



Dear Councillors,

The Wiltshire Police and Crime Commissioner, Philip Wilkinson, was contacted by a resident of Marlborough Road, Brimble Hill, Wroughton (B005) who raised serious road safety concerns of a long-standing nature and asked for his assistance. He responded accordingly and has raised this matter with the Wiltshire and Swindon Road Safety Partnership.

This Partnership is the formal Road Safety Partnership for Swindon and Wiltshire. I have been appointed as Chair of the Delivery Group and the objective of this correspondence is to establish what action can be taken collaboratively to improve road safety in this location.

This report was requested and has been prepared on a goodwill basis as a working document to assist the community to collate serious road safety concerns raised by local residents. It is submitted to the Parish Council for their information and subsequent action as they see fit. The Wiltshire and Swindon Road Safety Partnership is not authorised and does not seek to make any recommendations, nor can any work be instructed or approved.

Resident's report:

The B005 Marlborough Road, Brimble Hill as a dangerously unsafe road in need of immediate remedial action. There have already been fatalities on this road, and it currently presents a foreseeable and avoidable on-going risk of further collisions, serious harm, or potential additional fatalities. Vulnerable road users particularly at risk and the likelihood of harm is reported as very high. In terms of priority for remedial action, the question is asked, "Is there currently a more unsafe road with a higher risk profile and likelihood of harm, anywhere else in Swindon?"

There are numerous photographs used in the report as examples and it must be noted that there are not isolated incidents. There are many more showing similar issues, damage and risks.

The following concerns are identified:

1. The road width isn't suitable for use by Large Goods Vehicles. (It has been measured as less than 5m wide in places).

This is a statement of fact. There was a fatal collision in 2002 and the police investigation carried out by PC Roger Blythin, a specialist collision investigator from the Serious Collision Investigation Team, Wiltshire Police, notes that the road width isn't sufficient for 2 LGV's to pass. **(Appendix 1 Report by PC Blythin)**

This issue currently remains, and it leads to vehicles still being unable to pass, queuing which was a factor in the fatal collision **(Appendix 1)**, or vehicles attempting to pass by mounting the pavement or verges. The latter is currently evident by the damage to the pavement, road furniture, kerbs, build outs, and drain covers, and by the numerous LGV tyre tracks and damage to verges.



Taken MARCH 2024



Taken MARCH 2024

Pedestrians have been injured by passing vehicles when walking on the pavement. The pavements are very narrow to such an extent 2 pedestrians are reported to have suffered serious shoulder injuries having been struck by passing vehicles, which had not mounted the pavement.



Taken March 2024. This vehicle is reported NOT to have struck a pedestrian but had collided wing mirrors with a vehicle travelling the opposite way. The photo is to show the projection of a wing mirror beyond the width of a vehicle onto the pavement. The projection is much further on an LGV.

The photo below of large machinery moving LGV was taken in March 2024.



2. The term vulnerable road users is intended to include the following groups:

- A. Pedestrians. Includes those with young children, those using prams or pushchairs, unescorted children, Runners, Leisure Walkers, Dog walkers...the list isn't exhaustive
- B. Wheelchair users (safe use is reported as being denied to this group)
- C. Mobility vehicle users (safe use is reported as being denied to this group)
- D. Cyclists
- E. Equestrian users (reported as unsafe to the point of safe use being denied)
- F. Delivery personnel (Newspapers, milk, postal/parcel workers etc)

3. The issue of LGV use is reported as greatly (but also avoidably) exacerbated because:-

- A. There is a significant volume of LGV traffic using it regularly as a short cut to and from the A4361 and the A345. The road is reported as clearly not fit for this purpose.
- B. Due to the nearby location of the DVSA LGV Test Centre, this road is reported as an inevitably popular, although unsuitable, route for LGV's driver training schools resulting in new and inexperienced LGV drivers trying to negotiate an area of high risk where 2 LGV's cannot pass. The use of the road for this purpose was noted by PC Blythin in the Police report investigating the fatal collision of 2002. The link to the dangers posed by LGV's queuing in the way that contributed to the fatal RTC is obvious.

