

As a resident of Cowley I must refute NH's assertion that they have adequately and appropriately consulted and informed the community most affected by Option 30. The claim that scale was the reason why Cowley was omitted on maps presented at consultation seems spurious. I imagine that providing maps of varying scale to give complete information is not beyond NH. The omission instead implies a map led scheme in a distant office which conveniently ignored the effects on the nearest village. I note there is no explanation given by NH for the complete lack of first-hand knowledge of the locality or roads and consequently the impact that the scheme would have on this irreplaceable area and its inhabitants. Any inclusion of Cowley in assessments, such as noise, was only done belatedly after pressure from residents and their cursory nature has given little confidence that they portray an accurate picture of the likely effects - and in fact noise statistics were only distributed to the village after consultation had finished. None of this augers well for the future despite NH's promises of community liaison and I note that the Joint Councils have similar misgivings (8.13 / 1.1.19)

NH implies that there was no suitable venue for a consultation in Cowley. There is not only a large hotel in the village but Girl Guide County headquarters which has a large hall and adjacent car park. There was at the time a large function room attached to The Green Dragon Pub. Any of these venues would have served the purpose well and made it possible for more villagers, especially the elderly, to attend and be made more aware of the effect that Option 30 would have on the village. Why was there not a greater effort to keep Cowley informed?

Whilst acknowledging the difficulties caused by the pandemic I feel that NH has painted a rather disingenuous picture of its efforts during the third consultation. Many elderly residents find digital communication difficult and shielding meant normal lines of support and communication were denied them. The tally of 15 call backs, for example, is not quite what it seems given that 3 and probably 4 of those were to our own household - not quite as wide a spread as it would appear. I would also like to ask the ExA to investigate NH's projection of the huge percentage increase of traffic in Cowley both during and after construction. In this scheme whose aim was to decrease rat running through "in roads not designed to accommodate the level of traffic experienced" (NH's words!) this seems an appalling admission of failure. Could the ExA discover where this traffic is coming from? If it is from the Shab hill or Birdlip junction then these plans have never been submitted for consultation as there were several routes under consideration. Additionally, the road that NH identifies as carrying this increase, Cowley Lane, is a single-track road with no passing places, steep, in a frost pocket so dangerously icy in winter and a torrent of water in heavy rain; this can be evidenced by the wide drainage ditches dug to prevent flooding as it enters the village. It is totally unsuited to any increase in traffic. At the moment it is popular with dog walkers, hikers, cyclists and horse riders who are a common sight. It also borders the open fields that CDC have identified as being part of the historic character of Cowley whose nature will be changed by a substantial increase in traffic.

This scheme is not just a new road to solve a traffic problem but a grandiose, expensive, land hungry and over complicated response which needs to be re thought.