

Bus Lane Traffic Chaos in Baddow

Work began in August on widening the Baddow bypass, Essex Yeomanry Way, to add a bus lane as part of the Park and Ride project. The work is expected to continue until early November. The Area Highway Manager told Baddow Life:

One of the main challenges was how to deal with the approximately 33,000 cars that use the A1114, Essex Yeomanry Way each day. The traffic management system currently in place was influenced by 4 factors:

- 1. Safety of the motorists and contractor's workforce is paramount*
- 2. The Chelmsford bound inside lane was required to allow access to the site for the contractor and to provide the necessary safe working zone and protection for the workforce.*
- 3. Maintain two lanes of traffic into Chelmsford during the morning period and two lanes out of Chelmsford during the afternoon and evening periods.*
- 4. Maximise the use of the Army and Navy flyover to help with the flow of traffic.*

We recognise that to remove one lane from this major road is likely to cause congestion and inconvenience but in extensive discussions with the Police and other parties we feel the layout is working safely and effectively.

However, the people of Great Baddow do not seem to share this positive opinion. Already during the school holidays, when the roads are usually quiet, this work is causing traffic chaos in Great Baddow, for anyone trying to get into Chelmsford. The Army and Navy flyover has been closed off for anyone from Baddow, indeed from anyone joining the bypass at Maldon Road. Even in off peak times there is now regularly a queue as far back as this junction, as only one car at a time can exit on to the Army and Navy roundabout. A sign has been put up in Maldon Road, "Use alternative routes", but for most there is only one alternative route: Baddow Road. So this already congested road is suffering more than ever.

No doubt the queues will become even longer when the schools go back and the weather gets worse. Meanwhile before this started the Army and Navy was officially declared a health hazard for its poor air quality. This problem can only get worse as the time each vehicle queues in the polluted air rises. So the people of Baddow are forced to risk their health to get to their work, shops and leisure activities.

It seems that it is the people of Baddow who are paying most of the environmental cost of this Park and Ride. The pleasant rural verge of the bypass has already been replaced by an ugly urban-style fence. It is Baddow which is suffering most from congestion and pollution during the construction work, and will continue to suffer from extra noise once it is open. But there will be no benefit to Baddow from this scheme: the special buses will run along Maldon Road without stopping for local residents.

A few years ago our Councils threw away a golden opportunity to solve the Baddow Road traffic problem once and for all, at no public expense, by making developers pay for a through route from Beehive Lane to Waterson Vale. Now it is wasting millions of pounds of public money on a Park and Ride scheme which will have little real benefit. Is there an alternative? Well, how about switching back on the Army and Navy traffic lights, this time connecting them to an intelligent system which can monitor queue lengths - either a computer, or a human controller watching CCTV cameras. This might be quite expensive, but not as expensive as the bus lane white elephant.

With road improvements as most other fields, there is no gain without pain. But in this case, we in Baddow are suffering the pain, but for us there will be no gain.

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