(See photo below note also the obstruction of the ambulance, which would be worse for a much larger fire appliance)



- C. Recognition of the “challenge” of this road by LGV users is formally recognised by the DVSA in a letter to a resident in 2020. Whilst the DVSA welcome the “challenges presented to candidates” by this road from a VSA testing perspective, there is an acknowledgement that large vehicles cannot pass at a narrow part of this road, that LGV’s do use the pavement and that examiners “give advice.” The Parish Council are requested to take a view on this from a resident’s and vulnerable road users’ perspective who report this level of risk as unacceptable and ask for protection of their personal safety. An obvious statement of fact is LGV drivers won’t usually have an examiner sat next to them giving the required advice. The risk is exacerbated by the substantial increase in the provision of housing and associated occupancies.
- D. It is reported that permission was given to use the Wroughton Airfield site by companies such as Earthline and storage companies operating LGV’s. Access to this site by LGV’s, via Marlborough Road and Brimble Hill is reported as unnecessary because there are alternative access routes access and inappropriate because of the risk to road users. Permission for Earthline was rescinded and the question arises as to if it is now the case that future permissions involving the use of LGV’s should and will be denied?
- E. The route is reported as a route used by vehicles as a diversionary route in the event of the closure of the M4. This is not an official diversionary route. The road is reported as not fit for this purpose and such an outcome is suggested to be dangerous. Residents report they understand use of this road as a diversion route in the event of a road closure of the M4 has not been approved by the Police as a suitable route, nor would it be. The DVSA observe that alternative routes do exist to the test centre and state concerns that in the event of a closure of the motorway traffic use could potentially disrupt tests. Residents articulate they strongly feel their safety and that of their children on a daily basis is a far greater priority.

The danger to life and the likelihood of injury is reported as exacerbated by the pavements because they are considered as poorly maintained and dangerously narrow, not conforming to (and well below) the standard safe width of a pavement:

- A. The pavement has been measured at 51cms in places and the majority the pavements provided are of insufficient width to enable people to pass meaning someone has to step into the road.
- B. The pavements are so narrow users are at high risk of being struck by passing vehicles by means of wing mirrors or any other protrusion fixed or being carried and extending beyond the wheel width of the vehicle or trailers. Such incidents have already occurred.
- C. Parents cannot safely shield their children.
- D. It is reported that whilst there is no standard definition for pavement widths, the Disability Discrimination Act suggests pavement width should not be less than 1200mm? Wheelchair and Disabled carriage users cannot use the pavements and have no other option than to use the road.
- E. The pavements are reported to be in poor condition in terms of their maintenance, which itself appears to be continuously compromised by LGV's regularly using them illegally imposing loads for which they are not designed.
- F. The poor condition of the pavements is reported to make it unsafe for delivery personnel. The use of a sack truck for example would be foreseeably unsafe as the pavement is so uneven and in places has a camber towards the road. The same can be said of those who might be at risk of loss of balance or falls, particularly if using walking aids.
- G. Residents report near misses have already occurred. **(Appendix 3)**







It is reported as noticeable that when pedestrians are on the pavement in the photo below, driver response and behaviour means traffic usually deviates away from the kerb to the extent they cross the centre white line with the off side wheels. The issue of two vehicles attempting to pass (even non LGV) whilst the pavement is in use literally puts the pedestrian stood on the pavement in dangerously close proximity to the passing vehicle. This was something the report writer experienced personally in a near miss with a passing van. A collision with a wing mirror or anything being carried which adds width to the nearside of a vehicle, is very foreseeable. With a car, the height of the wing mirror would be about the same as head height for a child and the same can be said for the wing mirror of a van or LGV at the head height of an adult or young person. As already mentioned in point 1 above, 2 pedestrians have had shoulder injuries as a result of being struck by passing vehicles which had not mounted the pavement.



It should be noted that there are 2 new housing estates where access and egress is via this road. These being Bellway (Ridgeway Park) and Wanshot Close. This has significantly changed the demographic of the area and increased the risk as more young children and other vulnerable road users are present.

Summary

In order to effectively respond to residents' concerns, can written responses and timescales please be provided to the following questions.

1. To protect the safety and welfare of local residents and vulnerable road users, will the Parish Council support the road be closed for use by LGV's by means of a 3.5 tonne weight restriction being imposed. This is present elsewhere in Wroughton in similar circumstances. The suggestion that enforcement could possibly prove challenging in some circumstances should not deter this proposal as residents believe the majority of LGV Companies contractually insist their drivers conform to Road Traffic Law.

David Renard as a previous councillor and the leader of Swindon Borough Council is on record as agreeing with this proposal and it is disappointing to residents that their safety remains compromised because this has not yet been actioned. Such restrictions are present elsewhere in the village as shown in the photo below.



