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**Application Number 2021/48/92734/W**

Dear Sir/Madam

**Plans for road junction changes at Edgerton Road/Blacker Road/ Edgerton Grove Road. Application Number 2021/48/92734/W - OBJECTIONS**

We would like to object to the above plans. We have a number of detailed objections:

**1. The planned widening would negatively impact on safety of drivers, cyclists and pedestrians, as evidenced by problems already existing at this junction. These plans ignore what could be regarded as THE major and pressing issue on this road - speeding, illegal road racing and red-light jumping.**

The stated option is to “improvement of the A629 corridor.” However this will not be an improvement.

The planned junction gives smooth corners, more like a motorway, or race-track. The proposed junction designs will make the junction ‘faster’ outside those times when the road is mostly empty.

The massive issue in this road (if residents were taken at all seriously) is dangerous driving and illegal road racing. Making the junction ‘smoother’ and more ‘motorway-like’ is exactly the wrong thing to do. Widening the road will only make this problem worse, and may actually lead to more pedestrian deaths as pedestrians have to walk FURTHER to cross the road. We discuss below the lack of design thinking by the council evidenced in existing infrastructure. We are not persuaded they will be any different when conceiving of this wider pedestrian crossing.

The proposed widening and smoothing will make the junction more deadly - encouraging fast cornering and road racing. If anyone has doubts that this is happening, a simple look at the walls around the junction show the number of collisions at speed that have taken place there. This junction is dangerous because of feral driving, red-light jumping, and cars using the main road and Blacker/ Edgerton Grove Road as a racetrack. In a small survey I conducted myself, red-light jumping occurred nearly every change of lights.

The council, in its statement states that walls have ‘collapsed’ around this area. This is twisting the facts. They have collapsed because they were hit at high speed by vehicles.

In rush hour, when traffic forces people to drive slower (but with efficient throughput). I would contend that the slower traffic makes things slightly safer, especially for the cyclists who share

the road, though there is still the problem of red-light jumping.

Actually, several councils I know have worked to make junctions narrower, and more more abrupt-angled to actually slow traffic and discourage fast taking of junctions. I have noted this innovative approach in both Glasgow and London.

The design of junctions to be more abrupt and narrow has solid academic backing in the concept of Self Explaining Roads - that roads should be designed to give information that might encourage the driver to slow down at the junction. A wider road, with smoother sides, is more 'motorway like' and will give the driver contextual information that a faster speed is fine, thus encouraging speeding. This also has good backing from the concept of 'social affordances' in perceptual psychological work of JJ Gibson - the world around us gives us cues on how to act - motorway like infrastructure will give us cues that we can go faster, and corner at speed.

Therefore, it is arguable and persuasive that an actual improvement of the junction as stands might be to actually 'narrow' it, perhaps with dedicated cycling lanes in either side. This will discourage speeding and slow traffic even when the road is of low use. This would be in effect 'Psychological Traffic Calming' (e.g. TRL, 2005)

The design approach, then, of widening and smoothing the road, seems the worst thing to do if one has any interest in safety of either pedestrians, cyclists or even vehicle drivers and passengers. Rather, abruptness, narrowness, and corners help calm traffic. as they force drivers to be aware of their surroundings.

In contradiction to the stated objectives, the proposed junction design would mean that land would be wasted, and safety compromised. It is interesting, in the planning document, that only slow moving traffic is seen as a threat to safety. This seems to demonstrate that the planners' strange priorities and lack of design thinking.

**2. The roads are already wide enough - there is artificial 'dead space' taken up by a protected crossing that does nothing to increase pedestrian safety. In fact, the planned changes might increase danger through pedestrians having further to cross.**

There is actually ample space for traffic on this road. In fact there is space recently taken away in the addition of some dead space which seems to be for a protected crossing place - actually yards away from pedestrian lights. It seems a very strange design decision and could be easily removed. As there is a crossing just yards from it, it would seem a much better and safer design decision to give more time for people to cross at the lights. Light times are very short at this junction. I would contend that making the road wider might actually make it far more dangerous for pedestrians to cross in time.

