

Dear Councillor Woodman

Thank you for your October 16 reply to my note of September 14. The Parish Council considered it last week.

You say that without "significant evidence, e.g. a history of collisions involving personal injury", the County will not progress proposals even if they are supported. We are told that our case falls because the *Department for Transport* record does not show sufficient evidence of collisions.

Councillors were disappointed with this response and looked at the 49 *Small Improvement Schemes (SIS)* listed on the County's website. We saw that, for five years, 21 (43%) had no record of even a slight collision; 34 (70%) had no record of a serious incident, let alone a fatal one; and two-thirds of the programme comprised unclassified or B roads. It is difficult to square these facts with the claim that "resources are directed where there is clear evidence of significant problems or incidents".

It follows that our proposals have been dismissed purely on financial grounds. The SIS programme "regrettably, I have to advise, is fully subscribed," you say. Your officer was more candid, stating the programme had closed. Indeed, it closed in 2017 and is, we are told, unlikely to re-open before 2021. For four years, therefore, no proposals will be considered regardless of merit or consequences. It is hard to see how this is a tenable position for a Council with responsibility for roads and safety.

Shamefully, the county's website advertises the SIS programme as if it was live and well, still inviting submissions from the public and covering up the true position.

Our case is simple. The A37 through Gurney Slade has remained unchanged for the best part of a century. We sent you the evidence. It is actually now narrower as vegetation overgrows the carriageway south and weeds grow at its tarmac boundary. Consequently, lorries - and no road for miles has a higher proportion of HGVs - drive over the crown of the road making a mockery of the road markings, inexplicably painted after the road was top-dressed in 2017. Worse, it means north-bound lorries mount the footway when passing each other.

Salisbury Terrace is built along the straight through Gurney Slade beside the north bound carriageway. Effectively, residents have lost the use of their front doors. The footway is now too dangerous to use. You would not walk along it.

For the case for change, look along the A37 to Bristol. Communities north of Somerset - the boundary is not 3 miles from our parish - have benefitted from simple but effective safety measures that manage traffic, segregate vehicles from pedestrians and control speeds. Our parishioners can now clearly see the dangers they face from unprotected junctions, blind descents and a straight that allows reckless overtaking.

We did benefit from an SIS scheme. A puffin crossing was built in 2017. It is no longer safe because its road environment is not safe. We told you of the child who narrowly avoided probable fatal injury in March 2019 when a reckless north-bound vehicle ploughed through the crossing's red lights. Five collisions in three years with the adjacent Post Office wall add testimony to the danger in the area of the crossing.

In addition, we sent you evidence of a recent incident in which a vehicle crashed through a boundary fence into a back garden where children play.

The county's road safety strategy emphasises prevention. We believe our A37, unchanged for a century, has reached tipping point and has become unacceptably dangerous. We are sorry that you find none of this evidence compelling. We do and we fear for the safety of our residents.

Regards from

Richard Higgins (Chair), Jon Abbott (vice Chair), Philip Blatchford, Catherine Law, Phillip Roberts, John Scadding, David Stone

Binegar Parish Councillors

November 14 2019

On Wed, 16 Oct 2019 at 09:58, John Woodman - Councillor <JWoodman@somerset.gov.uk> wrote:

Dear Mr Higgins

Thank you for your email of 14th September 2019. I must apologise for the oversight in not replying to you sooner. You have drawn my attention to the A37 through Gurney Slade and I note your parish councils road safety concerns on this matter.

I have now had the opportunity to review the points you raise in more detail, discuss with the relevant officers at the County Council and consider the processes associated with the responses sent to you by one of our officers, Miss Davis.

As I am sure you will appreciate, any request for service has to be very carefully considered and prioritised in line with the available budgets. This involves making some very difficult decisions to ensure that our resources are directed where there is clear evidence of significant problems or incidents. Therefore, unless there is significant evidence e.g. a history of collisions involving personal injury, it is unlikely that we will be able to progress any proposals even if they are supported at this time. I understand that Miss Davis has made you aware of this situation. She has also advised you of the current position regarding the funding of improvement works through our Small Improvement Scheme process, which, regrettably, I have to advise is fully subscribed. I understand that Miss Davis will review the current signing and lining arrangements in the vicinity of the crossing to see if any limited improvements that can be made and have also asked her to report back to you directly on this matter.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for raising your concerns; we always welcome the opportunity to review our feedback, both good and bad.

If in the meantime if there is anything further that I can help you with, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards,

Cllr John Woodman

Cabinet Member – Highways and Transport