Transition Chesterfield comments on the

Chesterfield Staveley Regeneration Route (formerly the Brimington Bypass)

Transition Chesterfield is a local community group whose aims are to raise awareness of the issues associated with climate change and the need to develop a resilient, sustainable, low-carbon society. We would like to make the following comments on the plans for Chesterfield Staveley Regeneration Route (CSRR). The details given in the consultation are scant therefore we are unable to comment fully. We also wrote to Derbyshire County Council (DCC) on 15 March for further information on some aspects of the scheme but they had not responded by the time this response was submitted so we reserve the right to submit further comments once that information is received.

Summary

This £130 million road scheme (approximately £14 million of which is the council's contribution) has been planned for a very long time. However in the decades since it was planned, many things have changed including the growing awareness of the climate emergency as well as evidence that new roads are not the solution for traffic congestion that so many people assume them to be.

Transition Chesterfield considers that this scheme is an outdated and unhelpful solution to the very real problems of congestion, air quality and need for regeneration of the area north of Brimington and Hollingwood. Not only is it **not** the best solution to many of the issues it is designed to address, it is likely to make things worse or just shift the problem to other areas.

We believe that the redevelopment of this area would be much better served through local access roads coupled with a more progressive 'placemaking' approach[1] that prioritises walking, cycling and public transport and local services. The evidence shows that we need to reduce traffic significantly over the next decade, not facilitate more traffic by expansion of road capacity.

We object to the scheme for the following reasons.

1. The alleged benefits

The alleged key benefits of the scheme are that it will:

1. provide a more efficient route from the A61 to the M1.
2. improve local journeys for residents of Brimington, Hollingwood, Staveley, Barrow Hill, Middlecroft, and Inkersall by removing traffic from the A619.
3. improve bus service reliability by removing traffic from the A619.
4. facilitate housing and employment growth on brownfield land in the area north of Brimington and Hollingwood, as per the Chesterfield Local Plan.
5. address issues of noise and poor air quality in existing residential areas, including the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) near the Brimington gyratory.

We believe that these benefits are not sufficient justification for the scheme as they can be provided more effectively by other means, or the scheme is just as likely to undermine the objectives.

For example, while it is likely to remove some traffic from the A619 in the short term, all the evidence suggests that traffic levels on bypassed roads generally returns to pre-existing levels some

[1] Placemaking is the process of creating quality places that people want to live, work, play, and learn in.

years later[2], while overall traffic levels are increased by increasing road capacity[3]. There are also alternative ways of removing traffic from the A619 which have not been explored, for example road pricing for HGVs.

"A common assumption is that spending on more and wider roads will ease congestion. However, multiple studies have found that building new roads does not achieve this goal and is, instead, generating more journeys and more traffic." [4]

Although no traffic figures are provided for the new scheme it is clearly designed to be a fast, heavily-trafficked road. This will mean the traffic problems are simply shifted to a new area, impacting people living either side of the new road throughout the area.

Although the main rationale for the scheme now appears to be to open up the area north of Brimington and Hollingwood, we think this can be done with local access roads and without the need for a busy and fast highway bisecting the area.

"***It's difficult to find a new housing development that isn't linked in some way to a major new road or widened junction. You'd be forgiven for wondering if the new homes are being built to serve the roads rather than the roads serving the new homes***.

Instead of assuming wider roads are always the answer, we should tackle the problem of how people travel around by using a full toolbox of solutions, from investing in a range of transport options to putting the services we use at the heart of new developments. This would not only keep people moving but also support happier, healthier and better towns and cities at lower cost."[5]

This road will do little to alleviate the noise and poor air quality for residents near the Brimington gyratory for the next five years as the road won't be completed until 2027. The residents have had to put up with traffic problems and air pollution for years. There has been little or no attempt to reduce traffic on the A619, restrict or reroute HGV traffic, reconfigure the gyratory to make traffic flow more smoothly or other measures such as electrifying the buses that use the route.

The consultation fails to mention the many likely disbenefits of the scheme, namely:

- Additional road capacity will lead to more traffic leading to more congestion in the long run
- Additional traffic will lead to higher emissions of carbon dioxide and air pollutants compared to the situation without the scheme
- The road will dissect the canal and the river causing impacts on biodiversity
- The road will dissect the canal requiring the canal to be rerouted
- the road will create huge disturbance during several years of construction and when it is operational, to a well used and much loved canal walking and cycling route which is also part of the Transpennine Trail and a key part of the National Cycle Network
- The new residential areas north of Brimington and Hollingwood will have a major road running through their neighbourhood creating noise, disturbance, air pollution and safety issues.

