



Angela Billing Clerk to Blisworth Parish Council
Address: 48 Pond Bank, Blisworth, NN7 3EL
Tel: 07983233501 01604 857602
Email: blisworthparishcouncil@gmail.com
Website: <https://parish.blisworthvillage.org>

Date: 21/09/2023

By email to: Councillor Jonathan Nunn
CC'd to:

Rt Hon Andrea Leadsom, Conservative MP for South Northamptonshire

Ian Rigby, Director Technical Development, National Logistics SEGRO

Scott Martin, Project Director Civils & Infrastructure WINVIC

Nick Henstock, Assistant Director for Highways

Sam Simons, Kier (Highways)

Phil Larratt, Cabinet Member for Transport and Highways

Stephen Mold, Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner

Dear All

Blisworth Parish Council request that each organisation approached in this email send a representative to the next Blisworth Parish Council meeting on 2nd October 2023 to discuss the issues detailed below. We appreciate that this is short notice, but feel there is an urgent need to resolve the current situation. I will, if I may, contact each of your offices this week to follow up on this email.

It has been extremely difficult to find the correct contact details, particularly for WNC and Kier (Highways). May we please ask that if this has been sent to the wrong representative for your organisation, would you please forward it to the correct official as a matter of urgency.

Blisworth Parish Council has been informed that the essential roadworks to stabilise the embankment on Stoke Road to make this road safe have been delayed as a direct result of the road closures while SEGRO/WINVIC continue their various works and their road closures.

We have also been informed that the delay in stabilising the road will NOT constitute a road failure as long as:

THERE ARE NO OVERWEIGHT VEHICLES AND THAT THE 3T-WEIGHT RESTRICTION IS ADHERED TO AT ALL TIMES.

Currently, and for some time, we have seen a massive increase in traffic from c. 5000 vehicles per day to c. 9000 vehicles per day on one route alone, causing large tailbacks of traffic in all directions through the Conservation Area in Blisworth.

This greater volume of traffic alone is likely to impact on the safety and the stability of the road, but the vehicles that exceed the 3T weight limit exacerbate this danger and increase the risk that this road may collapse before the stabilising work can be completed.

We are writing to you to highlight that the situation for Stoke Road poses a significant Health and Safety issue for the public and to highlight the real risk that the road could collapse due to the increased volume of traffic, the constant illegal movements of vehicles over 3T and the delay in the repairs.

We are also writing to you because, as a Parish Council, we have tried to raise the issue of the traffic in Blisworth and in particular the safety of Stoke Road with West Northants, Kier (Highways), the Police and SEGRO/WINVIC, but we cannot get any organisation to take responsibility. Each organisation sign-posts us to the other.

We have requested help from Highways, but they say it is an issue for the Police. We have requested support from the Police but they say it is an issue with Highways. In addition, they say they cannot help because the roads need to be closed due to the SEGRO/WINVIC works and they are dealing with other issues, including monitoring other road closures. Our Police Community Support Officer cannot help as PCSOs cannot stop vehicles. Despite the fact that the Police ask us to report any overweight vehicles, we have also been informed that drivers are rarely pursued for this type of offence. As a result, drivers of overweight vehicles, particularly those living in and around the village, realise that they can breach the law with impunity.

We are not concerned about this issue merely as repeated traffic offences but because of the danger that the constant illegal movements of vehicles over 3T and the delay in the repairs constitutes a real risk to the Health and Safety of the public.

As a small Parish Council we cannot resolve this issue without the support of larger, key players with more influence and responsibility.

We appreciate that the Police have many legitimate demands on their time and cannot monitor Stoke Road to apprehend drivers that illegally contravene the 3T weight limit, so we are asking that West Northants, Kier (Highways), the Police and SEGRO/WINVIC work together to put in place **effective and immediate** strategies to safeguard the road and all the road users (both residents and others using the road).

We have also been informed that there is a plan to install 7T weight limit signage along the routes effected by the SEGRO (WINVIC) roadworks, but not until October 2023.

This is **NOT** sufficient to help the residents in Blisworth or to deter drivers from using the village as a rat-run.

To safeguard the residents and road-users of Stoke Road, we need

1. **IMMEDIATE clear signage on all roads leading to Stoke Road, and on Stoke Road itself, highlighting that there is a:**

**DANGER OF THE ROAD COLLAPSING
NO VEHICLES OVER 3T
Drivers contravening this will be prosecuted**

(The signage needs to change because most drivers believe we are simply causing an inconvenience. If they are aware that their loads and their vehicles are at risk and that they are liable, this will act as a better deterrent).

