

HIGHWAYS RELATED ISSUES IN LINSLADE

In early 2018, representatives of the Friends of Leighton-Linslade in Bloom made a presentation to the Town Council over highways-related issues in the town which detracted from the town's appearance and could act to the town's detriment in the Anglia in Bloom judging. Two of the matters raised by the Friends were a non-functioning and leaning lamppost which had presumably been hit by a vehicle some considerable time previously situated outside the flats at the Wing Road roundabout (this had been inspected by a CBC crew in May 2017 but the problem long predated that), and railings and bollards at the junction of Vimy Road and Leighton Road which had been part demolished the previous summer during a police car chase. Both problems were been repeatedly raised with Central Bedfordshire including at a meeting in the town, organised through Cllr Dodwell, in May 2018 with two CBC officers, which was also attended by representatives of the Friends of Leighton-Linslade in Bloom and the Leighton Buzzard Society. The lamppost has, at long last now been replaced (early August 2020). However, nothing has yet been done about the damaged barrier railings and bollards at the outer edge of the pavement on the busy pedestrian route into town from Vimy Road with its Tesco, Aldi and Homebase stores. This route is extensively used by parents and children who park in the Tesco Car Park and walk to/from nearby schools and raises significant safety questions.

The brief history of the barrier railings following the incident in summer 2017 is as follows:

April 2018 Raised by several members with Mark MacDonald of CBC at a Town Council Planning and Transport Committee meeting which he attended. Within a relatively short period of time the bollards alone were reinstated but subsequently again hit by vehicles. In a separate email, the CBC officer stated about the railings that "these are bespoke railings to Leighton Buzzard and are no longer obtainable - An order to replace the whole side of railings will be carried out in the new financial year." The railings have not, however, been replaced apparently as there was not felt to be a relevant safety issue because the area is a 20mph zone. This would seem to be highly questionable when the bollards have been hit subsequently by vehicles (would not bollards plus fencing be more visible especially to the many lorry drivers using that junction?). The damaged bollards and absence of railings were raised on further occasions with Central Bedfordshire.

March 2019 In response to an email to the relevant CBC officer about the further damage to the bollards and continuing pedestrian safety concerns over that corner in the absence of the railings, the reply received stated: "This was reported to us via the report it web page and an officer raised an order to reset these bollards in February as a 28 day order, unfortunately the officer did not provide the statutory undertakers underground service plans so the work has not been able to be carried out as quickly as it should have been. I have tasked the officer to provide the stats plans and get the work completed as soon as possible". By May, the only progress had been to fill the holes left by the uprooted bollards with tarmac.

August 2019 In response to a further enquiry from the Town Clerk, the relevant CBC officer responded that nothing had yet been done at the location for two reasons – a damage claim at the location, and that there “is no engineering need for any pedestrian segregation at the location which is within a 20 mph limit, the footway is actually too narrow for any street furniture to be useful and it will compromise the footway width.” It seems strange that the next sentence noted “all the street furniture we have had at the location has been damaged by vehicles that we have routinely replaced.” It was stated that, nevertheless, a road safety assessment would be done to determine future action.

October 2019 The matter was discussed in two Town Council Planning and Transport meetings with the minutes of that of 9 October recording “The Committee expressed frustration at the delay in replacing the damaged bollards on Vimy Road/West Street and the damaged lamp column on Wing Road. Discussions with Central Bedfordshire Council had been ongoing for months and it had been hoped that the works would be done alongside the recent resurfacing.” The minutes of the subsequent meeting recorded that “It was hoped that action would be forthcoming in respect of the longstanding issues with the lamp column on Wing Road and the bollards on the corner of Vimy Road and West Street.”

January 2020 Council noted that there had still been no action.

While, as noted above, the lamp column by the Wing Road roundabout has finally been replaced, there has been no action to date to deal with the problems at the Vimy Road/Leighton Road junction where one bollard remains upright on the pavement, two are leaning after impacts and a further two are absent with tarmac covering the base holes.

Quite recently, a sign column on the “island” in the middle of the road on the town side of the Leighton/Vimy Road roundabout has been hit and is now a stump covered by warning adhesive tape.

Against the above background, I suggest an urgent response be sought from Central Bedfordshire as to what action they propose to take at the Vimy Road/Leighton Road (or West Street) junction, (and when), given the long-standing untidy and dilapidated state of the bollards which remain, together with what would appear to be clear historic evidence of danger to pedestrians as shown by the damage to the previous bollards and referred to in their own correspondence.

Cllr Clive Palmer

7 August 2020