



Mr R Ward
Chairman
Dean and Shelton Parish Council
High Street Farm,
Upper Dean
Bedford
PE28 0LY

Contact: Jon Shortland
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23rd September 2019

Dear Mr Ward

Your Stage 2 (Senior Level Investigation) complaint

Firstly, I would like to thank you for giving feedback about our service. I am sorry that you have not had a positive experience in your dealings with the highways department and irrespective of the outcome of this complaint I very much value your feedback and will aim for the department to learn from your experiences where possible.

Your letter dated 30th August makes complaint about the manner in which my staff arranged the recent works in Upper Dean, and what you perceived to be their disregard for the concerns expressed by the Parish Council and others.

I have looked into your complaint, and find as follows.

Before deciding to implement a 24-hour closure, my staff explored alternative options and asked the appointed contractor to quote for clearing the site and re-opening the road for the safe passage of traffic every weekend.

The contractor advised that this would be likely to extend his programme for two weeks and cost £19,600 per weekend. These costs resulted from:

- demobilising the piling rig, welfare facilities and cabins and taking them to a safe location
- erecting temporary security fencing around all equipment at the safe location
- taking down the diversion route signage and site fencing
- providing temporary water filled barriers to protect the verge
- the reverse of the above tasks to enable site work to recommence the following week
- all associated downtime
- costs resulting from the consequent programme extension

If all of these tasks were to be undertaken not only at the end of each working week, but also at the end of each working day, the costs would be correspondingly higher.

In light of these potential additional costs, and the consequently increased timescale they would necessitate, the decision was taken to proceed under a continuous 24-hour closure.

I accept that the midsummer timing of the works may well have been inconvenient for farmers dealing with the harvest, but this season was deliberately chosen so as to minimise disruption to

schools and public transport. I regret that it is not always possible to accommodate all road users' aspirations when arranging works.

With regard to this aspect of your complaint, I find that the scheme engineers acted properly in considering alternative traffic management arrangements and selecting the one that offered the most advantages on a holistic basis.

Turning to the works themselves, it is correct that only the workers' cabin was in place on the road during the first weekend. This situation arose because the contractor was running behind programme at this point, due to safety-related concerns that we insisted must be resolved prior to works commencing. This led to the remainder of the plant and materials not being present until the Monday. As a result, I agree that the road could have been left open over that weekend.

With regard to the diversionary routes, the engineers did check for clashes with other planned roadworks. As a result, they identified the works in Tilbrook, which were scheduled to be complete by 30th July. Hence, the start of our works was delayed to 31st July to accommodate this.

Unfortunately, the Tilbrook works (in a neighbouring authority) over-ran by a day. This was outside our control but, in any case, the signed diversion route was actually to the west of Upper Dean through Yelden, Newton Bromswold, Chelveston and Shelton, not via Tilbrook.

In preparing for the works, we also instructed the contractor to erect "BUSINESSES OPEN AS USUAL" signs at key locations on the diversion route. We checked the signage on the first day of works and noted that these signs were missing. The contractor advised that they would be in place by the end of the day but, despite the engineers chasing this on a daily basis, I am sorry to say that they were not finally erected until the end of the first week of the works.

With regard to this aspect of your complaint, I find that although the works were completed five days ahead of programme, they were not delivered as planned and that this caused additional inconvenience to the public. I therefore offer an apology for the disruption caused to yourself, other residents, businesses and farmers in the vicinity of Upper Dean as a result of our works.

I very much hope that this response addresses your concerns. As a Parish Council, I understand that you do not have the right of appeal to the Ombudsman but, if any individuals remain dissatisfied, they can contact the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman on a personal basis. The Ombudsman's contact details are:

PO Box 4771
Coventry
CV4 0EH

Phone: 0300 061 0614
Online: www.lgo.org.uk

Yours sincerely

Jon Shortland
Chief Officer – Planning & Highways