

A5012 Via Gellia Safer Roads Fund Project
Consultation Report



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Author/ Editor: Gary Thompson **Date:** 04/04/2023

Project manager: Gary Thompson **Date:** 04/04/2023

Technical reviewer: Dave Connell **Date:** 15/4/2023

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The consultation findings expressed herein relate to the A5012 Via Gellia Safer Roads Fund project only. This document has been prepared for the sole use of reporting the consultation findings and how they may impact on the safety interventions to be introduced as part of the project scope and to progress to detailed design and installation.

Recommendations or comments contained within this report should only be read and relied upon within the context of the entire document.

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Introduction

The A5012 Via Gellia Safer Roads project is a Department for Transport sponsored road safety initiative. Research by the Road Safety Foundation and RAC Foundation has identified the A5012 as having one of the worst KSI safety records in the UK appearing in the top list of worst roads. Several road safety interventions are planned for the A5012 Via Gellia route aimed at improving road safety. It is standard practice for the council to consult on the nature and location of the interventions so that its internal consultees, wider stakeholders, and members of the public can view the proposals, make comment, and give feedback. This consultation report summarises the method by which the consultation was undertaken, the responses made and what impact these have had on the safety interventions to be taken forward into detailed design and installation.

Consultation Methods

Consultation drawings were prepared detailing the locations and nature of the proposed safety interventions along the route. An explanation of the project and the interventions was also drafted. These comprised the consultation materials.

DCC holds a list of stakeholders who are mandatory recipients of consultations that the council undertakes including internal consultee departments and affiliated organisations. Cllr Kewal Atwal and local MP, Sarah Dines, were emailed a copy of the above consultation materials on 20th February 2023. Following the acknowledgement of receipt from Cllr Kewal Atwal the same information was then emailed to the remaining mandatory consultees on 21st February 2023.

The consultation materials were also loaded onto a DCC webpage for the on-line consultation. Letters of invitation to individual frontagers along the A5012 were hand delivered on 23rd February 2023. These included the sections of the route passing through Cromford, Bonsall, Grange Mill, Pikehall and Newhaven. The village of Ible was also letter dropped given that the accesses to the village are taken off the A5012. An invitation to attend public exhibitions about the proposed works was also shared within the consultation letter.

The on-line consultation started on 27th February and ended 26th March 2023. On-line responses were received from 211 respondents using the feedback questionnaire. Some of those responding completed part of the form but did not give any commentary or views on the proposals. Other feedback was received using the roadsafety@Derbyshire.gov.uk email address from the on-line webpage but there were few respondents using this route. Those responding sought more information about the issues along the route or queried why the speed limit couldn't be reduced further. Individual responses were sent to these parties to clarify the data or to give reasons why their proposals couldn't be taken forward.

Two public exhibitions were held at the Cromford Community Centre at Cromford, one on Thursday 2nd March 2023 and the other on Tuesday 14th March 2023. Both ran between 2pm and 8pm attended by the project manager, a traffic and road safety officer, a member of the average speed camera team and staff from the Education and Training Team. Alternative venues were investigated but none were deemed suitable; the Bonsall Village Hall had a steep gradient which would hinder access by people with disabilities, the Carriages at Newhaven was a formal dining venue, and Cromford Institute had smaller rooms. Regrettably therefore, only a single venue was deemed available with suitable facilities for all types of users.

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Those interested in the proposed safety interventions or those who had personal insight regarding issues along the route came throughout the above period. A record was made of those attending each event as follows:

Exhibition Dates	Numbers attending	Number of Responses
Thursday 2nd March	41	20
Tuesday 14th March	29	17

Some of those attending the exhibition advised that they would consider the proposals further and make a response on-line.

Consultation Findings

Number of Respondents

There were 248 respondents to the consultation. The age range of those respondents was as follows:

Age Range	Number
18-24	0
25-34	13
35-44	25
45-54	42
55-64	82
65 and over	86

No-one below the age of 24 responded. Those responding in the other age ranges generally increased the older the respondent with the 55 and over range giving the greatest number of responses.

