

# ***LOWDHAM PARISH COUNCIL***

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## **Feedback relating to Proposals to Upgrade Lowdham Roundabout held on 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2019**

### **1. Document Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to provide details of the feedback that has been received from both parishioners and other local residents who would be impacted by the roundabout proposal. This information will be discussed by Lowdham Parish Council and provide a focus for developing the response the Parish Council submits to VIA.

### **2. Document Structure**

This document is split into sections as follows:

- Summary of Key Feedback Comments – section 3
- Methodology - section 4
- Consultation concerns – section 5
- Feedback in more detail - section 6
- Suggestions made by respondents – section 7
- Number of respondents raising similar concerns or making similar suggestions - Appendix A

### **3. Summary of Key Feedback Comments**

(Further information is available in the 'Feedback in more detail section 6')

102 feedback forms have been received. Of these 8 were on behalf of multiple respondents. In addition, a petition has been received from 26 residents of Lime Tree Gardens of which 22 have not responded individually. Therefore, the total number of respondents is 132 and the overall view expressed is as follows:

10 are in favour of the VIA proposal (7.8%)  
9 have a neutral view of the proposals (7.0%)  
110 are opposed to the proposals (85.2%)

3 respondents provided suggestions but expressed no overall view.

From an initial analysis of the feedback forms the reasons for opposition fall into two main categories. Firstly, a belief that the proposal will not provide tangible, sustainable, cost effective improvement and secondly concerns relating to the environmental impact on the village.

With regard to the proposed changes to the roundabout layout itself 56% of respondents see little or no benefit until the constraints of Gunthorpe Bridge have been addressed. Further comments relating to the constraints on the single carriageway between Lowdham and the A46 and the need for a new river crossing were made. The comments restate and re-emphasise the real need for a

strategic solution beyond Lowdham roundabout. Until such time as this has been done, and a coherent plan adopted, the sum of comments received demonstrates a local belief that the proposed investment on Lowdham roundabout will be ineffective.

With regard to environmental issues 54% of respondents are opposed to the loss of playing field land and its impact on the cricket pitch. While 53% expressed concern at the loss of trees both from an environmental and aesthetic viewpoint and 47% expressed concern that the capacity of the flood lagoon would be reduced. Comments were also received expressing concern at the damage to the character of the village and an increase in noise pollution.

One significant development emerging from the consultation process is a suggestion by two of the home owners on Nottingham Rd of the possibility that the owners of 15 -21 Nottingham Rd would be willing to discuss selling their properties to NCC / VIA. This would allow the positioning of any upgraded roundabout to be reconsidered offering a possibility that the land take from the playing fields could be minimised or indeed avoided. VIA has informally agreed to consider this scenario.

The feedback forms also contain a number of suggestions, the most popular of which, mentioned by 15% of respondents, was to replace or enhance the existing roundabout with a traffic signal-controlled system.

#### **4. Methodology**

The Parish Council produced a feedback questionnaire that was distributed at the two consultation sessions and also posted onto the Parish Council Website. This report incorporates the feedback forms and also a number of e-mails that have been received.

Details related to the consultation were also posted on the Parish Facebook page. The comments made on Facebook have not been included in this summary, in part to avoid double counting because a number of people who have posted comments have also completed a feedback form. It should be noted however that the general nature of the comments on Facebook object to the VIA proposal.

With respect to the questionnaire, all respondents were asked to indicate whether they were in favour, opposed or had a neutral stance on the proposals. This is to simply provide a high-level view of the general feelings of respondents. The feedback then sought to understand the reasons for the response and look to solicit any suggestions there may be.

The analysis of the responses has sought to identify both the concerns and suggestions that have arisen most often.

#### **5. Consultation Concerns**

Before moving on to consider the feedback, it should be noted that a number of concerns have been raised by parishioners relating to the conduct of the consultation.

A significant number of parishioners have indicated that they did not receive a leaflet advertising the consultations that was supposed to have been delivered by VIA, as a result they did not have the opportunity to attend the consultation events.

The timing of the consultations at the start of the summer holidays and only a few days apart has been criticised as people who would have wished to attend could not due to being on holiday.

The short timescale between the last consultation on 3 August and the closure of the consultation on 9 August has left little time for people to respond in detail to VIA. However, on 5 August it was noted that the VIA website now has an amended closing date for the consultation which is 6 September.

