better route out through Brimington Common.

- 17 We do not believe that the plan for the station would suffer in any way by the closure of Crow Lane, and indeed traffic flows along Brimington Road would presumably be improved by the removal of the junction with Crow Lane. The layout proposed for the station forecourt would not require redesign to accommodate the closure, and there would be no adverse effect on the proposal for a riverside walk on the left bank the Rother from near the railway bridge. The existing bridge over the Rother near the southern end of Tapton Terrace could also be closed to vehicles, since there is easier access to Tapton Terrace and the back entrance to Rose Cottage from the existing turning off Brimington Road near Tapton Bridge (which could presumably be improved). We hope that sympathetic consideration will be given to this idea.

### **Conclusion**

- 18 Apart from these suggestions, we are very happy to support the Masterplan for the station and especially cheered by the repeated assurances by the Borough Council that funding for the project has been secured irrespective of what the Government finally decides concerning the eastern leg of HS2. Even if the line is not built, Chesterfield badly needs a new approach to the station, as it did in 1870, and we believe that this scheme is the best that could be achieved, given the constraints presented by the railway itself and the Inner Relief Road, which already compete with the river for space in the valley floor at this point. We hope that it goes ahead as soon as possible.

2 March 2021