

Subject: Please refuse the A629 Halifax road (Phase 5) scheme.

Dear Mohan Sokhal,

I am a Kirklees resident and am asking you, in your position a member of Kirklees' Cabinet or Kirklees Strategic Planning Committee, to refuse the A629 Halifax Road (Phase 5) scheme.

Here is a brief summary of the main objections to the scheme:

Climate impact

The UN Secretary-General described the latest IPCC report as a Code Red for Humanity' and stated "The viability of our societies depends on leaders from government, business and civil society uniting behind policies, actions and investments that will limit temperature rise to 1.5°C."

In 2019, Kirklees MBC and West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) admirably "declared a climate emergency (which) commits the region to achieve net zero carbon by 2038... The task is challenging and will require significant and swift action to decarbonise all sectors".

WYCA's Carbon Emissions Reduction Pathways (CERP) study, which followed the Climate Declaration, has identified that traffic reductions of 21%-38% by 2038 will be necessary to meet climate targets.

It is well-evidenced that if you build more roads, you will get more traffic, a phenomenon known as 'induced traffic'. [Source: <https://bettertransport.org.uk/roads-nowhere/induced-traffic>].

WYCA has itself admitted this: "research shows that creating additional highway capacity for cars and other vehicles induces demand".

The Council's own Climate Impact Assessment has found that carbon emissions will increase by 36,000 tonnes as a result of the scheme.

Impact on trees and cultural heritage

A petition in support of saving the mature trees at the Blacker Road Junction ('Save Edgerton's Iconic Trees in Huddersfield') gained over 3000 signatures in just three weeks. Alongside widespread opposition to the scheme from local residents, the Council's own Tree Officer is opposed to the scheme on many grounds including:

"The mitigation proposed will take many years, potentially 50 years, to develop to the size where they can provide a similar amenity value and other benefits to the trees present today."

He has also stated that the scheme breaks both Kirklees and National Planning guidance:

"The proposals for the Blacker Road junction and Cavalry Arms junction are contrary to Kirklees Local Plan policies LP33 and LP35 as they have a significant impact upon the character and setting of the areas and will harm public amenity for many years.

In addition, the proposals do not comply with the directions of the National Planning Policy Framework in that they are not sympathetic to the local character and history of the areas and do not ensure streets are tree-lined."

The Woodland Trust also believes that the project "should not be taken forward on the grounds it does not comply with national planning policy" It also considers the plan to be "not consistent" with the council's own policy within its Local Plan.

"New planting simply cannot replace the value lost when mature trees are removed, and such planting can never replace the loss of ancient and veteran trees. This large-scale loss of trees from a council scheme is simply inappropriate and alternative solutions must be found to prevent the loss of these trees."

It is unnecessary and does not deliver on its own targets

Air pollution levels are not predicted to improve as a result of the proposed scheme according to the scheme's Air Quality Assessment. There is no clear evidence however that the positive effects of trees on air quality have been considered and that the loss of mature trees may mean that pollution levels may get worse as a result.

The scheme is based on accommodating future traffic levels that will never occur based on both historic data and future targets. Historical data from the Department of Transport shows that by 2018, traffic levels fell to three quarters of their levels in the early 2000s. There is no evidence that the A629 is experiencing continuous traffic growth and therefore the scheme is unwarranted.

There are many more arguments against the scheme which are summarised here:

<https://huddersfieldfoe.wordpress.com/2021/07/05/phase-5-a629-road-widening-scheme-our-key-objections/>

I would urge Kirklees Council and WYCA to show climate leadership by refusing the scheme and finding a way to refocus the available investment and deliver sustainable transport options for the people of Kirklees. As an absolute minimum, and to protect the 126 mature trees along the route, the Council needs to reconsider the costs and benefits of individual elements, for example, the proposals at Blacker Road and the Cavalry Arms Junction.

Councillors now have the opportunity to respond to communities who are so clearly invested in a sustainable future, and lead their engineering teams to deliver high quality sustainable transport design, consistent with their own policies and targets.

Yours sincerely