

Will locals pay to make danger junction near Harborough safer?

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Junction nightmare...David Durran vice chairman and Martin Reynolds chairman at the Shearsby Bath crossroads.'PICTURE: ANDREW CARPENTER NNL-170711-130147005

It should be Leicestershire County Council who pays for road improvements within its area.

But villagers near one dangerous Harborough crossroads say they could pay for road improvements themselves – after council experts ruled out cash aid from County Hall.

Shearsby crossroads, where the A5199 crosses the roads between Saddington and Bruntingthorpe – about eight miles west of Market Harborough – has seen nine accidents in two months, say local people.

But in a meeting with county council officials last Friday, disappointed villagers were told their local crossroads was not even in the top 60 of dangerous Leicestershire junctions.

“It’s depressing news” admitted Ann O’Connell, a member of the recently-formed Shearsby Crossroads Committee.

“It’s disappointing to hear that our dangerous junction – in relative terms – isn’t dangerous enough.

“We have nine reported accidents at that junction in two months – two of them serious.

“And we feel so strongly about this, we now think if the county council can’t help us, we’ll look at making a financial contribution ourselves.”

A local petition asking for the junction to be upgraded has attracted 679 signatures so far.

Last Friday’s meeting, at Shearsby Village Hall, featured representatives from six local parish councils, the county council, Harborough District Council and David Walton, managing director of local business Bruntingthorpe Proving Ground and Airfield.

County council road safety engineer Ian Shelton said that the Shearsby junction – like many around the country – did not meet modern standards on visibility.

But Traffic and Signal Manager Fiona Blockley said reports showed the junction was way down the list of Leicestershire's road priorities

She added that the council would look again at the junction in 2018/19.

And Blake Pain, the county's leader on highways and transport said funding was also an issue.

"There's 2,500 miles of road network in Leicestershire and just not enough money to do everything we'd like to do" he said.

But Harborough District Councillor Neville Hall was unimpressed. He said: "We want the attitude 'can do' and we don't seem to be getting it."

Local people suggested various comparatively cheap improvements that could be made at the cross-roads, including a speed limit ^[1]_[SEP]reduction and replacing the higher hedges at the cross roads with stockproof railings to improve visibility for motorists.

Shearsby Parish Council chair Martin Reynolds said, local people currently "avoid the cross roads if we can".

But locals are now moving towards a plan to fund junction improvements themselves.

Businessman David Walton of Bruntingthorpe Proving Ground and Airfield said his company would be "willing to make a contribution".