# Swindon’s cigarette bollards spark divided opinions on public art



In a whimsical yet polarising artistic move, Swindon has introduced bollards painted to resemble cigarettes, igniting a spirited debate among residents. The three bollards, adorned in striking white and orange hues to mimic the appearance of cigarettes, have been installed on Hythe Road, attracting both laughter and ire. While some locals express a sense of delight at the playful transformation of mundane street furniture, others have labelled the artwork as "disgusting" and "pathetic".

Comments from the community highlight this division. One anonymous resident remarked, “I probably would've preferred it not to be cigarettes,” while conceding that they looked significantly better than their plain predecessors. Another local enthusiastically endorsed the idea, stating, “It’s a fun little joke and it isn’t harming anyone,” advocating for more creative projects that enhance local aesthetics rather than suppress artistic expression.

The initiative comes at a time when civic authorities across various towns are exploring ways to beautify their public spaces. In Swindon, the local Redcliffe Collective, a group of artists led by Helen Salter, has made strides in rejuvenating the streets through murals that address years of graffiti and promote local pride. Their ongoing efforts serve as a reminder of the impact that art can have on community morale and the urban landscape.

Elsewhere in the region, Marlborough Town Council is undertaking improvements aimed at enhancing the visual appeal of its town centre, from new signage to a consistent palette for street furniture. This initiative reflects a growing recognition among councils about the importance of community feedback in making public spaces more inviting. Similarly, in Wellington, the council has initiated refurbishments that include repainting bollards and enhancing the overall streetscape with decorative elements.

However, not all councils align with the idea of unregulated street art. In Luton, a set of bollards transformed to resemble characters from the popular "Despicable Me" franchise by the group #Uninvitedarts were quickly painted over by the council, which cited a need to maintain order and avoid what they termed "illegal graffiti". This incident highlights the delicate balance town planners must maintain between encouraging artistic expression and adhering to community standards and regulations.

In Stratford, artist Ilona Pike is working on a similar project by adding historical designs to bollards, commissioned by local authorities to promote aesthetic enhancement. These creative initiatives illuminate the broader trend of reimagining public furniture as canvases for art, aimed ultimately at fostering a sense of connection and pride in local communities.

As the cigarette bollards in Swindon continue to spark debate, they embody the complex relationship between art, community identity, and public space. Whether they are viewed as humorous or distasteful, such installations challenge residents to reconsider the role of creativity in urban living—highlighting that even the most ordinary of objects can provoke strong reactions and inspire dialogue.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2059957/fury-over-uk-town-bollard-cigarettes), [[4]](https://www.wellington-today.co.uk/news/wellington-town-centre-bollards-given-much-needed-lick-of-paint-714979)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2059957/fury-over-uk-town-bollard-cigarettes), [[2]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-wiltshire-62169078), [[5]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-beds-bucks-herts-41203759)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.marlborough-tc.gov.uk/news/news-articles/2981-changes-to-the-street-scene), [[6]](https://www.stratford-herald.com/news/bringing-beauty-to-humble-bollards-9339599/)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2059957/fury-over-uk-town-bollard-cigarettes> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-wiltshire-62169078> - A group of artists in Swindon, known as the Redcliffe Collective, have been painting murals over years of graffiti tagging on Redcliffe Street in Rodbourne. Led by Helen Salter, the project aims to brighten the area and encourage local pride. The murals, inspired by the area's history, have transformed the building into a vibrant display of art, with plans to extend the initiative across the town.
3. <https://www.marlborough-tc.gov.uk/news/news-articles/2981-changes-to-the-street-scene> - Marlborough Town Council is undertaking a project to improve signage and enhance the town centre's street furniture. This includes commissioning new 'Welcome to Marlborough' signs, replacing old finger posts, adding new planters for trees, and repainting existing street furniture with a consistent black and gold theme. The initiative responds to community feedback aiming to make the town centre more attractive and welcoming.
4. <https://www.wellington-today.co.uk/news/wellington-town-centre-bollards-given-much-needed-lick-of-paint-714979> - Wellington Town Council's community warden team has repainted the bollards in the town centre to a shiny black, with plans for decorative gold paint in the future. This effort is part of a broader initiative to improve the town's appearance, including cutting back overgrown vegetation and repainting lampposts. The council encourages residents to report any issues they would like investigated.
5. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-beds-bucks-herts-41203759> - In Luton, bollards painted to resemble Minions from the 'Despicable Me' films appeared in Cumberland Street, created by the group #Uninvitedarts. While some residents found them 'brilliant' and 'cheery,' Luton Borough Council painted over them, urging people not to engage in 'illegal graffiti.' The council emphasized the importance of displaying Luton's vibrant art scene through proper channels.
6. <https://www.stratford-herald.com/news/bringing-beauty-to-humble-bollards-9339599/> - Stratford artist Ilona Pike has added decorative color to bollards in her hometown, featuring designs that highlight the town's history and landmarks. Commissioned by local councillor Tim Sinclair, the project aims to bring art to everyday street furniture, with designs focusing on aspects like Holy Trinity Church, the Welcombe Hills, and the River Avon. The initiative is part of a broader effort to enhance the town's aesthetic appeal.
7. <https://www.shropshirestar.com/news/viral-news/2017/09/04/this-councils-new-bollards-look-like-small-children-and-theyre-as-creepy-as-that-sounds/> - In Iver, Buckinghamshire, the local council introduced life-sized bollards painted to resemble children, named 'Billy' and 'Belinda,' to slow down traffic near schools. While intended to enhance safety, residents found them 'creepy,' with some expressing concerns that they might distract drivers. The council stated that 11 such statues had been purchased, with eight installed and one in storage, indicating the initiative's ongoing presence in the area.