

Roads and Transport Background Paper

1. The A1 - Introduction

1.1 Newton on the Moor and Swarland Parish straddles the A1, the main access for traffic to and from the two conurbations of Newton on the Moor and Swarland and also the 500 caravan Percy wood, is via three junctions onto the A1 which are under the responsibility of **National Highways** (formerly known as Highways England and the Highways Agency).

1.2 These three junctions are commonly named as:

- a) Rasherap Junction- a priority-controlled T junction (A1 having priority) on an unnamed road, there is no slip road for traffic heading North;
- b) Guyzance Crossroads – a priority-controlled T junction on an unnamed road, there is a waiting area between north and southbound A1 lanes which is shared with traffic from Guyzance heading north, and Guyzance traffic heading south;
- c) Leamington Lane Junction – a priority-controlled T junction on an unnamed road, there is a waiting area between the northbound and southbound carriageways, which allows the right turning vehicles to undertake the manoeuvre in two movements.

1.3 All local bus services to and from Swarland were cancelled in 2014 mainly due to safety concerns of double-decker buses crossing two dual carriageways of the A1. A one day per week service is currently being piloted.

2. The A1 – History of Accidents

Fatal Accident 30th December 2011 – Coroners Letter to The Highways Agency reference AB/JT/11/110 dated 14 June 2012 (Appendix 1)

Extract 1

“ I am reporting this matter to you in accordance with Rule 43 of the Coroners Rules 1984(as amended by the Coroners (Amendment) Rules 2008. This rule provides that where the evidence at an inquest gives rise to a concern that circumstances creating a risk of other deaths will occur or continue to exist in the future, and in the Coroner’s opinion, action should be taken to prevent the occurrence or continuation of such circumstances, the Coroner may report the circumstances to a person who may have power to take such action”

Fatal Accident 30th December 2011 – Coroners Letter to Mr Ken Walters, Swarland Resident (interested party) AB/JT/11/110 dated 15 June 2012 (Appendix 2)

Extract 1

“You will be aware that there have been numerous other deaths on the A1 at Swarland. I concluded from the facts at the inquest that the absence of a slip road or other safe road layout means that when collisions occur there is an increased likelihood of a fatal outcome”

Extract 2

“I have personally driven the full length of the A1 From the Scottish borders to the M25 and am not

aware of other road junctions on the national route, from which communities on either side of the A1 must cross four lanes of a roadway carrying traffic up to the national speed limit, without the benefit of a slip road or other safe means of access”

Extract 3 from Evening Chronicle Article dated 17th Feb 2015

“Residents' fury after saying A1 safety calls 'ignored' after latest death. Residents living close to the A1 in Northumberland have accused highways chiefs of ignoring their repeated safety calls following another death on the road. People at Swarland, near Alnwick, are angry after the death of 82-year-old Joan Hine, of the Denwick area, in a traffic accident on Sunday. Her death comes on the back of a number of other fatal accidents on that road and follows years of campaigning for improvements to be carried out to reduce the risk of further loss of life - backed by a coroner and relatives.

The latest incident saw Ms Hine die after the car in which she was a passenger was in collision with a 4x4 on the A1 northbound near the junction with Newton on the Moor and Longframlington. The driver, an elderly woman, was seriously injured and was taken to hospital. It is the latest of several fatal collisions on the A1 between Felton and Shilbottle in recent years.

In September 2007, Harold and May Fox, 76 and 71, of Swarland, and Stanley Loftus, 82, of Newcastle, died when their car crashed into another at the A1's Guyzance crossing. Eric Smith, 80, from Choppington, died when his car was in a crash south of Swarland at a junction onto the A1, just after Christmas 2011. And in November 2012, Nigel Fowerby, 37, from West Yorkshire, died after a three vehicle collision involving his van on the single carriageway near Felton.”

Percy Wood Planning Application for Expansion 17/00184/FUL
Highways England consultants CH2M Warrington Letter dated 7th June 2017 (Appendix 3)

Extract 1

“These junctions were constructed in the 1950s when demand for travel was lower and highway design standards were not well developed. Consequently, each of these junctions is at grade, have narrow central reservations and are not in line with current highways standard TD42/95”

Extract 2

“However, Highways England has concerns regarding the intensification of the use of Leamington Lane junction, Rasherap Junction and Guyzance Crossroads due to these junctions being considered as not being up to standard. Paying due cognisance to the information provided by Highways England, it is not possible for C2HM to recommend that Highways England offer “no objection” to the development proposals at this stage”

Extract 3

Evening Chronicle 25th August 2023

*“Fresh police appeal after A1 crash in Northumberland left man with life-changing injuries
Officers are re-appealing for witnesses after a serious collision on the A1 that left a man with life-changing injuries.*

Two vehicles collided on the northbound carriageway of the A1 near the junction with Swarland, in Northumberland at around 3.10pm on August 2. For reasons to be established, a silver Ford 4x4 travelling southbound was in collision with a black Suzuki Swift which was heading in the opposite direction”.

