

To:- Mr Mike Wasley
Principal Officer - Traffic Schemes
Oxfordshire County Council

Dear Mr Wasley,

I write on behalf of Woodstock Town Council to seek urgent action by Oxfordshire County Council as the county's Highways Authority to address the grave public safety threat posed by the section of the A44 running through this town in the vicinity of the Black Prince public house. This canyon, in the judgement of the Town Council, represents a major disaster involving multiple pedestrian fatalities waiting to happen; and suitable mitigating action can no longer be responsibly postponed. It will, the Council considers, only require one HGV to lose full control for the pedestrians who are obliged to use the narrow pavement, barely wider than a pram or push-chair, for mothers with small children to be killed. There have recently been multiple close shaves reported by residents.

The Council acknowledges that this danger spot has long existed and has developed its growing threat to pedestrians in consequence of the increasing weight of traffic, which can now only be expected to increase markedly as new development along the A44 in and well beyond Woodstock go ahead.

The Council further acknowledges that reconstructing the buildings on the A44 in the 'canyon' is unlikely to be a practical option and likewise a by-pass. The council understands, from discussion this month with Blenheim, that they have recently explored with consultants the creation of off-highway pedestrian routes by-passing the danger area on the A44. In the Council's judgement pedestrian walkways through both Blenheim park, south-west of the 444, and through the water meadows, owned by the Council, are needed in order to provide pedestrian access from Old Woodstock to both the Town Centre and the schools in Shipton Road. These will need to be metalled, lit and fenced so that they can safely be used by school-children in winter months and by cyclists. Old Woodstock residents have recently urged the town council, not for the first time, to take urgent action to protect them against this real and present danger.

The Council is encouraged to have seen an email of 9 July from County Councillor Ian Hudspeth endorsing this need in the following terms, "we need a safe off-road path so that residents and pupils ... can easily walk or cycle to the centre or school". He adds that "this funding will have to come from the developers," but the Town Council utterly rejects this

suggestion because it is not the developments which have generated this necessity. Indeed, highway safety is an imperative and unconditional duty of the Highways Authority and cannot be traded against or queued with other merely desirable services and amenities. If and when the foreseeable disaster occurs in the A44 canyon it will not serve, in this Council's opinion, to plead that the necessary action was delayed by arguments over funding the needed walkways.

We ask that you arrange an early meeting with the Town Council and Blenheim, not later than 12 September, to discuss ways and means of mitigating this unacceptable threat to the safety of Woodstock residents.

Thank you for your email dated 10 July advising that a safety survey of the A44 in Woodstock is being undertaken by Tony Kirkwood and additionally the levels of HGVs will be monitored during the duration of the Experimental Weight Limit period. We understand that his draft findings will be available by the end of the month.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Roger File at Blenheim and to County Councillor Ian Hudspeth at Bladon.

Yours sincerely,

Janine Saxton, Town Clerk