[2] The most famous example was the Newbury Bypass, built in 1998 to relieve congestion along the A339 in Newbury. Not only did the new road quickly attract new traffic but for the old, bypassed road, a local traffic study noted resurgent congestion issues by 2003 : Atkins (2005) Movement Study for Newbury
[3] Campaign for Better Transport. New roads create new traffic
[4] Create Streets (2022) Computer Says Road
[5] Ibid

2. Impacts on Chesterfield Canal

The consultation rightly points out that "*Chesterfield Canal is an important leisure and wildlife area. It is also a key part of our walking and cycling network, with the towpath also being used by horse riders*." It notes that the road will cross the canal in three places along the route, but rather than seeing this as an impact on the canal it euphemistically suggests this will "*increase connectivity and promote greater use of the towpath*."

The multiple crossings and proximity of the road to the canal towpath will be very disruptive to users, both during construction and once the road is open.

There are no drawings of the road but it will probably need to be elevated in order to climb over the canal at Station Road. As the extract from the route map below shows the road crosses the canal just east of Bluebank Lock near Bilby Lane and runs very close to the canal and through the Bluebank Pools Nature Reserve.

Figure 1: CSSR route map showing Bluebank Lock and a canal crossing (CSRR is thick black line)

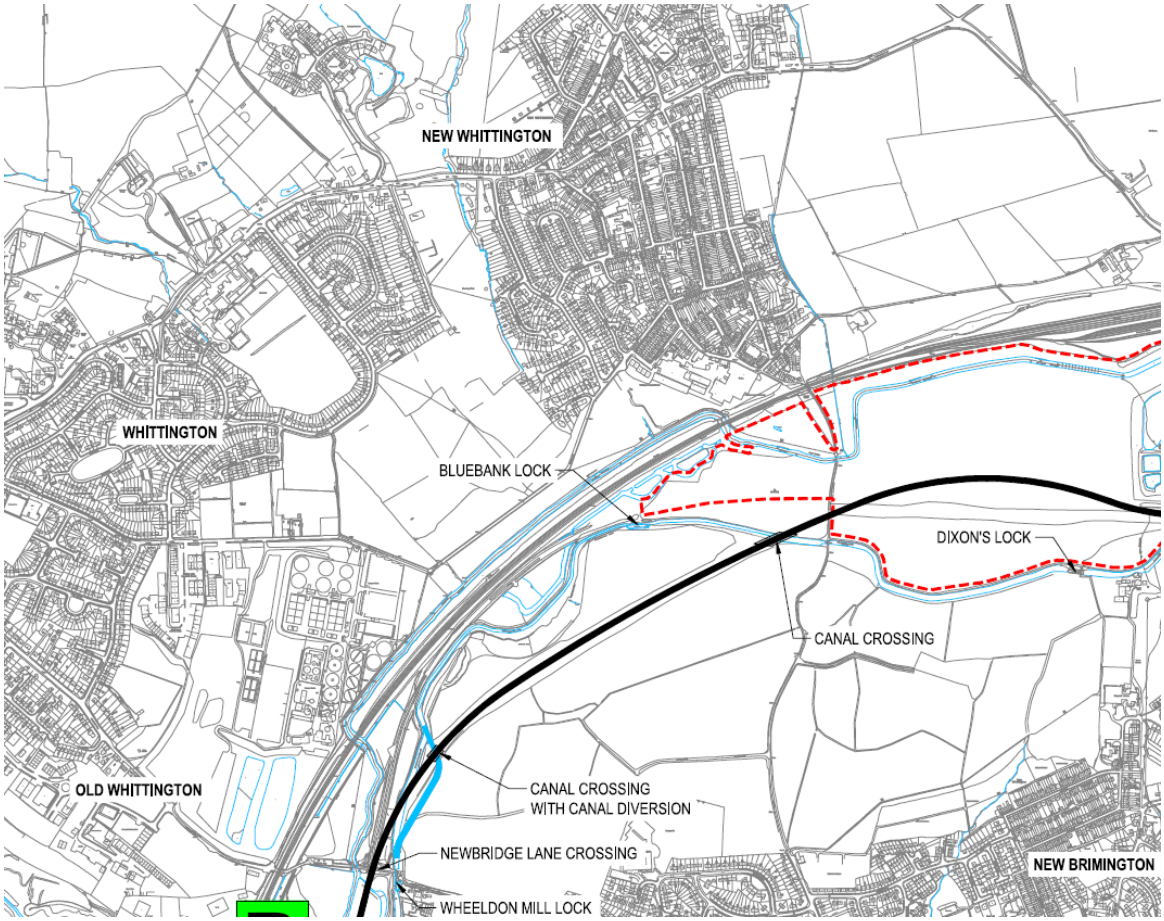


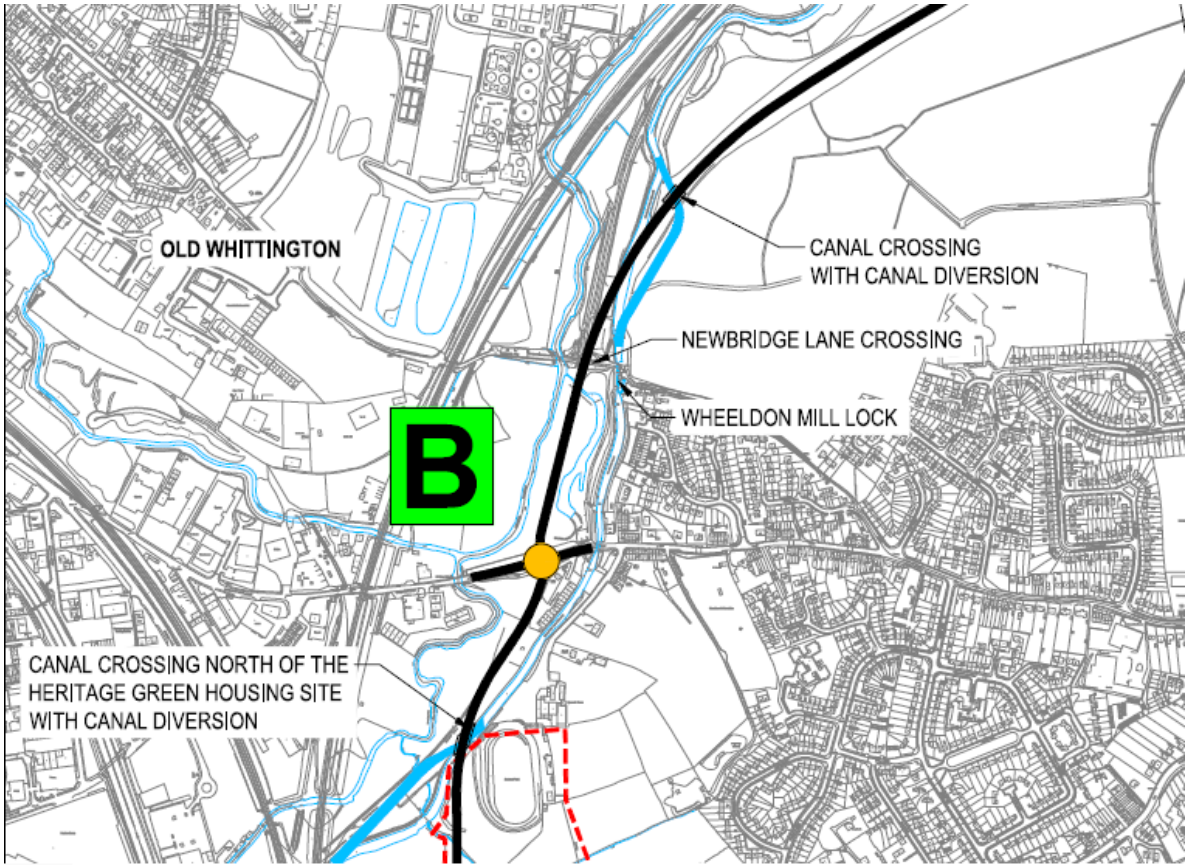
Figure 2: Image of Bluebank Lock near one of the points where the road crosses the canal

Figure 3: Bridge on Bilby Lane near Bluebank Pools Nature Reserve looking towards Bluebank Lock. Red line shows approximate route of road

Figure 4: Bluebank Lock with red line showing approximate route of road

Similarly Wheeldon Mill Lock will be severely impacted by another road crossing point and the CSRR only a few tens of metres away.

Figure 5: CSRR route map section showing Wheeldon Mill Lock (CSRR is thick black line)



In short, the character of this tranquil, rural canal route will be completely transformed by the proximity of this road and the multiple crossing points.

