

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Monday, 27th March 2023

Council road project will ‘endanger lives’ say Truro businesses

Businesses in Truro are urging Cornwall Council to think again about a controversial road project which they fear could endanger lives if it goes ahead.

Work is due to start next month on the latest phase of the Truro Loops project which aims to improve walking and cycling links on the southern side of the city.

The plans include widening the footway along Newham Road to create a shared pedestrian and cycle path. But this will mean narrowing the only road into the Newham Industrial Estate which is home to 180 businesses employing 1,200 people.

Many local businesses and the Newham Business Improvement District (BID) support the Truro Loops project in principle but say narrowing the road will give heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) just 10 centimetres of clearance. And they fear that large wing mirrors of HGVs overhanging the new path could cause serious injury or a fatality to pedestrians and cyclists.

Instead they want the Council to reconsider, and are asking why it has dropped an earlier plan to make use of Newham’s riverside path, away from the road.

Newham Road carries a lot of HGV traffic because the industrial estate is home to businesses that operate fleets of HGV vehicles such as crane hire company Macsalvors, waste and recycling company Biffa and Truro Recycling Centre. Bus company First Group also has a depot on site, and there is a Royal Mail delivery office.

Opposition to the project has been co-ordinated by the Newham BID, which exists to improve and promote Newham as a business location.

In a [letter of opposition](#) to Cornwall Council planners from **BID Chair Leigh Ibbotson**, which was signed by 24 businesses at Newham including Tesco and Aldi, Mr Ibbotson said: “We want to make it very clear that Newham BID believe the proposals pose a danger to the safety of users of Newham particularly the proposal to reduce the width of the carriageway on Newham Road.

“We want it formally noted that we foresee the accident statistics rising if these proposals are implemented.”

Businesses are also concerned that the Council is rushing the proposals in order to hit a deadline to spend European funding on the scheme and has relied too much on computer modelling rather than real-world conditions.

Mr Ibbotson adds in his letter: “The opportunity to spend European funding before the deadline seems to be the overriding driver for this scheme rather than carrying out detailed research and safety studies to consider the best scheme. We cannot see how these proposals are in any way safe and would urge you to consider the reality of daily movements on Newham rather than relying on ‘modelling’ as we understand has been the case.”

He said the BID was happy to work with the Council on a more workable plan and suggested if the Council needs to spend European funding quickly then it should widen and straighten Newham Road at a notorious pinchpoint between Lighterage Hill and Gas Hill – something local businesses have campaigned for for more than 20 years.

Also objecting the road-narrowing proposals is **Cameron MacQuarrie, managing director of Macsalvors crane hire**, which employs 65 people at Newham.

He said: “The road should be widened and not narrowed. The average HGV measures 3.2m across the wing mirrors, meaning that two lorries passing each other in a perfectly straight line will take up 6.4 metres of road space leaving 50mm per driver as the margin for error. This is ludicrous on a road with such a high proportion of HGV vehicles travelling along it daily.

“The inevitable result is that drivers will then move towards the pavement to create a safe passing gap with oncoming traffic and the wing mirrors will hang over the pavement cycle way causing extreme danger to anyone using it.”

And **Peter Beaumont, former Chair of Newham BID and Managing Director of farming insurance experts Cornish Mutual**, headquartered in Newham, said: “We recognise that businesses on Newham have raised concerns. Given that Newham BID and Cornwall Council have fostered such a good relationship over the years, it is very disappointing that the Council have not listened to those businesses.”

Also concerned is **Richard Bullen from motor body repair specialists P. Abraham & Son**, which has traded from Newham for more than 50 years. He said: “They seem to be taking the easiest and quickest route to get the money spent and there doesn’t seem to be a lot of sense to it now. We run recovery vehicles in and out of the estate and it’s a very narrow road here already. They are losing sight of the fact that it is an industrial area and we’ve said it might be a better idea to run the path down the Malpas side of the river.”

In light of fierce criticism the Council has agreed to modify some elements of the scheme, including its original plan to scrap the right-turn lane into Aldi at the entrance to the industrial estate. Businesses had predicted this would cause ‘gridlock’ in Truro as cars backed up onto Morlaix Avenue, and lead to ‘chaos’, so that element has now been abandoned.

But the Council says it is pressing ahead with the main element of the scheme to narrow Newham Road, despite the opposition, likening the road to a ‘minor industrial access’ road.

In an email to the BID dated 20th March, the Council’s project manager states: “A road safety review carried out along this route has not raised an issue. Proposed narrowing has been tested by computer modelling with no indication that conflict of HGVs will occur.”

It says Council-owned CORMAC Solutions Ltd intends to start work next week and finish the work by the end of June.

The Newham BID is urging the Council to reconsider and wants the scheme paused so that alternatives can be considered.

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Notes to Editors

Newham BID chair Leigh Ibbotson is available for interview by contacting Jason Clark at DCA Public Relations in the first instance. Email jason.clark@dca-pr.co.uk, telephone 07980-834368.