The objective of "making efficient use of land" would seem to not apply here. In fact, I would argue that land is wasted, and trees killed for no good end.

I would contend then that the social objective : "Tackling inequality and give all residents the opportunity for a healthy lifestyle, free from crime and to achieve their potential in work and education;" would be impacted extremely negatively.

### **3. The proposed design is too ‘motorway like’. This road is not a motorway.**

What the planners have forgotten about all this road, is that this is a road in an urban area. However it is not taken as such. The plans treat the junction like a stretch of motorway and these plans show this bias.

The problem is, junctions on motorways are designed from scratch and generally not historic. The historic junctions here allow traffic flow across the junction in two directions. This already causes catastrophe with the road as given, where traffic ignores the red light and hits other traffic going at an angle to it. In fact, the red lights may lead to a false sense of security.

More forward-looking councils are doing the reverse of widening roads, and uninstalling those ‘motorway’ features, and aiming for two lane roads through a collection of ‘villages’ to encourage both place making and modal shift to pedestrianism and cycling (e.g. ITDP, 2012, Wired, 2014)

As the Dutch road designer Hans Modeman put it: “A wide road with a lot of signs is telling a story... It’s saying, go ahead, don’t worry, go as fast as you want, there’s no need to pay attention to your surroundings. And that’s a very dangerous message.”

### **4. We have no faith in KMC in terms of its design decisions, based on the design decisions already taken in this road and on the roads around it.**

There are some arguably appalling failures of basic design on this road, that should be an embarrassment to any organisation that takes good design seriously.

The social objective stated in the planning document: “Tackling inequality and give all residents the opportunity for a healthy lifestyle” seems particularly ironic when looking at this existing infrastructure.

#### **Example 1.**

Take the walk from the junction into town. One of the first things one sees is a ‘welcome to Huddersfield’ sign, with the pillars of the sign in the centre of the pedestrian way, acting as obstacles. [<Link to Google maps>](#) Further, there are more and more obstacles, from other road signage, again placed in the middle of the pavement. These act as obstacles for partially sighted people, wheelchairs, and actually force a double pram onto the road to get round it. [<Link>](#) Further, there are more obstacles and terrible pavement condition [<Link>](#)

The other side takes pedestrians and cyclists to a mini-roundabout where no one knows how to signal, [<Link>](#) or use effectively, and finally to a urine-smelling underpass that floods in heavy rain. Sometimes pedestrians get treated to al-fresco vomit as well. And of course there is endless amounts of graffiti. [<Link>](#) This is the main way into town from Edgerton and beyond for pedestrians (and cyclists who can’t actually get onto the A629 any sensible way). It is an embarrassment.

#### **Example 2.**

In another road leading off the junction, Blacker Road, there is a zebra crossing next to a school that I have been nearly knocked down on 4 times, as an adult in full possession of his faculties. This pelican crossing is outside Birkby Infants School. [<Link>](#) One would think that any half-competent design might take into account that there are a number of issues in the

Highway Code regarding just who has priority in these junctions. Again, KMC seems quite unaware of its own failed infrastructure and its appalling and dangerous design decisions.

Example 3.

On another road off this junction, we have a two-lane roundabout that no drivers seem to be able to use right, which is a death-trap for cyclists. And this junction is right next to Greenhead Park, used by large numbers of children. There is NO adequate pedestrian crossing near the park, but a series of dropped kerbs so close to the roundabout to be death-traps. Actually, the dropped kerbs have tactile surfaces, obviously for blind/partially-sighted people. Any blind person using that crossing (right at the exit of the roundabout) would be likely to be run down instantly, and, given the speed of vehicles exiting that roundabout, die. <Link - note, this is an older picture before installation of textured paving>

This is the state urban design overseen by this council. Most fail nearly every one of RoSPA's basic Design Guidelines for Walking routes (RoSPA, 2018). No one seems aware of the sheer danger and effective discriminatory nature of the design in Kirklees evidenced by this design. KMC doesn't seem to be aware that not all pedestrians are fit adults, but a mix of able bodied and less able people, and children. In fact, they seem to add obstacles to disabled users at all turns. I can only assume that KMC's concerns are purely and solely about traffic flow. Like some remnant of the 1970s, they cater for pedestrians and cyclists only as an afterthought.

