

20th December 2019

Councillor Izzi Seccombe
Leader
Warwickshire County Council



By email only to: cllrmsseccombe@warwickshire.gov.uk

Dear Izzi,

CHIPPING NORTON HGV DIVERSION

I am writing to you to seek your help, through initiation of a dialogue, on an important Highways issue that affects us all. I refer to the emerging Oxfordshire proposal to divert heavy A44 traffic, currently passing through Chipping Norton off the A44, onto a minor Warwickshire road. While this might be seen as a simple solution to the very difficult problems of congestion and air quality in Chipping Norton, it appears to be significantly to the detriment of the special qualities of the AONB, and to the Scheduled Ancient Monument at the Rollright Stones, as well as posing potential asset, verge and ditch deterioration, road safety and other concerns for locals.

The issue arises from Chipping Norton Town Council needing to address their challenging congestion and air quality problems, resulting from the A44 passing through the very narrow and tortuous town centre, which I understand has led the Oxfordshire Council Cabinet Member for Transport to simply assert that Oxfordshire will block through traffic for HGVs.

I understand there is an occasional diversion route around Chipping Norton town centre (when closed for the annual Fair) by diverting north up the A3400 then west at the Oxfordshire / Warwickshire county boundary onto a minor (C115 Warwickshire) road, transecting the Rollright Stones site, and re-joining the A44 at the Greedy Goose pub. This route works adequately when needed for a couple of days at a time, however it is in no way a sustainable or appropriate long term solution. I understand the necessary upgrading of this route has previously (2016) been demonstrated to be damaging to heritage, landscape, and tranquillity and it would be uneconomic. I also understand it is also contrary to Oxfordshire's Local Transport Plan Goal 1.

The Cotswold Conservation Board, the Long Compton Parish Council, and the Trust responsible for the Rollright Stones are all concerned. This proposal has the appearance of being a solution to the difficult traffic problems which Chipping Norton faces, but I note the significant adverse reaction which is never helpful to the identification of a sustainable solution.

I would be grateful if you could let me know what steps the Warwickshire Councils are taking on this issue, what your formal response will be to Oxfordshire's proposal.

Conserving, enhancing, understanding and enjoying the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

We have asked Ian Hudspeth what formal consultation process will follow, so that I can reassure my stakeholders about the process and we can more formally feed into any consultation in view of the potential impact.

I am sure you will agree a joint dialogue on this issue is imperative as soon as possible.

My continued support for your sound leadership at the LGA.

Best wishes for the Christmas season to both you and Philip.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Liz Eyre". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Elizabeth Eyre

Chairman of the Cotswolds Conservation Board