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Date: Thu, 11 Nov 2010 10:23:25 +0000
Subject: =?Windows-1252?Q?TWA_Inquiry_Evergreen_3_=96_Islip_Crossing?=?

Hello

I know it is late in the day but I ask that the following statement read at the Inquiry when Islip Crossing is discussed. It reflects the content of a letter written by me to Islip Parish Council, who, I believe, are misrepresenting the interests of public amenity and conservation with regard to the replacement of the level crossing with a pedestrian one.

I am at a loss to explain the support claimed by Islip Parish Council (IPC) for a subterranean solution (an underpass) in favour of a bridge. Since I have discussed this with neighbours at this end of Kidlington Road – who make extensive use of Mill Lane – I am aware of no such support. In fact, I am aware of strong opposition to an underpass. When I have asked individuals if they had been consulted in the IPC survey, they all replied they had not. I am therefore forced to conclude that this survey was selective, at least, and possibly conducted persuasively. Six neighbours in particular (three households) went out of their way to waylay me and communicate their anger over the prospect of a subway, rather than a bridge, as had been promised by Chiltern.

Leaving popular opinion aside (whatever it may in fact be), I must point out that I consider it irresponsible and incorrect for IPC to denigrate the objections to an underpass listed by Chiltern. It *will* fill up with water when it rains, since a pump *will* fail, on occasion. Who do we call? Network Rail are arguably the most unresponsive organisation outside Albania. Will IPC commit to maintenance in perpetuity? It *will* act as a sink for leaves and rubbish. Who will clear it? Again, IPC? It *will* attract petty crime (graffiti, litter deposit, *etc.*) and drug use – to contradict IPC's assumption, there *have* been needles and related detritus along Mill Lane (I know; I picked them up). I have never heard of a bridge attracting antisocial behaviour; underpasses are well known for it. Lastly, an underpass *is* an urban feature; rail bridges have been part of the landscape for well over a century – they blend in. Together with retaining walls, bollards, and other associated features, IPC are inviting a significant step in the urbanisation of this precious village (a creeping blight I have witnessed before).

In my humble opinion, the case for an underpass, in favour over a bridge has been pursued with exceptional vigour by a small handful of loud individuals who are more concerned with the view out of their window and the value of their property than with public amenity and conservation. They have been allowed undue voice and have subverted our Parish Council. As is so typical in English life, the aspiration of ordinary folk, with a softer voice and little time to spare, has been ridden over roughshod.

I call upon the Inquiry to respect the professional assessment made by Chiltern/ERM and to answer the questions listed above, before recommending that an underpass should replace a bridge.

Thank you

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