Mode of Transport

The main modes of transport used by the respondents along the Via Gellia were as follows:

Mode	Number
Car	197
Cyclist	15
Commercial vehicle	11

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Motorcyclist	17
Pedestrian	2

The remainder did not indicate the type of vehicle they used. The responses can therefore be viewed from the perspective of car drivers as they are the largest group of respondents in this instance.

For or Against the Consultation Proposals

The consultation literature proposed various safety measures along the route and invited feedback on the proposals. Each written response has been assessed to determine the respondents support or otherwise for the proposed safety intervention. If the respondent was unsure whether the proposals would be a success or not, or whether the reviewer was uncertain if the response was in support or against the proposals these are marked as 'Unsure'. If no response was given, then these can be assumed to be a 'no comment' as to being neither in favour nor against the proposals.

Below is a summary of the support or otherwise for the project overall:

For – 97	Against – 28
Unsure – 69	No response – 52

The results would suggest overwhelming support for the road safety proposals.

Those against suggested that the money would be better spent addressing potholes on the county's network. Unfortunately, this is capital money and aimed at targeting the poor collision record along this road. It can't be used for maintenance activities.

A large proportion of respondents were unsure whether the proposals would yield the reduction in collisions sought and sought evidence from other examples. Some had vested interest in maintaining the status quo by retaining the vegetation, not installing speed cameras, or reducing the speed limit. Some didn't think that the signalisation of the Grange Mill junction should proceed or that the junction improvements planned for Clatterway would be of benefit.

Speed Limit Reduction/Average Speed Cameras

Below is a summary of the support or otherwise for this safety intervention:

For – 82	Against – 32
Unsure – 3	No response – 123

There was clear evidence of support for the speed limit to be reduced and average speed cameras to be installed. The majority of those supporting the speed measures lived adjacent to the route and were aware of the issues of excessive speeds and the collisions that occur along the route. The respondents considered that this would be a major contribution to road safety along the route. Some considered that this would be effective at addressing the excessive speed of some drivers and motorcyclists who now frequent the route following the introduction of average speed cameras elsewhere in the network.

Most of the negativity to this intervention blamed those drivers who had collisions by taking bends too fast or not being aware of the road conditions. Some didn't see the need for the safety cameras as they hadn't seen any accidents along the route and blamed the collision on poor driver behaviour. Some motorists considered that this was a means of taxing the motorists if they were subsequently prosecuted for exceeding the speed limit.

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Road Restraint Systems (Crash Barriers)

Below is a summary of the support or otherwise for this safety intervention:

For – 35	Against – 9
Unsure – 0	No response – 204

Most respondents had no clear opinion as to these measures proceeding. This could be because the consultation information didn't share details of collisions where motorists had left the carriageway. However, those that did indicate a preference were in support of the intervention proceeding.

Road Markings/Signage Improvements

Below is a summary of the support or otherwise for this safety intervention:

For – 44	Against – 8
Unsure – 0	No response – 196

Most respondents had no clear opinion as to these measures proceeding. Most considered that better road markings and signage would be of benefit to motorists, which reflects that they were more in favour than against this intervention proceeding.

Friden Ghost Island Right Turn Lane

Below is a summary of the support or otherwise for this safety intervention:

For – 34	Against – 7
Unsure – 1	No response – 207

Most respondents had no clear opinion as to this measure proceeding. Some queried the need for a ghost island right turn lane as traffic movements and collisions were low at this location in their opinion. The latter is backed up by the collision information with a single collision occurring between 2012-2022. More were in favour of the intervention proceeding than against it.

Clatterway Junction Improvement

Below is a summary of the support or otherwise for this safety intervention:

For – 38	Against – 17
Unsure – 5	No response – 188

Most respondents had no clear opinion as to this measure proceeding. Those against didn't understand the issues at this location and queried whether a reduction in the junction footprint was necessary. More were in favour of the intervention proceeding than not.

