

Meeting 30/9/2020

31 Tyre Road  
Oakham  
Rutland  
LE15 8YJ

Oakham Town Council  
Long Row  
Oakham  
Rutland

29 August 2020

Dear Sirs

I refer to my letter to Rutland County Council dated 29 August 2020 (a copy of which I sent to Oakham Town Council).

Enclosed are some press cuttings concerning the subject of alterations to roads and parking spaces during the Covid19 epidemic. In Mill Street in particular and including the Market Place, I do not think due diligence has been taken concerning the effect this has had on blind and/or disabled people. For example at the junction of Mill Street and South Street the "road closed" sign appears to block part of the pavement.

As the Government is asking people to go back to work is it not time to remove all these barriers and signs? These alterations were only meant to be temporary and not a "back-door" way of making permanent changes.

My other concern is who are the unelected members of the 4 Oakham group, and what gives them the right to act on behalf of Oakham Town Council? Surely a sub-committee of Town Councillors would have been the correct way of going about this.

Yours faithfully



# Councils must stop abusing green roads cash

If implemented well, the scheme can transform the urban environment – but it requires sensible planning

GRANT SHAPPS



I'm a petrol-head. Well, perhaps more accurately an electric head.

I drive an electric car and it wows me with its technology and refinement. I drive for pleasure and for work, and believe our roads should be good to drive on.

There's a false dichotomy expressed by some about the car. For the planet to survive, the car must die, they say.

What I say is the car must evolve, and as rapidly as possible. In the meantime, we must fix our roads and keep the main arteries of our economy flowing.

That's why I fought for a record £27 billion to upgrade the roads our country depends on: going further than ever to ensure they are safe, well maintained and help keep people and goods moving. This is the largest road programme in our history. And we are putting a further £2 billion into filling in the blight of potholes that plague drivers and cyclists on the local roads

so many of us use every day.

We are tackling bottlenecks, helping people to get to work, and simply out and about – it's one of the central roles of my job as Transport Secretary.

None of this means ignoring the increasingly vital role of walking and cycling, which the Covid pandemic has thrust up the priority list. Or railways and trams, which offer travel fuelled by multiple sources of energy. But it does mean acknowledging the fact that the car has bestowed a degree of freedom that no one wants to surrender.

Roads are not the problem. It's the millions of internal combustion engines running along them contributing to climate change.

Engines that pump out harmful pollution when gridlocked on poor and inadequate highways, particularly in urban areas. We must change the vehicles using roads, not condemn ourselves to transport paralysis by stopping road building in its tracks but ensuring we have the right capacity where we need it.

For those who say we shouldn't be building roads, I say there is nothing green about standing still in traffic, pumping out CO2 and pollution. And either way, the future will be zero-emission cars which reduce dramatically the harm done to the environment.

People are waking up to the electric vehicle revolution. The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders,

which represents car manufacturers, recently showcased the dozens of new models on offer. And soon, green number plates will help make everyone aware that their numbers are growing exponentially – 5 per cent so far this year as opposed to around 1.5 per cent last year.

As part of this great road building revolution, we also want to make our roads more accessible for everyone, including the millions who have taken up cycling and walking as a way to get fit and complete shorter journeys.

That's why we have asked local authorities to come up with schemes to help all types of road user.

Done well – and I stress the “done well” – it is transforming our towns and cities, offering people the chance to walk and cycle safely, improving our fitness, health and the environment around us. Millions of people, the vast majority of them non-cyclists, have already benefited from measures to reduce rat-running through narrow residential streets, cut danger to children around schools, make walking easier and provide safe space for cycling on main roads. These measures sometimes cause noisy opposition, but surveys show they are very popular with the silent majority.

But as you would expect with things which are trials, not everything has worked. That's why they are trials – so they can be changed. Some councils have introduced random one-way systems, which don't seem to offer

many benefits to anyone. Some of those plastic barriers that have gone up in town centres to widen the pavements can actually prevent pedestrians, including disabled people, crossing the road. They narrow the carriage way for traffic, causing congestion and increasing danger for cyclists. They reduce parking for essential visits to the pharmacy or dentist or doctor. And they don't seem to be much used by pedestrians either. So a number of them will be coming out soon. We are also telling councils that now the height of the emergency has passed, there is time to consult people more.

Where some councils have abused the cash, my message is clear: speak to local residents, get it fixed or no more cash.

Environmental campaigners are not the only ones who care about pollution. Which motorist or lorry driver has not sat in a traffic jam and not been depressed by the fumes pumped out by stationary vehicles? We all want greener road transport. And as an electric car driver myself, I know the benefits. But let's have decent roads for all users.

*Grant Shapps is Secretary of State for Transport*

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# Blind people 'confounded' by green roads revolution

By Steve Bird

MANY blind people are struggling to emerge from lockdown because streets have been transformed by the Government's green transport revolution, campaigners have claimed.

And the National Federation of the Blind of the UK has received reports of people who use a white cane becoming entangled in tables and chairs set up on pavements to help social distancing.

The problems are compounded by other hazards including plastic barriers for temporary cycle lanes and so-called "bus stop bypasses", where the stop is sandwiched between the road and bike route. Andrew Hodgson, the federation's president, said blind people were finding new road and pavement layouts "confounding", making it almost impossible for them to socially distance.

"The changes to high street layouts have meant many now face an entirely new environment when they venture out," he said.

"Blind people need a clear building line to follow with their cane. But we are coming up against tables and chairs, as well as those sitting down to eat and drink. We feel the needs of blind people have been ignored when councils designed these new layouts."

Grant Shapps, the Transport Secretary, invited local authorities to bid for £250million to promote walking and cycling, to relieve pressure on public transport during the pandemic.

Sandy Taylor, the federation's Scottish representative, said some councils appeared to be flouting the Equality Act as they had failed to make "reasonable adjustment" for the blind or disabled.

"We are being excluded from our own towns and city centres," he said. "Everything is being done for cyclists."

A spokesman for the Local Government Association said: "Councils have had to make rapid decisions in order to adapt to social distancing guidelines and support the surge in demand for cycling and walking options due to the pandemic. They have tried to involve all parts of their communities as much as possible. Inevitably, not all schemes will be as successful as hoped and in some areas, these are being altered or removed to reflect changing local circumstances or views."

## enquiries

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**From:** ~~Chris Chapman~~ ~~chris.chapman1951@gmail.com~~  
**Sent:** 23 September 2020 16:07  
**To:** enquiries  
**Subject:** 1 Way system on Mill Street

Hi,

Can you please explain to me how you think that making Mill Street one way has any effect on "Social Distancing" presumably of pedestrians. It seems more likely to me that you are using concerns re Covid as an excuse to push through your thwarted agenda for changes to traffic flow in Oakham.

On a second matter as one can't go straight on at the traffic lights (coming from Brooke Rd) if you turn right (past the fire station) the phasing of the traffic lights at the end of South Street has not been extended resulting in backlogs of cars as the timing is now too short for the extra traffic.

Thanks,

Hi

I contacted RCC to ask that the one way system in Mill Street be removed forthwith as it serves no useful purpose at all.

They tell me that the one way system is in place at the request of the Town Council and 4Oakham.

Please advise when the one way system will be removed.

Kind regards