2. Will the Parish Council support a width restriction being imposed on vehicles using the road?

3. Will the Parish Council support the use of the road by LGV training companies being stopped? It is reported that the DVSA rationale declaring the route is desired because it is so challenging is completely unacceptable. The acknowledgement of the challenging environment placing vulnerable road users, families and children at foreseeable risk with an outcome of serious harm or death should result in the practice being stopped. Actions 1 and 2 would enable this and there is an alternative and safer route to the DVSA test centre already exists.

4. Can the 30mph sign be moved at least 600m further up the hill and prior to the start of the hill decent? **(See photo below for location)** Residents report it makes little sense enabling LGV's (or any vehicle) to travel down this steep hill at 50mph (since the April 2015 road speed increase for LGV's) only to be met with the need to brake heavily and reduce speed to 30mph. This has a detrimental environmental impact and increases wear and maintenance of the road surface.

..



5. Will the Parish Council request and support a reduction to 20mph at the speed limit currently set at 30mph as it is elsewhere in the village? Residents report it makes no sense for a 30mph speed limit to be present in view of the risk and a limit of 20mph is consistent with risks such as schools. It sends a message of caution required.

6. Will Swindon Council agree to reset to 20mph and in any case relocate the speed indicator device from its current position to the existing 30mph speed limit sign visible when entering the village from down the hill, to assist in reducing speeds earlier and access the associated environmental benefits of noise reduction and reduced wear on the road surface caused by hard braking.

7. In view of the excessive use of the road and abuse of the verges and pavements by LGV's will the Parish Council agree to support a request for them to be resurfaced and the frequency of maintenance be increased? Residents suggest the need for this and could be reduced and associated cost savings made if the use by LGV's was removed.

8. Many of the drains are blocked or damaged. Will the Parish Council support a request for them to be cleared and repaired and the frequency of maintenance be increased? Residents suggest the need for this and could be reduced and associated cost savings made if the use by LGV's was removed.



9. Many of the road markings have been eroded by excessive use of the road by LGV's. Will the Parish Council support a request for them to be renewed and the maintenance frequency be increased? Residents suggest the need for this and could be reduced and associated cost savings made if the use by LGV's was removed.

10. Will the Parish Council give an undertaking that they will not support any requests for the use of the hangars by Companies using LGV's or if it is in exceptional unforeseen circumstances, then access is only to be via the A4361?

11. Will the parish council request that Swindon Borough Council reviews the effectiveness of the traffic signs, which are generally so dirty they can be difficult to read, particularly at night. The parish council request that Swindon Borough Council implements a maintenance schedule to ensure traffic signs on this road (the B4005) (and also on the A4361) are cleaned regularly to ensure they are easy to read and therefore effective as warnings to all road users to ensure they are safe from potential driving hazards & situations. Residents suggest the need for this and could be reduced and associated cost savings made if the use by LGV's was removed.

12. Will the Parish Council ask Swindon Borough Council to advise residents of all road safety improvements which have been considered. What has been discounted and why and which can be implemented and when?

13. Is it possible that consideration could be given to making the route one way for LGV's? Is this achievable technically and legally? The Police can be approached for enforcement methodology and the use of "Op Snap" or similar might be worthy of consideration. As an example the use of the link below to upload any moving footage as long as they have the weight restriction sign in the footage <https://nextbase.co.uk/national-dash-cam-safety-portal/> may be considered.

Conclusion

Does Swindon Borough Council agree with residents that this road presents such a serious level of risk and potential for serious harm that it is currently not safe for vulnerable road users and that further improvements are necessary and urgently need to be planned and implemented? Is there perhaps a current risk assessment of any kind in place to suggest otherwise?

It is recognised by residents that funding is a big issue for Swindon Borough Council but feel this doesn't negate the need for a duty of care. Improvements such as the moving of the speed limit, the reduction in speed limits, weight restrictions, width restrictions, painting of road markings, are all believed to examples of measures which are achievable at low cost but can bring enormous benefit and safety improvements.

To enable feedback to residents and assist with future discussions or representations as appropriate, in replying to these questions would Swindon Borough Council please advise who has made these decisions and on what authority. If the decision is made at committee level, then please advise the names, responsibility and authority of those comprising the committee and making the decision.