Since the consultation was undertaken, a preliminary design of the junction improvement has been shared with nearby residents for comment. To date, no responses have been received which suggests that it would meet with their approval.

Grange Mill Crossroads Signalisation

Below is a summary of the support or otherwise for this safety intervention:

For – 40	Against – 24
Unsure – 5	No response – 182

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Most respondents had no clear opinion as to this measure proceeding. Although the majority supported the signalisation proceeding, the main reasons against were in relation to the speed limit through the junction and on the side road approaches with a suggestion for it to be reduced to 40mph. A farmer at Ible also suggested that it would be difficult for them to get their tractor/trailer into the flow of traffic due to queuing vehicles from the Winster direction. This wasn't considered to be an issue as the signal loop detectors would identify a demand when vehicles travel over them and allow vehicles through the junction.

Vegetation Clearance and Visibility Splay Improvements

Below is a summary of the support or otherwise for this safety intervention:

For – 54	Against – 17
Unsure – 2	No response – 175

Most respondents had no clear opinion as to this measure proceeding. However, there were significantly more in favour of the clearance works proceeding than against. The chief benefits were that the road would be allowed to dry out by improved access to sunlight and wind to dry the road surface. Those against suggested that the loss of the trees would be a detraction to the current tree lined limestone valley. Others proposed that road safety would be improved by the lack of visibility, but this is contrary to the collision record along the route.

It should be noted though that there are many ash trees along the Via Gellia. The County Council has an ash die-back programme whereby diseased trees need to be felled and removed to prevent its spread. The A5012 Via Gellia route is being targeted in the Autumn 2023. Hence, many of the trees along the valley will be lost. Compensatory planting is also proposed but ideally not within the visibility splays.

Road Drainage Improvements

Below is a summary of the support or otherwise for this safety intervention:

For – 56	Against – 6
Unsure – 0	No response – 186

Most respondents had no clear opinion as to this measure proceeding. Those in favour of the intervention recognised that the route is heavily used by quarry and HGV traffic which leads to deposits along the road and hence the drainage systems require more regular maintenance.

Discussions with Derbyshire County Council's Flood Team, responsible for the gully cleansing contract, identified that maintenance activities haven't been at their best along the A5012 route in the past. A new gully cleansing contract has been let and it is hoped that improvements will be made to the drainage systems along the route.

Contact has been made with the planners as there are planning conditions relating to the quarry operations to reduce dust and deposits on the highway. A review of the planning conditions for each quarry alongside the A512 has been made and enforcement action has since been taken and the planning team are continuing to monitor the situation going forward.

PROW Landings and Verge Hardening

Below is a summary of the support or otherwise for this safety intervention:

For – 39	Against – 6
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Unsure – 0

No response – 203

Most respondents had no clear opinion as to this measure proceeding. The respondents that were frequent walkers of the PROW adjacent to the A5012 Via Gellia supported the hardening of verges at the PROW access and crossing points. Some suggested improvements have since been assessed and there are too many engineering difficulties for them to be actioned via the Safer Roads Fund budget. These may be picked up by the PROW Team in the future action and a report prepared detailing the investigations made and recommended proposed improvements.

Other Suggested Safety Interventions

Many of the respondents made suggestions as to other safety issues that did not form part of the proposed safety interventions along the A5012 route but which they would like to see introduced.

For additional or alternative measures – 82

No request received – 164

These have been discussed with the Road Safety Team and both the responder and the Road Safety Team's comments are summarised below.

1. A515/A5012 Newhaven Junction

Respondents considered that the Newhaven Junction had been missed from the route proposals. The analysis of the collision history from the Department for Transport did not identify a safety issue at this location in the study years. However, collisions have increased at this location since. The proposals to alleviate this issue either comprise an improved T junction, a roundabout, or a ghost island right turn lane solution.

