

HIS PLAN FOR A BY-PASS.

Letter to the Editor August 29, 1952

Dear Sir,—You have been kind enough to afford me space in your paper to publish letters from me, re the congestion of the roads and footpaths. The increase in motor traffic and the influx of workers at S.R.D.E., M.E.X.E., Hurn Airport and Airspeed (some thousands) has made our narrow streets and footpaths difficult to negotiate in the rush hours and has created a situation which will get worse, unless unnecessary traffic on the roads is diverted to a by-pass. I refer to lorries stocking the shops from their warehouses, and holiday buses whose great idea is to get to their destination with as little delay as possible. Neither of these two categories spend a penny-piece in the town, and cost the ratepayers upkeep of roads. I do not rush into print, but I suggested some months ago a plan to completely by-pass the town, which I feel certain would minimise, if not eliminate, the chaos which it now amounts to.

I saw the plans, as drawn out by Sir Patrick Abercrombie (an authority on the subject) some months ago, and pointed out to various people interested that I did not favour adding another major road to the three already producing a bottle-neck at the Fountain, by debouching via Pound Lane. Already it requires services of a police officer at rush hours and holiday seasons to operate the lights to expedite matters, taking him off his duties of a more important nature. I foresee that if the by-pass comes in at Pound Lane it will require a traffic operator many more hours, as the lights are very often a hindrance to the steady flow.

My reason for taking up a firm stand now is the result of reading that certain members of the Chamber of Trade are afraid that a complete by-pass would lose them trade. As regards this, I can cite two concrete cases where small towns with similar narrow streets, connecting main arterial roads to the south and east coast, have benefited by the complete by-pass and increased, or got back, their trade. Motorists from the outlying villages were getting tired of the "no waiting" regulations, or the appearance of a police officer which sometimes entailed the waste of a day in court and possibly a fine.

That, I believe, has happened here, as the car park at the Quay is very inaccessible owing to the narrowness of Wick Lane, and Church Lane, and the official car park at Pit is usually, at the busy hours, cluttered up.

In my humble opinion, the course to adopt is to take the by-pass, in the full sense of the word, across the fields between Roeshot Hill and Somerford Bridge, opposite Prichards' trial ground, link up with Ambury Lane to Staple Cross, follow the south side of the railway embankment as far as Stoney Lane-Winkton road, pass through the bridge (plenty of clearance for a double-decker) across the Avon above Knapp Mill Hatches (one bridge required) taking care to build a solid road with many culverts to take off flood water in the winter months, and not interfere with the good work being done by the Catchment Board in draining the marshes. Carry on from there to the foot of St. Catharine's Hill and Proceed via The Grove to Jumpers Corner and Iford Bridge.

The plan of Mr. F. B. Johnson, with whom I have discussed his idea of continuing along the embankment to the railway bridge and not through Stoney Lane, is open to the objection that it would involve the procuration of a large slice of Lights' timber yard, which is already fully used and for which I feel sure they would demand large compensation. Furthermore, I gather that the police force would not welcome the influx of a major road into the already busy corner by the Railway Hotel, with the additional disadvantage of the hump of the railway bridge cutting down visibility.

It might be possible to follow Mr. Johnson's plan as far as the railway bridge over the river and build a viaduct diagonally under the present structure, with due regard to the foundations of the railway bridge, to link up with, say, Portfield Road, which route would entail crossing the marshalling yard of the railway and a bridge.

Sir Patrick Abercrombie plans to leave the Somerford Road at much the same spot as mine, and come across the meadows and marshes to Pound Lane, involving the building of many culverts, a bridge over the Avon and another over its tributary, the mill stream; the demolition of the cottages in Pound Lane, many long since condemned as unfit for occupation and wisely bought by the Council and the purchase of the several habitable houses in the little square at the head of Pound Lane

His plan entails the demolition of all the buildings in the triangle of the Pit, including the Antelope Hotel, Mac's Restaurant, six residences, Millers' shop, stores and residence. Think of the compensation for loss of amenities.

There is no doubt Fountain Corner ought to be set back to the level of Frampton's Garage to the entrance of the recreation ground of which the County Council own 24 feet. This would get rid of the bottle-neck at Fountain Corner but would entail the demolition of Tweedales' office, the boot repair shop and greengrocers, and two residences, and already plans are ready for the Fountain Hotel to surrender their small dart-room and a slice off their forecourt.

I am not too sure that if this plan was put into operation the bottle-neck which causes nine-tenths of the congestion in the High Street. Castle Street, Bridge Street and Purewell, would not automatically disappear and save the ratepayers the interest on a large loan from the authorities for a by-pass, and compensation. To straighten the line the forecourt of the Labour Exchange would be cut by 24 feet, all the beautiful trees would go in the recreation ground, and Vancouver, Broomway, Farndon Corris, Carfax and Mr. Laphorne's front would be entitled to compensation for depreciation of property. What a colossal addition to the cost of the by-pass. My plan would entail no demolition and compensation only on agricultural land seized. I am glad to see that Mr. A. R. Haviland agrees that a complete by-pass would if anything, benefit the tradespeople.

I am grateful for the courtesy of the Town Clerk and his staff, the Borough Surveyor's office for sight of the plans and information. As regards the Superintendent of Police, quite rightly he, acting on instructions, takes no side in the matter of overcoming this chaos. —Yours faithfully,

W. JASPER JEANS.

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