

## Wokingham Borough digs a bigger hole over California Crossroads

The Lib Dem Councillors got the Borough to send out a "News release" to tell us what we already know, that the Crossroads are badly disrupted by roadworks they have imposed. The "news" they say is that the work is "on track". Does that mean it will finish on time? What is the promised date to get the roads back? When will the nearby estates be spared the rat runs through to avoid the junction? How much are they spending on all the signs, traffic cones and temporary traffic lights that have sprung up? Is it on budget, large though that is, or will it overrun? This is a junction to the south of my current constituency used by my constituents that comes into the new constituency of Wokingham at the next election.

We are told these improvements come "at no cost to local taxpayers". Is the Council unaware that Borough taxpayers pay a lot of Income Tax and VAT and this money is being used to pay for these works? The Council designed and approved the scheme despite local opposition. The government provides grant from taxation for schemes Councils choose and undertake and does not seek to impose its own alternative view of what is wanted. This is part of the local road network, not part of national highways run by the government. They reveal a wanton approach to tax revenues in this throw away line.

It says the work will create "an appealing and safe centre ". We already had an appealing and safe centre before they dug it all up. The long works are doing grave damage to local businesses which many people have used in the past but now cannot get to owing to closed roads. The Council has failed to help or reimburse these important local businesses. Locals want to keep them and many need cars to get to them.

If instead of ignoring the consultation replies against the scheme the Council had been interested in how existing users would like improvements the number one ask would probably have been a larger car park. The present car park before road closures could just about handle the shops traffic, but could not handle all the cars needing access to the school at drop off or pick up times of day as well. The Council clearly ignores the needs of parents or believes they should all walk with their children whatever the weather and the distance.

I have often used these shops and garage as a driver and as a pedestrian after parking. Cars went through the old junction at a slow speed so if anyone stepped onto the road to cross the car would stop. The junction allowed the flow of a large number of vehicles safely and successfully. The Councillor says this was "an unloved road junction, which has been dominated by traffic". It was far from being unloved as the high volumes of car and pedestrian use and use of the shops and school showed. The Councillor implies that the new junction will take less traffic. If so it will make the local facilities less loved with fewer visitors and mean fewer people to keep them going.