A feasibility assessment has been undertaken for each of these junction forms. A roundabout would seem to be one of the safest options to install and there appears to be sufficient land available to install one. However, there are difficulties in terms of deflection that may require a departure from standard. A roundabout solution could cost over £2m to install depending on utility diversion costs and would take almost all the available budget to install leaving little to no budget remaining to install the other proposed safety interventions for the rest of the route. Hence, this option isn't feasible financially given the safety sacrifices that would need to be made along the rest of the route.

A ghost island right turn lane solution using the existing junction would fit within the available highway footprint and should be cheaper to install than a roundabout. The issue would be around the funding available to intervene in this manner. An improved T junction with a modified approach to the A515 would cost a similar amount. The T junction or ghost island right turn lane would take up a significant part of the budget for the route proposals for construction which could only be met by reductions in the scope of work on the A5004 Long Hill project.

Due to the higher than normal collision casualties recorded at the Newhaven junction, it is recommended that an improvement to the junction be considered and if cost savings can be made to the safety interventions planned for the A5004 Long Hill route, a ghost island right turn lane or modified T junction be installed subject to installation costs being within the available budget for both Safer Roads fund projects.

2. Ryder Point Junction – Proposed Ghost Island Right Turn Lane

Respondents complained about the lack of visibility of standing traffic at the junction when approaching from the west. Examination of the accident record for the junction over the past ten

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years identified just two accidents occurring resulting in slight injuries by the occupants. The suggestion isn't borne out by the safety record for the junction.

A cursory feasibility examination of the junction has been made and a very sub-standard ghost island right turn lane could be installed but would require relaxation or departures from standard to achieve it. Its success would also be dependent upon other safety measures being implemented such as the clearance of the visibility splays to improve forward visibility.

The northern part of the junction is significantly lower than the road level and would need to be built up to provide the additional traffic lane. A safety barrier would also be required. Bonsall Brook is also nearby and may require re-alignment depending on the footprint of the junction.

This solution isn't considered feasible therefore, given the above.

3. Seeking Lower Speed Limits along the route

Several respondents proposed lower speed limits, i.e., 50mph to 40mph in rural locations, 40mph to 30mph within Grange Valley and 30mph to 20mph in Cromford, thinking that this would by itself automatically achieve the desired safety result.

Past speed surveys within each speed zone confirm that the 85th percentile speed is at or slightly above the signed speed limit. This means that 15% of all drivers currently exceed the signed speed limit. Reduction of the signed speed limit is therefore unlikely to achieve the desired effect of lowering vehicle speeds consistently to improve road safety along the route.

In addition, highway authorities need to be guided by the 'Setting Local Speed Limits' advice from Government. This recognises that to achieve a desired speed along the road, the speed limit needs to reflect the character of the road and be enforceable by the Police to be successful. The Road Safety team consider that the current lower speed limits between Cromford and Bonsall reflect the advice within the above. Where there are many junctions and driveways accessing the route with properties directly fronting it then the speed limit is 30mph. Where there are fewer junctions or access then the speed limit is 40mph. Where the route is more rural with major junctions spaced far apart and with few frontagers then the 50mph speed limit is appropriate.

The Road Safety Team has reviewed the need for lower speed limits along the route and consider that there are advantages to lowering the speed limit through the Grange Mill crossroads from 50mph to 40mph in conjunction with the proposed installation of traffic signals at the junction. However, except for the proposal to reduce the national speed limit section to 50mph west of the Grange Mill crossroads, the current speed limits are appropriate for the characteristics of the route.

4. Widening the Carriageway at Pinch Points

The tight radii of the bends between Bonsall and Cromford presents difficulties for HGV traffic when passing. West bound vehicles end up mounting the footway and coming into conflict with pedestrians. Cyclists are also squeezed on the uphill sections. Significant overrun damage is also occurring alongside the road at these points.

Consideration will be given to winding the road at these locations, but it does present difficulties as follows:

- The highway extent is to the road edge meaning that land would have to be acquired from the neighbouring landowner and there is no certainty that this can be achieved and introduces potential delays while the terms are agreed.

