

Highways and Transportation

110 Merrion Centre

Leeds

LS2 8BB

05 July 2021

Dear Mr Maude,

East Leeds Orbital Route (ELOR) – Leeds Road Closure

Firstly, my thanks to you and your fellow Parish Council members for attending the meeting last week on the 1st of July 2021. As promised, I write to confirm a number of points and commitments made in advance of your meeting tonight. Some of the comments below also reflect previous communications and meetings held between the delivery team and ELOR Working Party during June 2021.

As stated at the meeting, please be reassured we are taking the concerns relayed to the Council on this matter very seriously. We do recognise that the proposed closure has caused strong feeling locally with residents feeling misled. In undertaking our work, we are taking into account and balancing a number of variables, including and notably disruption to local communities, the safety of contractors seeking to complete this important project for the city on behalf of the Council and the safety of the general public who use the public highway in the area. This has been the ethos for delivering this very significant infrastructure project since it commenced early 2020. Unfortunately, sometimes, it is not possible to reconcile all the variables.

As was explained at our meeting, this is a design and build contract. The information provided to the Working Party and the Parish Council in February 2020 relating to the initial construction phasing was accurate at that time. Since that time the design has evolved and led to changes although the intention remains very much to deliver 90% plus of this very significant infrastructure scheme off line.

Following the development of the elevation, drainage and utility design of all junctions, construction phasing was developed further. Due to the existing levels and narrow width of the existing road here, the originally proposed methodology was not able to be utilised. From that time the Contractor has looked at other options to avoid a road closure. This has been challenged by senior managers on several occasions but unfortunately the closure is the only viable option here. With that conclusion drawn, consideration has then to be given to the timing of the proposed closure.

We acknowledge that more work could have been conducted regarding buildability constraints as the land acquisition process was progressed in the earlier stages. This would have provided an increased working area at the new Leeds Road junction giving the Contractor more scope to mitigate such a closure. Council Officers have a duty to balance what is needed to promote the scheme with wider land interests.

To that end, the impact has been mitigated as much as possible considering the time of year the closure has been approved for. When we are considering permitting such temporary closure applications we regularly look to restrict contractors to complete the works in the school holidays. This is because there is approximately a 15% reduction in traffic volumes during this time and is a very noticeable reduction on normal traffic flows. It is also worth noting here that our monitoring of general traffic flows across the city show they have been increasing again but are still significantly below pre-COVID levels. The two

combined will reduce impact on the local communities if the work is completed in the 6 week holiday period.

As is normal practice, any other works planned on the network will continue to be closely coordinated by the Network Management team.

We will maintain multiple routes of access and egress to and from the villages. We acknowledge the concerns raised regarding potential issues with the performance of the A64/Scholes Lane end junction. This has already been considered and ongoing traffic surveys will take place prior to and during the closure to understand if there would be benefit to installing temporary traffic lights at this junction. There is a concern not to intentionally encourage/facilitate the right turn manoeuvre from the A64 through Scholes as a rat run but also want to allow the most efficient movements to take place across the local network. All survey data will be shared with you on a weekly basis.

All emergency services have been contacted with no concerns raised. As discussed last week, we will contact the Ambulance Service again to ensure they are aware of the proposed closure.

I can confirm there will be a temporary **free** shuttle bus provision in place for the duration of the closure to maintain public transport service and to ensure bus patronage continues.

Provision for turning areas for the refuse teams to continue their service as normal will be made.

We will provide a letter drop to all Barwick and Scholes residents with further details on the free shuttle bus and any further suitable information regarding the closure. This will be delivered in the coming weeks prior to the closure once we receive all of the information from the bus operators and relevant partners.

In addition to this, advance information signs will be placed across the wider network within 7 days to help inform all traffic of the upcoming closure helping to redirect and disperse traffic evenly across the rest of the network. As forewarned at the meeting, it is our experience that for the first day or two of such closures, there may be some drivers who forget the signs before things settle down.

Original estimates for the duration of the closure proposed here were 12 weeks. This was unacceptable and the Contractor and the team have worked hard to condense this to approximately 6 weeks and to contain the works within the 6 week holiday period utilising the current extended working hours that has been granted to the Contractor. This will be challenging because of the work involved, the different levels involved, utility diversion work and the presence of coal tar which has to be handled with appropriate precautions. Nevertheless, all parties are committed to doing their utmost to complete the works in this period and there is some confidence this is achievable. There is time risk allowance included within the programme but there are residual risks that will continue to be monitored daily as the work progresses. None more so than the potential impact Covid can have on the scheme and of course weather.

Please be assured that the Contractor and delivery team continue to consider and mitigate impact to local communities across the whole footprint of this very significant infrastructure project. The scheme commenced over 14 months ago and has made great progress through multiple challenges including the global pandemic with minimal disruption to neighbouring communities. We are on track to deliver this important scheme for the city in Spring 2022.

Rob O'Brien continues to be the nominated officer for the project so please contact him in the first instance with any further queries.

We hope we have demonstrated at our recent meeting that we have given proper regard to the options and challenged the Contractor, and while the outcome maybe disappointing we feel we have arrived at the optimum arrangement given the constraints discussed. We do apologise for any inconvenience this closure will cause and appreciate your ongoing input into the scheme. If I have missed anything following our conversation last week, please do let me or Rob know.

Yours faithfully,

Gary Bartlett

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "G J Bartlett". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small flourish at the end.

Chief Officer
Highways & Transportation