

Press statement from Graham Tobbell, Chairman, on behalf of Finchingfield Parish Council

It is not surprising that there is uproar by residents following Essex Highways closure of the bridge last week and its failure to put in place measures to reduce the inconvenience caused, as it had been urged to do so by the parish council. My letter to Highways last Thursday is on record as I described the village as being like a ghost town in which our local businesses had reported a dramatic fall in their trade.

In these circumstances a temporary bridge during the main works, which have been deferred to 2020, is now the only viable solution, but it is not a panacea. Roads connecting a temporary bridge to the existing highway will cross village greens and will add to the overall length of the building works.

Ten local businesses, Health Centre and School were asked for their view a year ago. The feedback they gave, the concerns they expressed and the issues they said needed to be addressed were given to Highways. Two businesses said a temporary bridge was essential whilst others were concerned about the time the works would take and Finchingfield becoming a building site. A way forward was agreed with Highways, discussed at the Annual Parish Assembly with residents and a statement placed on the council website in May 2018. In drawing on the views of local businesses and others, it stated that “the consensus view, and one shared by the parish council, was that the works on the bridge should be done in the minimum time possible and that ways should be sought to alleviate problems a road closure would give rise to” There is no record that this has been challenged or disagreed with until after last week’s debacle.

Graham - Chairman, Finchingfield Parish Council