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- Limestone outcrops mean that lane widening will be difficult and costly to install.
- The land adjacent has several statutory stakeholders and classifications – English Heritage, Natural England, SSSI and Special Area of Conservation status. The agreement of each of these parties would be necessary to achieve the desired width improvements.
- Drainage systems may also need to be extended and improved if there are falls towards the inside of the bends.

The decision has been taken to investigate the feasibility of improving the lane width issues along the eastern section of the route subject to the agreement of the various statutory bodies whose areas would be impacted by this proposal. However, these can't be afforded due to the restrictions of working within the SSSI and SAC designated areas in conjunction with the costs and intrusion likely to be caused by removing limestone within these areas.

5. Reducing the amount of Quarry Traffic along the route

Many suggestions have come forward to re-direct quarry and HGV traffic from the route. However, the route is part of the Principal Road Network designated by its 'A' road status and is therefore deemed to be capable of taking such traffic. In addition, there are fewer alternative routes for HGV traffic in this part of Derbyshire onto which HGV traffic could be re-directed and doing so would move the issue somewhere else. Therefore, it isn't practical to re-direct most HGVs on to adjacent routes.

6. A5012/ Winster Junction at Aston Hill

A respondent has sought an improvement of this junction to aid visibility when leaving from the Winster direction citing that the trees in the Keeper's Cottage property obstruct visibility towards Grange Mill. The location is also used by walkers who park at the junction before starting their walk.

The collision records for this location have been reviewed and only a single accident has occurred in the past 10 years. Discussion with the Road Safety Team concluded that this location doesn't have a significant safety record and that improvements such as re-aligning the kerb line etc. are not necessary. However, the design team should look to remove some of the overhanging vegetation that obscures visibility to the east subject to agreement with the adjacent landowner.

7. Improvements for Particular User Groups

Several respondents have sought specific measures to help improve safety of their chosen mode of transport when using the route. Equestrians have sought improved crossing and access facilities, for instance at the above Winster junction at Aston Hill and access to the high peak trail via Mouldridge Lane. These are part of the proposed safety interventions, but a subsequent preliminary investigation has identified level issues and the need for retaining structures of some kind.

Other suggestions relate to the creation of new public rights of way through off highway provisions across private land. While these proposals do have merit, it would take time to agree these new rights of way with the landowner(s). For this reason, they will fall outside of the scope for this project due to the anticipated timescales involved to reach agreements etc.

Cyclists have sought dedicated on road cycle lanes for their use through the narrower sections between Cromford and Bonsall. The majority of these cannot be delivered by the safer roads funded works at this time. The nature of the works and the geography of the route would require more extensive works than can be funded through the safer roads project at this time.

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Statutory Consultees

Sections of the A5012 Via Gellia route are administered by several statutory consultees as follows:

English Heritage

Natural England

Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site

Special Area of Conservation

Site of Special Scientific Interest

Peak District National Park Association

Environment Agency

Derbyshire County Council's Conservation and Design Team

Many of the consultees have cited the proposed interventions as being out of character for the area where the highway interventions are proposed to be installed. Some like Peak District National Park Association have issued a 'holding objection' effectively seeking engagement with the designers to minimise the impact of the proposals in the Peak Park. Others like the Conservation and Design Team are seeking further information or an alternative proposal to be considered which may be out of keeping with standard collision intervention measures. Some, like the Environment Agency and Derwent Valley Mills have responded but made no comment on the proposals.

A clear way of appeasing the various statutory requirements is yet to be determined but the design team will share the design details when they become available and engage with the various statutory consultees to minimise their impact. A separate report covering the Heritage and Ecology impacts of the proposed safety interventions has been commissioned via Amey to aid these future discussions.

Conclusion

The consultation has received much interest from those that live adjacent to and use the A5012 Via Gellia route. The two public exhibitions have also been well attended. The responses received are therefore deemed to be representative of the public's views regarding the proposed road safety interventions.

There is overall support for the project to proceed in its current form both as a whole and for the various proposed interventions. Refinement of the proposals may be required as the project moves forward into preliminary and detailed design.