

Local Residents' Report on

Proposed Changes to the Lawnswood Roundabout

*Prepared for the LCC Scrutiny Board for
Infrastructure, Investment and Inclusive Growth*

*Meeting to be held on
Tuesday 4th Sept 2019*

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The Lawnswood Roundabout



Would you advocate destroying this?

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An Aerial View



We think that this change does not enhance the environment

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Why We Are Here

- **Original Proposal**

- Main focus on improving bus journey times
- Safety for pedestrians and cyclists a secondary concern
- Destruction of 49 mature trees and indicated cost of £10m

- **Points from Cllr J Bentley January 2019, reflecting concerns over:**

- Public consultation
- Decision making processes
- Value for money
- Environmental impact

- **Subsequent Developments**

- Change of portfolio lead
- “Back to the drawing board” decision – bus time improvement now accepted as not achievable
- Current focus of planning is understood to be on pedestrian and cyclist safety

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Who We Are

- **Group of local residents have self-organised to oppose poorly conceived plans**
 - Facebook page with 591 members
 - Petition with ca 1,600 signatories
 - Engaged with local MP and Weetwood ward LCC councillors
 - Engaged with planning consultants and council officers
 - Linked in with other campaign groups (eg Leeds Youth Strike 4 Climate X)
 - Media presence on Look North and YEP
- **Deep frustration in our experience with LCC in this matter**

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How We Have Tried to Engage With LCC Timeline

- Public review of plans 1 in Headingley Jun 2018
- Deputation at council meeting 12 Sept 2018
- Public review of plans 2 at Lawnswood YMCA 13 Sept 2018
- Meeting held with LCC's Andrews Hall and Wheeler 15 April 2019
- Plans "paused for review" April 2019
- Local elections leading to change of portfolio lead 02 May 2019
- "Lawnswood Roundabout Saved" (political announcement) 07 Jun 2019
- Invited to attend September scrutiny meeting 15 Aug 2019
- Scrutiny meeting 04 Sept 2019

"We have not been able to secure a meeting with a LCC Executive Member"

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Area of Concern: Public Consultation

- **Should begin at the start of the project, not as an add-on at the end**
 - Should begin when all options are on the table (Appendix 3)
- **Public consultation should engage local experts – the residents**
 - Starts at the **project outset**, not after draft plans have been made. Continuous thereafter
 - Is **free** (unlike expensive paid professional consultants)
 - Quickly **screens-out obvious “non starters”**: eg “Headingley is the problem, not Lawnswood”
 - **Builds trust** with the community at an early stage, avoids “entrenched positions” developing
 - For examples of the quality of local people’s input, see Appendix 2
- **Consultation made over the plans was:**
 - Too late in the process, “11th hour”
 - Badly organised – “chaotic and fragmented”
- **The waste of £0.4m public money was avoidable**
 - *Have any lessons been learned from other aborted projects, Supertram etc? Why has no new consultation taken place for the “back to the drawing board” plans?*

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Area of Concern: Control of Projects

- **A successful project starts with a rigorous planning brief**
 - Defines the space in which the planners have to find an acceptable solution
 - Contains a **clear problem statement** - why do we think action is needed?
 - Sets out the **stakeholder engagement approach** (inc public consultation)
 - References appropriate strategies – identify and **embed strategy in operational planning**.
 - Defines any “**red lines**” Eg “the area is a garden gateway for North Leeds and this essential nature should be maintained and enhanced”
 - **Signed-off** by an Executive Member. Clear ownership/leadership – “don’t blame the planners”
- **Forms part of a robust **stage-gate control process****
 - Controls the entire lifecycle of a project, ideation through to post project review
 - Evaluation at each gate, using weighted scoring against defined acceptance criteria

The Lawnswood project shows no evidence of any of the above and is in clear conflict with “Making Leeds Green” and Climate Change Emergency

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Area of Concern: Decision Making

- **Why was Lawnswood the focus of bus journey time improvement plans?**
 - Downstream bottlenecks towards Headingley and beyond are the issues
 - **Building a “Lawnswood Flyover” would not decrease journey times**
 - Any connection to a stealth plan to build a northern orbital road?
 - Was the non-achievable bus time improvement used merely to justify funding from LPTIP?
 - Plans have all the hallmarks of a “top down” led project rather than public demand
- **Why were environmental matters not given higher weighting?**
 - Landmark Garden Gateway set to be destroyed, 49 mature trees lost, over-urbanise
 - Increased pollution near a school from idling engines held at lights?
- **The same arguments were advanced consistently for 9 months**
 - **Q: Why did it take a change in portfolio lead to arguments recognise these arguments?**

“If the local community had not fought so hard, deeply flawed plans would have been implemented”

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Area of Concern: Communication

- **Why was the decision to “go back to the drawing board” made**
 - as a Labour Party Political communication, rather than a communication from LCC?
 - Delayed for a week after the decision
 - State that the roundabout is “saved”. This is not the case
- **Everyone likes to criticise “the Corporation”** *but is LCC aware of how its lack of communication gives rise to a lack of trust? Example – the recent removal of a mature cherry tree on the ring road. Conspiracy theories were flying.*

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Summary and Recommendations

- **LCC needs to develop an effective stakeholder engagement policy**
 - Strong public perception of being “arrogant” – lack of public trust
 - Transformational journey - become customer-centric, listening and learning organisation
 - One element of this is developing an appropriate public consultation process.
- **Develop a robust stage-gate process to control projects**
 - Prevent bad ideas from progressing forward and consuming valuable resources
 - Covers entire lifecycle - from ideation through to post-project review
 - Includes an appropriate planning brief to start with
 - Clear ownership by a sponsoring LCC Executive member
 - Formal evaluation at each stage gate, with objective weighted scoring against criteria

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Appendices

- **A. Example of a Stage Gate Process**
- **B. Example of Input Available from Local Resident**
 - Lived next to the Lawnswood Roundabout for 31 years
 - Assistant Head Teacher at Lawnswood School for 19 years
 - Children attended Lawnswood School
- **C. Article from the Guardian by George Monbiot, dated 22 Aug 2018)**

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Appendix A: Example of a Stage Gate Process