3. The A1 - Parish Council Response

3.1 The Parish Council has, over the last 20 years, been prompting National Highways (formerly Highways England and the Highways Agency, the body responsible for trunk roads, including the A1) to improve the safety of the various junctions in our area. Here is the response which they received from them in 2020:

‘..aware of continued problems at Guyzance Crossroads, my team has been involved in undertaking an initial investigation into measures that could be justified to improve the safe and efficient operation of the junction. Whilst we have looked at options to close the central reservation opening at this junction, these have been discounted as it is currently not affordable to build an over-bridge at this location and there are no suitable alternative crossing locations in close proximity to the junction for motorists to divert to. However, we have identified some smaller scale improvements that could be introduced at this junction. We are currently at the start of developing the details of the scheme and some investigatory works are proposed in the near future to establish the locations of statutory undertaker’s apparatus locations in the verges. However, no funds have been secured to build the scheme at this stage, which will take some time to develop. Furthermore, to ensure that our limited funds are targeted at schemes that offer best value for money, this improvement will compete for funds with other safety schemes of this nature across the country; so I am not currently in a position to advise you when the scheme is likely to be delivered.

I hope that this response at least provides you with the assurance that we are aware of the difficulties that drivers face when negotiating this junction and that it confirms that we are already taking steps to progress improvements for Guyzance Crossroads.’

Following the recent serious accident (August 2023) which occurred at the Guyzance crossroads, the PC contacted National Highways again, and received this reply:

‘Thank you for your email of 10 August on behalf of Newton on the Moor and Swarland Parish Council regarding our ongoing efforts to improve safety at Guyzance Crossroads on the A1. Your email has been passed to me as the Route Manager for this section of the A1.

We keep the safety performance of our network under continuous review. Accordingly, we are aware of the collision at Guyzance Crossroads which occurred on Wednesday 2nd August. You will appreciate that it would be inappropriate for us to pass comment on the collision so soon after the incident however, we will review the findings of the collision investigation and take them into consideration as we continue to develop safety interventions for this section of the A1.

Following the previous engagement with the Parish Council, we secured Preliminary Design funding to progress a safety scheme for Guyzance Crossroads. In our previous response we outlined some of the options which have been discounted. Our preferred option is to install a

near-side diverge lane for southbound A1 vehicles and to bring the southbound off-side diverge facility up to the current standard. We also intend to make improvements to the signing and road marking layout, to increase warning of the risk of vehicular conflicts as well as improving driver information regarding authorised movements.

We are now working to identify funding to deliver our scheme. However, we are currently experiencing funding constraints and so it is possible that our proposed scheme will not progress beyond Preliminary Design until the third Road Investment Strategy (RIS3) which begins in March 2025.

I hope my response sufficiently outlines to the Parish Council our awareness of the local concern regarding the safety of Guyzance Crossroads and our ongoing efforts to improve the safety performance of this junction.'

4. The A1 - Comment

- 4.1 There has been a “creeping” increase in usage of the three junctions, with the new housing developments not only in our Parish, but Longframlington and also Percy Wood since 2017, which is contrary to the CH2M limitations stated at that time. There is a need to fully quantify the actual figure by traffic monitoring and possibly add the requirement for a Traffic Impact Assessment in all Planning Applications.
- 4.2 Given the lack of response from National Highways, it gives ground for a complaint to be lodged under their complaints procedure, also HMG Office of Road and Rail protects the interests of rail and road users, i.e. “*We are improving the safety, value, and performance of railways and roads, today and in the future*” and Transport Focus - the independent watchdog for transport users in Great Britain (includes roads).

5. Other Roads in Swarland

- 5.1 The parish roads are not in a good state of repair and have many potholes that present a danger to those driving and walking along the roads.
- 5.2 The Parish Council have information about a number of roads in Swarland on their website at <https://newtonswarlandpc.orh.uk/swarlands-roads/>. Whilst Northumberland County Council owns a number of the poor quality roads, they have not yet adopted them.

6. Public Transport

- 6.1 The Parish has not had access to public transport but a trial of a bus service commenced on 30th March 2024 and follows the timetable below:



From March 30th 2024

Alnwick – Newton on the Moor – Swarland – Felton – Morpeth

Saturdays only

Service Number	415	415	415
Morpeth Bus Station (Stand G)	10:08	13:48	17:28
Felton Bridge, Northumberland	10:27	14:07	17:47
Arms			
Swarland, Square	10:35	14:15	17:55
Newton on the Moor, Cook C	10:41	14:21	18:01
Barker			
Willowburn Estate,	10:49	14:29	18:09
Leisure Centre			
Alnwick Bus Station	10:56	14:36	18:16
Service Number	415	415	415
Alnwick Bus Station (Stand 2)	09:15	12:55	16:35
Willowburn Estate,	09:22	13:02	16:42
Leisure Centre			
Newton on the Moor, Cook C	09:30	13:10	16:50
Barker			
Swarland, Square	09:36	13:16	16:56
Felton Bridge, Northumberland	09:44	13:24	17:04
Arms			
Morpeth Bus Station	10:03	13:43	17:23
<i>Departures to Newcastle</i>	<i>10:13</i>	<i>13:58</i>	<i>17:38</i>

'Hail & Ride' where safe in villages

- 6.2 Clearly, this is a very limited service and, if it is not used regularly, it may not be continued. The service has been extended for a further twelve months from April 2025 but is not guaranteed beyond this.
- 6.3 Access to the nearest bus stops for buses on routes outside the Parish are a few miles away and there are no footpaths to provide a safe walking route to them.
- 6.4 The Parish has an ageing population, many of whom have expressed concern that they may need to move outside of the Parish when they become unable to drive as there is no public transport option for them.
- 6.5 Many footpaths are not suitable for pushchairs or wheelchairs.
- 6.6 The junctions for the A1 at Newton on the Moor and Swarland are considered dangerous and

there have been many accidents when people are crossing at these points because of the junction layouts and poor visibility of oncoming traffic. See A1 junctions background paper.

Please also refer to the background paper on the Census.