There was an expectation that the information provided by VIA would be more detailed and demonstrate their business case, an analysis of projected traffic volumes, traffic flow modelling and environmental impact in support of their proposal. This information was not available and therefore limited the opportunity for parishioners to comment and cast doubt on the depth of analysis the proposal is based on.

In addition, the consultation has not provided information with regard to completing a Health Impact Assessment. The proposals have not demonstrated any consideration of health economic impact, the loss of green space, loss of physical activity facilities and the increase in both noise and air pollution, that are known to have a detrimental impact on the quality of life and contribute to poorer health outcomes.

Given that the Environment Agency has been forced to undertake substantial economic modelling regarding the flood scheme over a period of 12 years, and been required to produce a range of impact assessments, the question has to be asked as to why the roundabout proposals do not seem to have to comply with the same level of scrutiny.

## **6. Feedback in more detail**

An analysis of the number of respondents making similar comments is shown in appendix A.

### Comments in favour of the proposals

In the main, the respondents who were in favour of the proposal took the view that any improvements would be welcome. It is worth noting however that while approving of the proposal concerns were still raised in this group relating to the impact of the proposals on the village, the limitation of the single carriage way between Lowdham and Gunthorpe and the constraints of Gunthorpe Bridge. The concerns and suggestions noted have been added into the narrative later in this document as there is a degree of commonality in this respect regardless of whether respondents were in favour, neutral or against the proposals.

### Comments that were neutral relating to the proposals

These comments were similar to the responses in favour. While this group of respondents welcomed elements of the proposals concerns were again expressed about the impact on the village and constraints relating to Gunthorpe Bridge.

A number of respondents (whether they were in favour, neutral or opposed to the proposals) commented on the proposal to provide a toucan crossing and the proposal relating to the speed limits. With regard to the toucan crossing, the majority of comments were supportive citing the fact that young school children cross at the roundabout regularly. A minority of comments expressed concerns that the toucan crossing could result in road traffic accidents on the roundabout due to traffic build up. Several suggestions were made that a bridge would be a safer option.

With regard to the suggestion on speed limit reductions there were a small number of comments, the majority of which were in favour, particularly relating to the 30mph proposal at the roundabout itself. There were comments that the current 40mph limit between Lowdham and Gunthorpe should be raised back to 50 mph to improve the exit from the Lowdham roundabout. While this may ease congestion at Lowdham it would however be likely increase the queueing at Gunthorpe Bridge.

#### Comments that were opposed to the proposals

Respondents who oppose the proposal provided a number of reasons that broadly fit into four high level categories as follows:

- That the proposal fails to demonstrate it will deliver any significant benefits at the junction and as such the £4.5 million cost is a wasted investment that will result in unnecessary disruption for an extended period to deliver no tangible improvement.
- That the proposal as currently shown will fail to deliver any real improvement to the A612 traffic through the roundabout in either direction. In particular it also appears to take little account of the fact that the volume of traffic travelling through the junction along the A6097 is a limiting factor. In addition, the view was expressed that increase in traffic, likely as a result of the proposal, would exceed the increase in capacity it may provide.
- That any attempts to improve traffic flow at Lowdham roundabout are severely limited by the constraints of the single carriageway A6097 towards Gunthorpe, the limitation introduced by Gunthorpe Bridge, the delays experienced at the traffic light-controlled junction for East Bridgford and Newton and the delays, particularly towards Lowdham, at the A46 roundabout. During the consultations VIA indicated that NCC has recently requested them to investigate whether some improvements could be introduced, as a separate project at Gunthorpe Bridge. At this early stage it appears any improvements would be minor in nature and in all probability any benefit would simply push the congestion problems elsewhere. In their feedback respondents reiterated comments that have been made many times over the past 20 years that the problem will only be fixed when a strategic decision is taken to deliver a further river crossing between Gunthorpe Bridge and Lady Bay Bridge.
- That the proposal will result in unacceptable environmental destruction, increased noise for residents living near the road and a loss of village identity and amenities. The current plan requires the annexation of a proportion of the playing fields, specifically part of the cricket playing area. There are some major consequences in respect of this loss of land as follows:
  - A significant loss of trees currently in their prime, with no space available for replanting of replacements in the vicinity without encroaching onto the cricket pitch. This not only impacts the contribution the trees currently make to the environment but will also devastate the rural ambiance that they support.
  - Unless measures are engineered in to the VIA proposal, the movement of the flood retaining wall will reduce the capacity of the flood lagoon which is viewed with alarm given that the Environment Agency has only recently advised that the current flood prevention measures cannot be delivered. At the consultation the VIA project manager did recognise that any reduction in lagoon capacity would need to be addressed, with additional storage provided elsewhere, potentially under any new roundabout.
  - The loss of the playing field will certainly reduce the cricket pitch playing area and it is thought highly likely that once all landscaping has been taken into account that the remain playing field area may be too small to comply with E&WCB standards.