If KMC can not get a basic main road right, that must be seen by councillors and road officers every day, there are no grounds to believe in their basic competence and assumptions in other ways.

## **5. This proposal destroys a beautiful vista and goes against KMC's stated aim of 'place making'.**

One might think this is a woolly-hearted objection, but architectural and natural heritage have a value that is often underestimated. It is these things which help draw people to a town, and destroying these things means that we lose the very people we want to keep - those who choose to live here, set up businesses, value its heritage, identify with it. If we keep destroying architectural and natural heritage, then we have nothing to draw people to this town. Richard Florida and others have covered what draws people who end up bringing value to cities - walking design, a sense of place, beauty are all part of this. These things are not zero value. People-friendly cities and towns do not destroy beautiful aspects simply to take a few minutes off journey time.

The social objective: "Supporting the growth and diversification of the economy, to increase skill levels and employment opportunities" would seem very negatively impacted here.

KMC boasts about 'place making'. Schemes like this destroy the very things that place making is all about - local distinctiveness, the natural environment, architectural history.

**6. Overall - this proposal represents a waste of money for all concerned. It does nothing to increase quality of life, and actually will make things worse.** Rather than rearranging deckchairs on the Titanic, it is the equivalent of driving it towards the iceberg.

The plans answer a problem that doesn't seem to be there, and that prioritises traffic flow above all. This is not a solution that is sustainable. It will encourage more traffic, and thus more problems with capacity creating demand, (e.g. ITDP, 2012). In fact, when cities take away capacity, demand also drops.

These plans will not encourage modal shift off vehicular transport if we are going to cut carbon emissions. This plan is concerned mainly with traffic throughput at enormous environmental cost of destroying so many mature trees.

Better congestion solutions could come much cheaper from modal shift and better public transport. Slower traffic encourages this. Narrower roads may be actually be an improvement.

Money could be better spent on 20's Plenty zones, much better crossing facilities for pedestrians, and repairing the many dangerous potholes around the area. (Please see below where I detail the many issues pedestrians face on this road).

20 mile an hour zones would easily be cheaper than the current plans, and would cause no damage to this heritage area. Combined with better road design this would provably both reduce accidents, and reduce extreme speeds on these roads (the road racing issue) while only causing a small overall reduction in average speeds. Such an approach would provably reduce accidents dramatically (see also my comment about Self Explaining Roads, below). In their own, without even dedicated infrastructure, 20 mile an hour zones also increase markedly safety of both pedestrians and other co-users of roads, whether other cars, or cyclists. Studies have shown that accidents were reduced by 60%, and child injury accidents were reduced by 67% (TRL, 1996). Such zones also encourage modal shift onto both cycling and pedestrianism.

At this particular junction, money would be better spent making sure the road design and lights work better for pedestrians and cyclists, and that traffic slows in an orderly fashion and does not constantly break the law with feral driving and red-light jumping.

In conclusion, is sad that a council facing so many serious challenges should opt for such dubious and architecturally and environmentally destructive window-dressing initiatives which promise so little return. There are real and present issues in our roads and pavements that cry out to be addressed, especially if we are going to encourage the shifts in transport that we need to tackle climate change. KMC is making itself look quite out of touch with ordinary people.

I can see this issue becoming an embarrassing and toxic one, for both KMC and those councillors (and their parties) that support it, unless people's local knowledge and concerns are listened to.

## **References:**

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Yours faithfully,