2. **We also need CCTV to collect evidence of infringement** (this is something SEGRO/WINVIC could install quickly and at relatively little expense). **The Police then need to ensure that all drivers breaching the weight limit are prosecuted.**
3. Candle Bridge is also subject to a 10T weight limit for the very good reason that the bridge is not structurally sound and cannot take any weight above 10T. We have received notification of a number of overweight vehicles using the bridge as a cut through the village. Therefore we also need further signage on the approach routes to Candle Bridge (which has a 10-T weight limit) to safeguard the bridge and the public using the tow-path under the bridge. (We have been asking Highways for this for over a year).

In addition to these immediate issues we would like to bring to your attention our endeavours to improve the road safety of all the roads in Blisworth. The increase in traffic in recent years has meant that it is increasingly dangerous for residents using the pavements and trying to cross the roads. HGVs have to mount the pavements in order to negotiate the tight junctions. The traffic pollution increases every day and children and the elderly cannot safely traverse the High Street, Stoke Road or Northampton Road.

We have petitioned Highways for a number of road safety controls that could help to alleviate the situation:

- A. Traffic-light monitored pedestrian crossing located on High Street (Highways have informed us that the only position would be at the current bus stop on the junction of High Street and Northampton Road). Currently the only safe time children and the elderly can cross the road is when the local school traffic warden is in place. (Blisworth Parish Council help to fund the cost of the traffic warden each year).



Proposed position of a traffic-light monitored pedestrian crossing.

- B. 20 mph zone through the main routes of the village, especially along Courteenhall Road and along High Street by the school, local shop and the church. We have been informed that we need to submit a request to the relevant bodies but when we request further information as to what

evidence they would deem to be supportive, we get no response at all. Many villages have 20 mph speed limits, particularly in school zones, so we fail to see the difficulty here.

- C. We have had a number of near misses of traffic on the Towcester Road (leading towards the A43). Again, the excessive speed of the drivers and high number of HGVs means that residents are at risk when using the bus service and exiting their drives. We propose that rumble strips could be installed to alert the traffic that they need to slow down on the approach to housing along this stretch of the road.



Proposed position rumble strips to slow the traffic down as they exit/join the A43.

- D. Similarly the approach to Blisworth village from the Northampton Road is also very dangerous. Drivers travelling at speed (Northampton Road has a National Speed limit) are not aware that there is often a tail back of traffic waiting to negotiate entry into the village around the bend, so that when the turn the bend, they often have to slam on their brakes to avoid collision with waiting traffic. Better signage of the inevitable delays would warn drivers, as would rumble strips on this approach as well.
- E. In Blisworth currently there are no safe routes for mobility scooters to safely travel in the village independently. This is because the dropped kerbs do not match up; forcing residents to travel along the main road and compete with HGVs and fast traffic.
- F. Furthermore, we have been informed that when the works on stabilising Stoke Road are complete, Highways and WNC will remove the 3T-weight restriction and it is a lengthy and difficult process to get the 3T-weight restriction reinstated on a permanent basis. This seems like a completely retrograde measure, and grossly unhelpful to residents. As it is, the repairs are a temporary fix, as more permanent repairs cannot be carried out without impacting the foundations of the nearby buildings. Without a permanent 3T-weight restriction, the road will again be at risk of collapse and the residents will be subjected to the same concerns: high volumes of oversized vehicles damaging their cars, their homes, mounting the kerbs and making the road unsafe for children and the elderly. The Council has a responsibility to ensure that public money is spent wisely, and having spent thousands of pounds fixing the road, it would seem irresponsible to remove a weight restriction which helps prevent its future deterioration. By simply maintaining and monitoring the signage that has already have been paid for and installed, we can help ensure that the road and residents are safeguarded.

G. Stoke Road is currently a classified road. We would like all parties to work together to make it an unclassified road as this would help safeguard against inappropriate traffic being diverted along the road from classified roads in the future.

Equally imperative is that we need you, with your expertise and the actual power to effect change, to take on the challenges detailed above and to work together to resolve these issues. As we have already stated, we are a small, local parish council and we rely on your expertise and agreement to work together to expedite these issues. Blisworth Parish Council is happy to convene an extraordinary meeting to suit your schedules so that we can urgently action the suggested remedies.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Billing
Chair of Blisworth Parish Council

Appendix – Just a small selection of evidence of the traffic situation in Blisworth