Appendix 1

P.C. Roger Blythins report (**Redacted**)

Appendix 2

----- Original message -----

From: "Public.Liaison" <Public.Liaison@dvsa.gov.uk>

Date: 30/07/2020 09:04 (GMT+00:00)

To: Reacted

Cc: Redacted

Subject: Our ref: 2007/00978

Driver and Vehicle T 0300 200 1122
Standards Agency F 0300 200 1155
PO Box 349 www.gov.uk/dvsa
NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE
NE12 2GN

29 July 2020

Our ref: 2007/00978

Dear "**Redacted**"

Thank you for your email of 20 July about using the B4005 Marlborough on test routes.

I appreciate your concerns and have raised them with the local driving test manager, Sean Donovan.

This road is used on several test routes from the Swindon LGV site, and taking the road off the test route would leave the site with only one exit (towards the M4). This would impact tests as if there is a holdup on the motorway junction, tests would not be able to proceed. Along with this, it would compromise the validity of the test as the learner drivers wouldn't experience B roads of this nature until they are driving alone, which I'm sure you'll agree would not be safe.

Sean has searched through all the past incident reports and was unable to find any for the section of road you are concerned about. He states that there is only a small section of the road that narrows and if learners encounter another large vehicle here then the examiner gives guidance on how to safely pass. This is possibly where mounting the pavement has been mentioned; although this doesn't frequently occur, it can happen.

This road has been approved as suitable for testing large vehicles. Supervisors from both quality control & assurance checks have accompanied examiners along this road several times over the years with no concerns raised. Sean regularly supervises tests and has witnessed candidates passing large vehicles. He states that this has all been carried out at low speed and safely by both drivers.

Any road can pose a risk if a driver doesn't plan or respect the risks involved when assessing hazards along the route. This part of the B4005 has a maximum speed limit of 30mph, due to the road width, bend, and parked cars near to the roundabout. Candidates on their test travel around this section well below the speed limit which also lowers any risk element.

Sean has looked through all the available information and sees no reason to stop using the road for vocational tests. Test routes are designed to be meaningful and have challenges on the way; this is so candidates are well prepared for any road conditions they may encounter when driving alone.

However, he does take on board your concerns that a small section of the road is too narrow for two large vehicles to meet. To overcome this, he is going to speak to his examiners to reaffirm to them the importance of giving guidance in this area.

Yours sincerely

Jodie O'Dell

Corporate Reputation

customerservices@dvsa.gov.uk

Appendix 3 – Near Miss.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: BUCKLAND, Robert

Sent: Thursday, 27 August 2020, 14:35:38 BST

Subject: RE: RAF Airfield Wroughton

Dear **Redacted**,

I share your concerns about this issue and sent in my own objections to the retrospective planning applications by Earthline on behalf of local residents. I have copy pasted the most recent update I have from SBC below. Following this, I will continue to push SBC to take further action regarding this matter.

Yours,
Robert

Earthline, Hangar L6 Wroughton.

Further to previous correspondence I can let you know that last week the Certificate of Lawful Use application for these premises was refused. Subsequently the other applications for the office and the vehicle depot have been withdrawn by the applicant. This means that enforcement action can be taken by the Planning Enforcement team.

-----Original Message-----

From: **Redacted**

Sent: 27 August 2020 13:11

To: BUCKLAND, Robert

Subject: RAF Airfield Wroughton

Dear Mr Buckland,

I am a resident of Alexandra Park and concerned at the very large number of HGV lorries, especially Earthline and DVLA, using the old RAF site by the Science Museum. It is especially worrying with current lockdown rules as of course more children are walking and cycling in this beautiful part of the countryside. Whilst out walking my dog I have witnessed many near misses when youngsters have been walking and cycling even though the smaller children are with their parents. I believe the developer contributed to the pavement joining the footpath to walk into the village which I use every day and am very grateful for. However, last week at Brimble Hill by the bend the path is very narrow and a man walking with a pushchair stepping off the pavement caught the front wheel in the grid of the drain and the pushchair tipped forward. The little girl was strapped in but still fell forward into the road. Amazingly nothing was coming down the hill but it was a very scary moment. The path is not wide enough for a child walking with a mother and a pushchair or indeed a disabled person's wheelchair. I too have had several near misses when I slipped on mud or leaves and the dog although on a lead jumped into the road. I spoke to a lady who was actually hit by the wing mirror of the DVLA learner lorries. The road is too narrow in places for lorries to pass so they mount the footpath and because of the blind bend the drivers do not see oncoming traffic. I know money is tight so no major road alterations affordable but it would not cost anything to restrict the lorries by using a weight limit and there is an alternative to use the A roads.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind Regards

(Redacted)

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