While there will be more houses built along the canal and therefore there is the opportunity for use by the new residents, the new road will also ruin the tranquillity of the towpath for existing users. By designing the new residential areas around people rather than for cars, it would be possible to increase access to the canal without the ugly scarring and impacts on it.

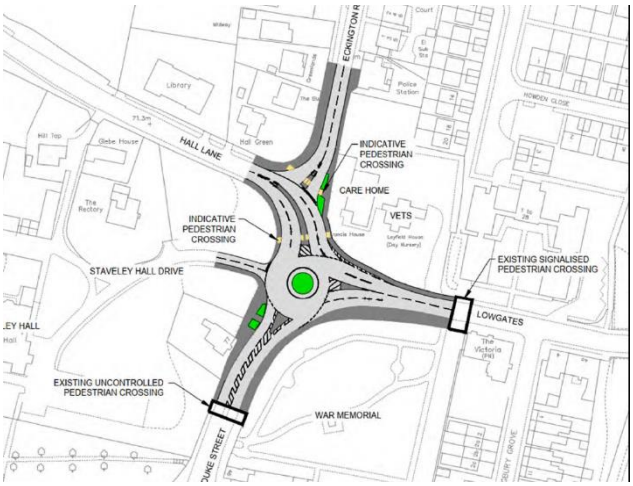
3. Design of roundabouts

The expected rerouting of traffic from the A619 to the new road will necessitate the redesign of the Duke Street roundabout in Staveley to manage increased traffic flows. These changes are misleadingly termed “improvements”. The roundabout is within an existing Conservation Area and the changes include felling of several large trees and adding two-lane entries and exits to the roundabout on Hall Lane and Lowgates as well as restricting right turns to/from Eckington Road, creating a left-in left-out arrangement.

This current relatively quiet and leafy location next to the memorial garden will become a busy and dangerous roundabout.

Figure 6: Current view of Duke St Roundabout

Figure 7: Drawing of design of Duke St Roundabout from consultation



There is a further roundabout at Station Road, Brimington, which has a dangerous, uncontrolled crossing across two lanes for pedestrians and cyclists. It is not clear why any of these roundabouts need two lanes for entry and exit which will only promote greater speed. The roundabout below also runs extremely close to the canal and it is not clear why it can't be moved further away to reduce noise, pollution and disturbance to walkers and cyclists using the canal towpath.

Figure 8: Drawing of design of roundabout at Station Road from consultation

4. Environmental Impacts

Impacts on the canal and river: The scheme will cross the river and canal in multiple places and turn a quiet, tranquil and popular walking and cycling route along the towpath into a noisy, polluted route alongside a main road. There are no details on the ecological, landscape and flood impacts and we are asked to accept at face value that these can be mitigated to 'acceptable' levels. There is a

local nature reserve at Bluebank Loop which is described on the DCC website as a "Jewel on the Chesterfield Canal".[6] From the route map it appears the CSRR cuts through or very close to this.

Air Quality and Noise: while the proposed scheme may reduce traffic using the A619 through areas such as Staveley and Brimington in the short term, in the medium to long term that traffic will build up again unless there are measures in place to restrict it. And the new houses built along the new road will be subject to air quality and noise impacts that have simply moved from other areas. Chesterfield Borough Council and DCC have failed to take any serious measures to reduce air pollution in either the AQMA or the other areas of Chesterfield such as Sheffield Road and Derby Road which are blighted by air pollution. We find the claim that this road is designed to address air quality as disingenuous.

Carbon: There is no mention of carbon in the environmental section despite this being a key impact of new roads. By increasing road capacity (and unless there are attempts to restrict traffic on the A619) this will inevitably lead to more traffic (induced traffic plus the traffic from the new houses) than there would be without the scheme or if the new housing had been designed to encourage walking, cycling and public transport instead. The Department for Transport have sent letters to local authorities warning them that budget cut-backs will mean major road schemes, previously considered dialled-in, won't be funded from central government if they are likely to increase carbon emissions[7].

5. Increases in traffic

The consultation makes much play of the potential reduction in traffic on the A619 and quotes specific figures for reductions in several places. We have requested the traffic analysis behind these claims from DCC on 24 March but at the time of submission we had not received a response. We therefore reserve the right to make further submissions once the data is received.

There are no figures provided for how much traffic this new road will generate and how this will increase traffic overall.

