

The June Edge article on the road changes in Nether Edge – ‘Who Are Our Streets For?’ - interested me a great deal living, as I do, at the top end of Brincliffe Edge. However, what initially caught my eye was the picture of the crossing at the junction of Psalter Lane and Ecclesall Road which was used to explain the hazards pedestrians face in our area. We in the Banner Cross Neighbourhood Group (BXNG) have long since campaigned about this particular crossing along with two nearby junctions and the dangers they present. In January 2021, as Secretary of the BXNG, I spoke at a Zoom meeting of the council’s Planning and Highways Committee to present our case and offered some cheap but effective remedies to reduce potential accidents. Our case was well founded and we hoped it would be taken seriously by the Committee. What actually happened was that the officer from the Highways Department summarily dismissed it on the grounds that not sufficient accidents had happened there to warrant their attention. As evidence, she quoted her computer which told her that her data software was her guide, a programme which contained logged accident details over previous years. Who compiles this data? What are the criteria of an ‘accident’? How many accidents would meet their criteria for remediation? All of this is a mystery and fades away in the face of a robotic and obsessive attachment to unquestioned data by the Highways officers. At the end of her submission, the Committee, mostly representing distant wards and clearly disinterested, accepted her advice and dismissed our case.

And so it has been throughout the twelve years since we founded our group. In 2010 we fought a planning application at Banner Cross which was supported by the Highways officers. Their recommendation was so absurd that the then Chair of the Committee dismissed it in withering terms, turning to the officer to say, “A fifteen year old boy could have come up with something better than this.” The application was refused. Sadly, the days of a strong Planning Committee have long since gone. Our experience over the ensuing years has taught us that when an application with obviously hazardous traffic consequences has been approved, such as the Baldwin’s development, it has been on the advice of Highways officers and a supine Planning and Highways Committee has nodded it through.

It’s in this context that we see the latest changes in Nether Edge with the initial closure of Archer Lane. It is causing huge problems from an increased traffic flow along Brincliffe Edge Road which itself leads to greater pollution. The consultants who advised the scheme (a group led by a former councillor and Deputy Leader of Labour Group) were surprised to be told in an early meeting that Nether Edge was not flat and had no answer to give when asked how they had arrived at their assessment of need or of how the scheme was to be monitored. Those of us who live in the area from Machon Bank Road to Brincliffe Edge Road, especially the elderly and those with mobility problems, know better than most what it is like to live on a steep hill so do not consider that walking or bicycling is an option for getting about. We use our cars. What the proposed scheme has done already is to bring inconvenience and dangers that did not exist before. It should be a case of returning to the drawing board but knowing how the system works and those involved in it I’m afraid that it seems unlikely.

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