

Proposed 3rd Prison. Ulnes Walton

I am responding to an email I received from the Ulnes Walton Village Community Group in relation to road safety concerns in the vicinity of the proposed 3rd prison and accidents which have occurred in the last few years on Southport Road. These accidents I have knowledge of as they occurred either directly in front of our house or within 50 yards.

They requested that any information be forwarded to you.

I live on the A581 Southport Road, Ulnes Walton between Lydiate Lane and New Lane which is a principal route to the current prisons.

One of the ten most Dangerous Roads in the Country.

The speed limit at this location is 30mph.

It is accepted by several organisations that the A581 at Ulnes Walton is a very dangerous road and there is ample evidence to support that assertion.

In an article in the Lancashire Telegraph dated the 14th of April 2022 it was described as one of the four worst stretches of road for motorcycle accidents in the County.

In an article in the Lancashire Post, dated the 16th of October 2018, the headline is: Four of the most dangerous council managed roads in the **country** are in Lancashire. The article lists at number 10 the A581 between Rufford and Euxton which of course encompasses Ulnes Walton.

If you were to google Carthrottle. There is an article headed Wheel scary: The Ten most dangerous roads in the Country. Listed at Number 6 is the A581 Chorley to Rufford (Lancashire) It is quite significant that the picture of the road that is displayed is the approach to the right-hand bend with our home being some 10 yards around the bend and where most of the accidents have originated from. Although this article appears to have been published in 2012 the road still appeared in the top ten in the country in 2018 and our experience is that nothing has changed since 2012, indeed it has become more dangerous.

An article in Lancslive published on the 19th of November 2019 also identifies the road as one of the most dangerous roads in the country.

There are plenty of other items published in respect of this including the Safer Roads Fund programme for Lancashire County Council and the Road Safety Partnership

In an unrelated matter all the residents in our immediate area raised road safety concerns in 2022 with the Highways Department at Chorley Council whose response was to say that their data did not show any accidents in the vicinity of Southport Road between Lydiate Lane and New Lane.

We, the residents were non-plussed with this as you will see later in this email. When challenged over this they said that the data relied on information from the police. You will see in relation to one particular accident that the police attended an horrific and potentially fatal accident shortly after it occurred, so we are sceptical as to how the Highways Department were not aware.

It should also be noted that most accidents do not involve the police and generally motorists deal with it themselves by exchanging details. This is perhaps a long-winded way of saying that data and statistics from organisations does not reflect the reality of concerns that residents have.

A few years ago, a speed indicator device was installed some 50 yards from our home indicating the speed of motorists travelling from the directions of Chorley, this is not a speed camera. Clearly this was a road safety concern from the Council. This has made no difference to those vehicles intent on travelling in excess of the speed limit, indeed during last summer several residents took to observing the speed travelling from the Lydiate Lane junction westwards and we estimated that 60% of vehicles exceeded the speed limit and of the remaining 40%, we consider that most of them would have been responsible drivers anyway and would generally obey the 30mph speed limit.

As stated previously has been widely recognised by Lancashire County Council and Road Safety Groups that this is a very dangerous road and in an effort to address that average speed cameras have been installed on the A581 between Rufford to the West and Euxton to the East, whilst this is very welcome for those residents who live on that stretch (and of course the Emergency Services ,who have to deal with the aftermath of fatalities) it has little effect in our particular location. Part of the reason for this is that the cameras are in entirely the wrong place as vehicles travelling at excess speed from the west and passing the first camera have to naturally slow down as the second camera is situated at the roundabout at Leyland Lane!

The A581 is at times a very busy road used by farm vehicles, very large HGV's transporting market garden produce from the farms in the west, and at weekends, particularly in the summer, motor bikes usually travelling at speed in convoy.

This is the list of serious accidents that have occurred in the last few years, you will be able to see the location in detail on google maps.

Pumping station adjacent to 138 (On the bend)

Two occasions when vehicles went through the hedge in front of the Pumping station

Resident of 138 (All separate accidents)

Motor bike through his hedge

Car through his hedge

Car through the hedge and into his pond

Car colliding into back of resident's car whilst resident's car waiting to turn into driveway.

In addition to this the occupant of 138 employed a company to cut his hedge but they ceased the contract as they considered it too dangerous due to the speed of traffic passing the house.

Residents of 134 (opposite our home)

On two separate occasions they have had cars ending up in their front garden knocking the wall down. These two occasions are in addition to the very serious one below.

Residents of 136,134 and 132A

This was the most serious accident where a vehicle travelling from the direction of Ulnes Walton Lane along Southport Road towards Chorley collided with the kerb outside 136, demolished the wall between 134 and 132A damaging two cars parked on the driveway of 134 one of which was written off and then smashing into a car on the driveway of 132A writing that car off and damaging another car on the drive. Not only did it write off two cars, but it caused structural damage to two of the houses. It was remarkable that there were no fatalities.

Resident of 143

Driver lost control as he came out of the bend and smashed into the resident's fence and the farmers gate opposite 132A writing off his car.

Resident of 132

Cyclist knocked off his bike ending up on the grass verge opposite 132/132A.

Resident of 130

Driver lost control of his car as he came out of the bend and ended up travelling a good fifty yards on the opposite carriageway eventually ending up in a ditch.

In addition to the above there are several other observations that we would wish you to consider.

I am aware that there is a proposal to make the junction of Southport Road and Ulnes Walton Lane into a roundabout and that the Government Levelling Up Department have already purchased the land adjacent to it which seems a little premature. I use Ulnes Walton Lane regularly and I see little point in installing a roundabout, if it makes a difference, it would only be marginal and only add to the Chaos.

In conclusion I would add that I totally understand the need for new prisons but to add a third prison in this area gives no consideration to the community. Those residents closer to the prison are plagued with friends of the inmates setting industrial fireworks off late at night without consideration for the neighbours and certainly spooking horses in the many stables that are nearby to the extent that I am aware that some of those horses have injured themselves. A third prison will substantially increase the risk to the horses as well as impacting on the local community, this is a rural community who have had to tolerate this anti-social behaviour for years, a third prison will on exacerbate this and inmates will outnumber the community, how can this be right?

I am sure that there are many other comments you will receive that you will take into considerations prior to making the decision and I guess your department will be under increased pressure from the Government to allow a third prison to be built at Ulnes Walton despite the impact it will have on the local community, and it certainly will, in my opinion increase the risk in respect of road safety. I hope that the decision makers have the courage to stand up to the Government of the day.

Peter Fletcher