6. Options Considered

Four alternative options that were considered are presented in the consultation. Three of these are simply alternative road routes. One option was modal shift to bus, walking and cycling. This is dismissed simply by saying that "this alone wouldn't be enough to address problems on the A619, now and in the future." There is no analysis to back this statement up and although we have requested a copy of that analysis [15/03/22] we have not received a reply.

Given the climate crisis and the need to reduce traffic significantly over the next ten years to meet carbon targets, coupled with changes in travel patterns due to Covid, increase in fuel prices, and the likely introduction of national road pricing within a few years, it is not clear why a shift to bus, walking and cycling would not be sufficient, and indeed is absolutely necessary.

"Building another road shouldn't be the expensive default solution for every congestion challenge. Instead, all towns and boroughs must consider transport as a holistic ecosystem and apply a range of solutions to achieve their desired outcomes. This toolkit could include small tactical (and often

[6] https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/leisure/countryside/countryside-sites/waterways-wetlands/bluebank-pools-local-nature-reserve-lnr.aspx
[7] https://twitter.com/anotherJon/status/1502927143696801795?s=20&t=Jft2eL0CFrDLSc_xpK7ukQ

cheaper) interventions such as opening offices, nurseries or gyms close to where people live, more pleasant walking routes, e-bike loan schemes or more regular buses."[8]

Although we appreciate that the £93 million is only available for this road scheme and not to spend on alternatives it is worth pointing out that there are the following alternatives that could provide better and more sustainable access to the area:

Restoration of the Barrow Hill Line to allow passenger services to use the current freight route.
This was one of ten proposals shortlisted under the government's Restoring your Railways fund. The Barrow Hill Line used to have passengers until 1963 but is a well maintained double-tracked freight line with 2 freight trains per hour. The proposal will involve 5 new stations at Whittington; Barrow Hill & Staveley; Eckington & Renishaw; Killamarsh; Beighton which will link existing communities with limited public transport and high car dependency to employment hubs.

Extension of the tram from Halfway to Barrow Hill
Although Transition Chesterfield has promoted this as an option for many years there has never been any serious consideration of this by either council. This would provide a fast, efficient commuter route to Sheffield for many people in the area.

Significant expansion of bus services
Although there are no published figures for Chesterfield, bus journeys per head in Derbyshire have declined significantly in recent years (from 39.5 in 2010/11 to 30.2 in 2018/19 pre-covid) due to government funding cuts and is part of a long term decline in many areas outside London due to deregulation of the bus industry. However there is no reason why this decline is inevitable as there are many parts of Britain which have maintained good bus services and increased patronage such as Reading and Nottingham (who have retained municipal bus companies) and some of the metro areas are now considering franchising their bus services to achieve London-style service levels. With sufficient ambition and investment there is no reason why Chesterfield could not achieve a significant increase in bus services and patronage.

For example in 2012 the small town of Dax in France (population 56,000) set up a municipal company to run its buses, and funds of about €5m/year enabled a complete redesign of the bus network, with new routes, higher frequencies and lower fares; construction of dedicated busways; a demand-responsive service to 18 rural settlements; a new bus / rail interchange; and new park and ride services . This is the level of ambition that we should be aiming for in Chesterfield. DCC have just applied for £105 million for its Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and it is likely in future years there will be more funding for buses to address the climate crisis.

Provision of free buses
Dunkerque, a town of 200,000 people in Northern France, made its buses free in autumn 2018, and at the same time increased bus frequencies on the busiest routes to every 10 minutes and installed bus 'express corridors'. One year afterwards, bus trips were up 85%. Nearly half of new bus users previously drove, one in ten new bus users had sold their second car, and there is anecdotal evidence that the free bus network is leading young people to postpone getting a driving licence. There are many other parts of the world introducing free public transport. Many towns and cities in England are now looking to extend free bus travel through their Bus Service Improvement Plans