Even if the playing area were to be compliant who would want to play next to a dual carriageway with no or limited natural screening?

In addition to the above grounds of objection the following observations indicating adverse impacts have also been made:

If the stretch of Nottingham Road near the war memorial becomes a cul de sac there will be a significant impact of traffic turning out of Station Rd. onto the A612 and traffic turning right off the A612 onto Station Rd. This will impact traffic flow along the A612 and impede traffic attempting to exit Main St. to both the left and right.

If the current proposals are adopted the 4 houses on the left-hand Nottingham Rd. on the Burton Joyce side of the roundabout (numbers 15-21) will lose direct access onto the A612 from their driveways and have to access it via a newly built access road. Representations have been received outlining the problems and constraints this will introduce for the householders and general road users.

The proposals require NCC to acquire some of the agricultural land at the roundabout to accommodate the increased size of the roundabout obviously this is a private matter between NCC and the land owner. Several respondents have commented that they believe the loss of agricultural land will have an adverse impact on the village and could open up the land to housing development putting further strain on the amenities and infrastructure of the village. A smaller number of respondents took a different view and questioned whether it would be possible for any proposal to acquire more of the agricultural land so that a slightly relocated island would require less or none of the playing field area.

## **7. Suggestions and observations made by respondents**

The most significant development concerns the owners of 15-21 Nottingham Rd. Two of the householders indicated at the consultation that they would consider selling their properties to NCC and that the other 2 householders were probably of a similar mind. If this were to happen VIA would have the opportunity to consider remodelling the roundabout to either minimise or avoid the need to acquire the playing field with all that consequences that has. VIA has verbally indicated at the consultation that this option will be considered.

Several respondents also suggested or queried whether the diameter of the centre of the roundabout could be reduced thus increasing the road width without major upheaval.

Several respondents suggested that traffic lights either in conjunction with the current roundabout, or separate to it, could provide a solution and additionally it was suggested that peak time only traffic lighting could be introduced to reflect the fact that the roundabout is not congested permanently.

Several respondents also commented on the fact that the buses that stop on the A612 are also responsible for increasing queuing traffic particularly when the bus stands for an extended period due to the war memorial stops being a timing point. The question has been raised as to whether anything can be done, either within a roundabout proposal or separate to it, to reduce the adverse impact of buses blocking the carriageway.

As mentioned earlier in this paper there were several comments that the strategic solution to the current and future issues is a new bridge over the river.

There was one suggestion that the roundabout is replaced by a flyover.

## Appendix A

### Concerns and Suggestions raised by multiple respondents

Concerns	Number
The proposals will not solve the problem, there is nothing wrong, it will cost too much, provide no real benefit and cause unnecessary disruption	38
The proposals will not be effective unless improvements are made at Gunthorpe Bridge	57
The proposals will not be effective while the road between Lowdham and A46 remains single carriageway	18
Loss of playing field land and impact on cricket pitch	55
Loss of Trees	54
Reduction in flood lagoon and increased flood risk	48
Detriment and destruction of village character	14
Lack of environmental assessment	6
Loss of agricultural land	5
Noise pollution	7
Congestion at Station Rd/A612 junction caused by creation of cul-de-sac	6
Congestion created by buses with suggestions to address	7
Comments in favour of toucan crossing / suggested increase	11
Comments against toucan crossing	4
Comments in favour of speed limit reduction	6
Comments against speed limit reduction	3
<b>Suggestions</b>	
Introduce a traffic light/ signals solution	15
A new bridge across the Trent is needed	11
Make the roundabout island smaller	4
Use improved traffic marking and signage to avoid the proposed work	4
Footbridges instead of Toucan Crossings	3
Retain Nottingham Rd service Rd. make it one way and have bus shelter toward Nottingham on that road	2
Flyover	1
Make Main St one way	1
Purchase more agricultural land and re-site the roundabout	2