



Dear Cabinet Member,

I am writing to you about the A650/Newton Bar Roundabout “junction improvement scheme” that is due to break ground in January.

I am writing on behalf of Just Transition Wakefield to demand that this scheme is cancelled.

I will explain the reasoning below, and make concrete suggestions to support your decision making, including working with WYCA to replace the current scheme with a scheme that focuses on improving safety and free movement of buses, pedestrians and cyclists through the junction.

As it stands, this scheme is a waste of £9.5 million of public money.

Critique of the current scheme.

1. The scheme is based on outdated and inappropriate models of traffic growth. These assume a constant increase in car ownership and private car commuting, based on 20th century models. They are not fit for purpose in the 21st century when we are actively planning for reductions in car use and increasing use of public and active transport. Our guiding principle should be “Build for the traffic you want, not the traffic you have”.
Even more critically, when examining the data, it is clear that traffic growth in West Yorkshire was essentially zero in the decade 2000 to 2010 and very low in the decade 2011 to 2021. Your traffic monitoring on the A61 approaching the Newton Bar roundabout illustrates this clearly:
<https://roadtrafficstats.uk/traffic-statistics-wakefield-a61-wakefield-16578>
Data we have seen suggests that traffic queues less than 1,000m in both peaks do not qualify for congestion amelioration. We have never observed queues like this at this junction.
Therefore, it is clear that this scheme is an historical anachronism, and to go ahead with it will be to build a monument to the 20th century paradigm of car ownership.
2. As the scheme currently stands, at least 107 mature trees will be destroyed, releasing tonnes of sequestered carbon into the atmosphere from both the tree carcasses, from the soil and in the future loss of carbon sequestration. New trees planted will take decades to replace the sequestration power of

these mature trees. This is incompatible with your declared climate emergency.

3. The loss of these mature trees and associated shrubbery will damage the ecosystem in the area by removing habitats including well-established soil biomes that have remained undisturbed for years. This is incompatible with your declared ecological emergency.
4. The loss of these mature trees will remove the ability of the site to absorb air pollution from traffic. As society moves to electric cars, whilst gaseous emissions such as carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide will decrease, studies show that particulate pollution will increase – particularly PM10 and PM2.5. We need these trees to help manage this airborne pollution throughout the transition to zero carbon transport.
5. The loss of these mature trees, and their replacement with a huge road system, will not provide a positive visual aesthetic to welcome people into the city, and will in fact tell the world that Wakefield is anything but a green city.
6. The cycle and pedestrian proposals are inadequate for anticipated future demand, forcing both to be held together in the central reservation whilst waiting for lights – this does not allow for any significant planned increase in cycle commuting.
7. The proposed slip road to “accelerate” traffic from the city onto the A650 and the motorway network is misguided and mis-designed. The complexities of the junction require traffic light control not traffic merging. Therefore there will be no benefit to this traffic. We have counted 11 sets of lights to manage traffic flow through the junction, with further pedestrian lights adding to the mix and no doubt driver frustration.
8. The proposed “hamburger” road through the roundabout is designed to accelerate traffic flow from the A650 (from the motorway network) into the city. However, it is again the wrong solution. The traffic leaving the roundabout has barely 200 yards before stopping for the Leeds Road/Wentworth Street/Bradford Old Road interchange. Again, this restricts traffic flowing off the roundabout already and this congestion point will remain unchanged – the proposal will not deliver improved traffic flow. This is before considering that traffic using the “hamburger” road will have to pass through two sets of lights.
9. The proposals make no change to traffic flows along Bar Lane, or exiting Bar Lane at Newton Bar – the only place where congestion is a problem – although nothing like the scale of the traffic problems in bigger cities such as Leeds. There may be some advantage to traffic here through the traffic light control systems, but this will simply slow other traffic flows from other approach roads.
10. Finally, we have not seen the detail since planning on the area known locally as “The Green”. This is earmarked for either a flood attenuation pond or underground tank. We do not believe that the local community who use the green are really aware of the threat to their amenity.

It is clear to everyone looking at the proposals that the scheme is designed to increase traffic flows between the city and the motorway network. In other words, it is designed to encourage and increase long-distance commuting in private cars – the exact opposite of what is needed to mitigate the accelerating climate emergency. This is why we are demanding that the scheme is cancelled, and why we encourage

WYCA to bear the contractor costs from the project funds. We believe that this is a better use of public money than spending £9,500,000 to trash an ecosystem for at best no easing of congestion, at worst, increased traffic levels.

We are very happy to work with WYCA and Wakefield Council to look at a new scheme within the remaining project fund that would deliver the kind of improvements that we need for the future zero carbon world we are all aiming for.

Alongside this letter, we are writing to the West Yorkshire Combined Authority to demand that they cancel the scheme and redirect remaining funds to bus, pedestrian and cycle improvements to this junction. We ask you to work with all West Yorkshire transport campaigners, and all local authorities, to create the conditions for WYCA to at least pause if not cancel all road schemes, because none have been assessed against the combined authority's own Carbon Emissions Reduction Pathway studies.

The UK has just spent a fortnight engaged in detailed climate study through COP26 reporting. Many of us have been on the streets to demand change, many others have listened to the daily news updates and reports. Our own West Yorkshire Mayor has made very clear statements about cities and regions taking leadership roles and moving ahead of central government. This is Wakefield's opportunity to draw a red line on climate damage and remain a climate leader in the region.

As Greta Thunberg said on Twitter: "the people in power don't need conferences, treaties or agreements to start taking real climate action. They can start today." This is Wakefield's opportunity to be the force for good on the right side of history. Of all of the five councils, Wakefield is the one with consistency – opposing HS2, opposing the expansion of Leeds Bradford Airport. To allow this scheme to go ahead runs counter to your recent good work, which is why we appeal to you to cancel this scheme.

Yours faithfully,



Stuart Boothman
On behalf of
Just Transition Wakefield

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<https://justtransitionwakefield.org.uk>
jtw@justtransitionwakefield.org.uk