

Meeting Notes (taken by a resident)

Discussion regarding Broken Cross Traffic Lights Scheme undertaken by Bellway & Huyton Asphalt Civils. (There was some overlap with the plans for housing in the area).

Date: 2 September 2022: 17.00 – 18.00

Venue: Macclesfield Town Hall

Speakers from Cheshire East and developers:

Tom Moody, Cheshire East Transport Director (TM)

Jon Peasant, Director, Bellway Homes (JP)

David Malcolm, Head of Planning (DM)

Paul Hurdus, Highways Development Manager (PH)

Simon Wallace. Network and Road

Safety manager at Cheshire East Highways (SW)

Others present: David Rutley MP (DR), Richard Slater, Henbury Parish Council (RS), Councillor Nick Mannion (NM) Councillor James Barber (JB), Residents and Business owners in Broken Cross and surrounds

TM – Introduced himself as Cheshire East Transport Director, introduced Jon Peasant, Director for Bellway Homes, Manchester.

JP referred to a rough coloured drawing (slide) of the Broken Cross area. Residents asked questions but there was some difficulty as JP was unsure of the roads. He mentioned pedestrian access changes and kerb realignment but did not have any drawings or artist impressions of what would be done.

(resident) asked what would happen regarding traffic coming out of Tesco, but JP unable to comment.

(resident) asked where were the final plans for the roundabout, JP unable to answer.

(resident) told attendees about the history of Broken Cross junction, how residents asked for traffic lights (70s?), then the Council told them it believed the best solution for better flow would be a roundabout. It makes no sense that they are now saying lights are better.

JP introduced but did not finish showing the phases of the roundabout and housing project. One resident commented that it was difficult to understand the drawings, the writing on them was small and roads were not marked.

(resident) Who was it in the council who gave permission for all this to go ahead. There was no response.

(resident) I live where the traffic queues are constant, drivers are sitting looking into my home, it's like living in a goldfish bowl. Previously this didn't happen. Also, people in the businesses have found their takings have been badly affected as people can't stop anywhere to pick up goods and are avoiding the area due to the traffic jams caused by the contractors.

JP did not respond to this.

RS said no-one affected by them had been given any of these plans. There's been a lack of consultation before work began.

NM referred to the air pollution factors now there is more congestion due to vehicles queueing at lights. Asked if there was any evidence that the traffic improvements would improve the already unacceptable air quality. Broken Cross is an AQMA (Air Quality Management Area) due to concern after levels were found to be harmful following figures collected 2014 – 2016. JP could not respond as this had not been monitored by them.

RS asked why this had been rushed through like this with none of the required safeguards or research. Gave the example of other congested areas in Macclesfield where roundabouts had replaced traffic lights to cure the problem (Fieldbank Road/Chester Road), so it seemed to make no sense that traffic lights have been selected as the solution here, and given the congestion already illustrated when they were in operation at Broken Cross in July.

TM said will provide a generic email for questions and there will be a Q & A session after the other speakers had spoken.

Residents started asking questions all together.

DR said the information from Bellway/the Council has lacked context and the communications have been poor, hence the anger from residents. Preparatory works for Broken Cross had begun before residents had been given the opportunity to ask questions or get much needed answers. There has been a woeful lack of communication. For instance, what will it look like, how can it make the air quality better when the opposite seems the case, and where are the plans and proof this will be a better solution?

TM said perhaps the presentation should cease seeing as people continued to interrupt and comment.

David Malcolm Head of Planning took the floor and said all this was approved in 2019, the discussion was stuck in the past and that was the end of the story.

He claimed there was an Open Meeting to discuss the planning applications. Residents said no-one had told them there was one to attend. Communication of this had not happened.

DM showed a slide with the planning application numbers on but did not show anything further for minutes of that meeting or outline what they included. He mentioned a condition 6 removal (for the roundabout?) but did not clarify what that was as there were too many questions being asked and anger from the residents. (numbers – 17/4034M, 17/4277M, 18/0294M)

DM repeated, plans were approved, no point in protesting about what is past. That residents had their chance. It was mentioned that housing plans such as Bellway's are part of the Government's 'Levelling Up' plans so it would be pointless to oppose this. He did not elaborate on this.

DR asked where are these plans?

RS asked if the plans which they said would be subject to changes at the discretion of Bellway might be changed again. This seems complicated as there are a number of developments whose needs may change.

DR said we need the context clearing. He spoke of Jones Homes who have said they are waiting for the changes but are unable to begin until those are completed.

JB (councillor) said this was all new to people as there had been no communication. He mentioned the data for all this was sourced during Covid conditions so was flawed. How can anything that can tweak this flawed solution make it better?

TM said that lessons would be learnt for the future.

(resident) When was this S278 signed and published? If not why isn't it in the public domain (in line with legal transparency). Where or when is this going to be published?

PH took the floor - This was signed in early 2022.

TM said there is no legal obligation for this to be shown to the public but that they would, but did not provide details as to how or when that would be done.

(resident) Following these 'improvements' the traffic is terrible, it is causing environmental destruction (air quality) and is causing distress and chaos. They do not seem to be working at all as the traffic queues, which did not happen previously, are often stretching back to Henbury and even happening in evenings and normally quiet times.

SW Introduced himself as Network Manager for Cheshire East.

To answer the last point, he said he had monitored the lights earlier in the afternoon and adjusted them better.

(resident) the traffic jams are still happening though.– it is not just about the chaos on the main roads, frustrated motorists are using the surrounding roads and speeding to make up for time spent in the queues.

(resident) Can I just ask you all – how would you all like to live with this?

(resident) Due to the queues it's taking too long to get out of our drives, and angry motorists are being abusive when you try to get in and out. This is every day, even at weekends and nights.

(resident) Why are there no proper drawings for the finished design?

PH changed to a slide of the crossroads with lines across the ends of the roads indicating where the traffic would be stopped.

(resident) Why do you think traffic lights are better? Surely they cause congestion and health issues due to fumes from static vehicles.

PH – the figures have not been published but there have been AQMA and signalling people involved in that and monitoring will happen over a twelve month period. If changes are needed it can be tweaked.

(resident) Don't they have reliable data for similar traffic areas?

(resident) there is still the danger to children, the speeding traffic diverted down Whirley Road is terrifying. You don't seem to understand. There will be accidents.

Laura Crane (vice-chair of the council's highways and transport committee) – I have children so I understand such concerns. But we don't have the power to do anything, the

S278 has been signed. If the contractors don't seem to be doing their job we could revoke the contract.

NM – We still have no assurances regarding the air quality due to the traffic queueing. Can those responsible provide any assurances the air quality will be better with traffic lights?

No response from the speakers to the question.

(resident) Traffic lights in this area will always be a problem and have been so in the past so will not improve the traffic flow or air quality when there is more traffic from the new housing.

(resident) when was the last traffic impact survey done? You have not presented that information here.

No response from the speakers.

DR – We need conclusions, action from Bellway and the Council. You need to address the problems for motorists and road issues. Air quality monitoring and modelling is needed immediately, and the public need structured assurances that things will improve.

TM – we really need to leave, security want to close up the building. You can send any further queries to the email address.

(resident) You said at the beginning you would provide this but didn't, can we have it?

TM found a slide giving the general email address for Cheshire East Customer Services.

Meeting concluded.