



HELEN WHATELY MP
Member of Parliament for Faversham and Mid Kent

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

David Brazier
Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport
County Hall
Maidstone
Kent
ME14 1XQ

Reference No. HW54567

21 April 2023

Dear David,

As you know I am concerned about the closure of Upper Street in Leeds from July 2023 to January 2024. I have heard from many residents about this and also from Leeds' borough councillor. I am keen to make sure that my constituents concerns are heard, considered and acted on.

The planned road closure means a long diversion which will be detrimental to residents and businesses in Leeds and the surrounding area. This would be a problem were it just for a few days or weeks, but the six month period proposed makes this particularly serious.

Specific concerns are:

- Extended journey times due to traffic and the diversion
- Difficulty for children to get to and from school by bus.
- Potential delays for emergency services accessing the village
- Loss of income for businesses like the George Inn
- Damage to lanes and verges due to increased traffic on narrow country lanes

The majority of constituents and also Leeds Borough Cllr Gill Fort have made it clear to me that they want to see traffic lights used to maintain access through the village rather than a full closure.

Please could you advise me:

- What options have you considered to avoid the closure?
- What work has been done on implementing a temporary one-way-system as requested by residents, and also traffic lights?
- What options have you looked at to reduce the length of disruption? Will works continue during evenings and at weekends to shorten the duration? I recognise the need to avoid noisy works at night in residential areas.
- How will delays to emergency services vehicles be avoided? I have been told by residents that when Upper St has been closed in recent months there were delays to both fire engines and ambulances due to congested country lanes as cars, lorries and HGVs tried to avoid using the official diversion.
- How will children access school buses?

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- What steps will be taken to make sure HGVs do not use the lanes in the area, other than when accessing specific local properties? Lorries cause problems in the lanes in normal times, but it will be particularly important to make sure large vehicles do not attempt to use a narrow diversion route
- What steps are being taken to address the risk of damage to local road surfaces and verges? For instance, to make sure we don't see large potholes developing during the course of the works and damage to verges.
- What action will be taken to make good any damage to local roads and verges after the works?
- What steps will you take to support the George Inn, given the likely loss in revenue the pub will experience? I would very much like to understand the compensation the pub will be offered.

Generally, I am supportive of investment in local infrastructure, but I hope you can understand the concerns raised above. I would be grateful if you could address these points.

Best wishes,

Helen Whately MP
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