[8] Create streets (2022) Computer Says Road

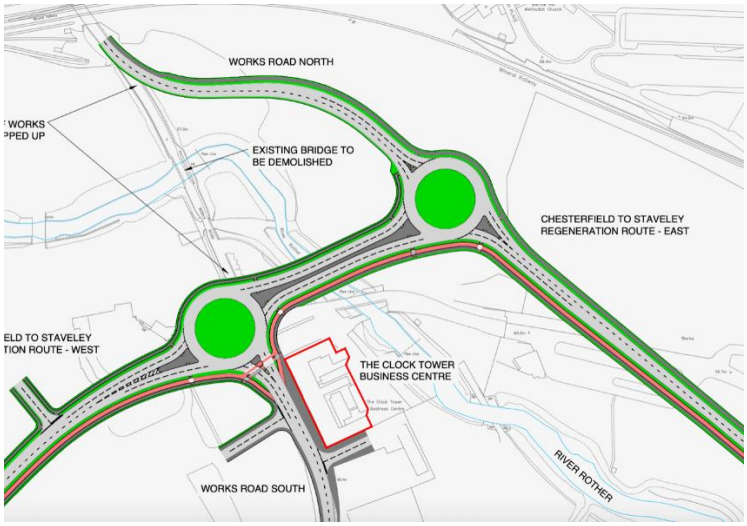
(BSIP) (sadly this is not part of Derbyshire's plan). If this could be done, even on a corridor basis, this would significantly reduce the amount of car traffic on the A619.

Improved walking and cycling network

Although there is a reasonable cycle routes through Brimington and Staveley via the canal towpath and the TPT, there is scope to improve connections to make the network more permeable. For example for the new residential development near Sainsburys (known as "Heritage Green") both Transition Chesterfield and Chesterfield Cycle Campaign objected due to the very poor walking and cycling provision – despite being next to the canal the residents do not have any easy access to the towpath, and the residents are almost entirely car-dependent.

The design also does not promote any good walking and cycling connections with Barrow Hill. There is a missed opportunity to use the existing road and bridge (shown on the drawing below), which for some reason is due to be demolished, as a dedicated walking and cycling route between Barrow Hill and the new development. The only alternative route is along Works Road North which is extremely dangerous for both pedestrians and cyclists.

Figure 9: Drawing of design of roundabouts near Staveley Clock Tower Business Centre



"There are only a few ways to deal with the enormous growth in demand for roadspace. The first way is building more roads in urban areas, which is politically and practically difficult in most cities, with little public support for the demolitions of private property which would be required. There is also evidence that it does not work, simply attracting more traffic. The second way is building more railways, which takes decades. The third is some form of congestion charging, as in London. The fourth is to make better use of the roads we already have, by encouraging vehicles such as buses and bikes that take up less space per passenger. In the short and medium term, this is the only way to keep the roads moving for the traffic that most needs to use them."[9]

7. Jobs and Investment

Although not included in the consultation, newspaper reports have quoted council chiefs as saying that this will provide investment and jobs[10]. We sent requests to DCC on 24 March for a copy of the

[9] Department for Transport (2021) Gear Change One Year On.
[10] https://www.derbyshiretimes.co.uk/news/people/full-route-of-planned-ps130m-chesterfield-to-staveley-road-unveiled-as-jobs-and-investment-promised-3614088

Business Case quoted in the media but had not received that at the time this response was submitted.

However we repeat our point that the area can be opened up for development without this new road through local access roads and better public transport infrastructure and services, and improved walking and cycling links.

This TUC report[11] suggests that new roads provide the lowest potential in terms of creating jobs through infrastructure spend.

It is often assumed that new roads are the key to unlocking economic growth and jobs, and yet there is almost no empirical evidence supporting this assumption. Instead a detailed analysis of major road schemes using Highways England (as was) own data and reports found that:

"***Of 25 road schemes justified on the basis that they would benefit the local economy, only five had any evidence of any economic effects. Even for these five, the economic effects may have arisen from changes incidental to the road scheme, or involved development in an inappropriate location, or involved changes that were as likely to suck money out of the local area as to bring it in.***

Where a road scheme was justified on the basis that it would support regeneration of an area with a struggling economy, it was common for economic development following completion of the road scheme to be slower than expected, or not to materialise at all, or to be of a type which offered little benefit to the area concerned."[12]

We consider that £130 million would be far better spent on schemes which create jobs as well as reducing carbon and improving quality of life for local residents. We consider this scheme a massive and costly mistake that is out of step with the climate crisis and more enlightened approaches to planning and place-making. We urge both councils to reconsider and look at more people-centred options for travel.

www.transitionchesterfield.org.uk

Making Chesterfield More Sustainable

[11] Minio-Paluello M and Markova A (2020) Can an infrastructure stimulus replace UK jobs wiped out by COVID19 crisis? Report by Transition Economics for the TUC. June 2020.
[12] https://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/the-impact-of-road-projects-in-england/