# Dutch roundabout in Hemel Hempstead sparks debate over road user priority and traffic impact



The much-anticipated Dutch roundabout in Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, is set to open on June 6, marking a notable shift in the UK's approach to road design. Costing £2 million, this innovative construction is designed to prioritise the safety of cyclists and pedestrians through a host of features that distinctly separate them from motorised traffic. Dubbed Britain’s ‘most woke’ roundabout due to its controversial hierarchy of road user rights, the design requires drivers to yield to pedestrians first, followed by cyclists, before giving way to motor vehicles.

While Hertfordshire County Council has championed the roundabout as a significant stride toward sustainable urban development, local reactions have been mixed. Critics contend that the emphasis on cycling and pedestrian access may be unnecessary, particularly on Boundary Way, a route predominantly used by cars and lorries. Some residents believe the new design could exacerbate existing traffic issues rather than alleviate them. The council claims the approach aims to enhance access, improve air quality, and promote public health by encouraging more active modes of travel. However, there are concerns that the redesign could lead to increased congestion in an area already known for its heavy traffic.

To familiarise drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians with the new system, the council has produced a comprehensive instructional video highlighting how to navigate the roundabout’s complex layout. The guide emphasises safety protocols, such as cyclists yielding to pedestrians and motor vehicles conceding priority to both cyclists and pedestrians when entering or leaving the roundabout—ideas that have sparked lively debate online. Many commenters express scepticism, predicting chaos during peak hours as road users grapple with the new rules. One user succinctly noted, "That's going to be carnage at rush hour," capturing the sentiment of many wary locals.

The roundabout aligns with a broader initiative in Dacorum aimed at fostering greener travel options, supported by an additional £2.6 million from the Department for Transport's Active Travel Fund. This funding is part of a larger £9 million awarded to Hertfordshire since late 2020 to enhance walking and cycling infrastructure across the county. Phil Bibby, the council's executive member for highways and transport, has publicly defended the project, arguing that such designs are not only about enhancing current safety but also about preventing future gridlock due to rising local employment and increased traffic demand. The county council aims to cultivate a ‘cleaner, greener, healthier Hertfordshire’ through this initiative, hoping to set a precedent for future roadworks throughout the region.

The reception of this pioneering roundabout serves as a reflection of a larger societal dialogue about the balance between accommodating motor vehicles and promoting active travel. As the opening date approaches, eyes will be keenly focused not only on the functionality of the roundabout itself but also on the broader implications of its design for urban planning in the UK. As one resident lamented, “I don’t like the idea of braking when exiting the roundabout to give way to pedestrians.” Questions remain regarding the practicalities of this forward-thinking design and its long-term impact on the local driving culture.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2061017/controversial-2m-roundabout), [[2]](https://www.road.cc/content/news/outrage-over-first-its-kind-cycling-roundabout-311975)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2061017/controversial-2m-roundabout), [[3]](https://www.mynewsmag.co.uk/going-in-circles-dutch-style-roundabout-in-hemel-hempstead-receives-mixed-responses/), [[5]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c23vjkzy5dro)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://www.hemeltoday.co.uk/news/people/ps26m-more-funding-to-develop-walking-and-cycling-projects-in-dacorum-including-a-dutch-style-roundabout-in-hemel-hempstead-3714457), [[6]](https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/roadworks-and-road-closures/major-roadwork-projects/active-travel-fund.aspx)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://www.road.cc/content/news/outrage-over-first-its-kind-cycling-roundabout-311975), [[3]](https://www.mynewsmag.co.uk/going-in-circles-dutch-style-roundabout-in-hemel-hempstead-receives-mixed-responses/), [[5]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c23vjkzy5dro)
* Paragraph 5 – [[6]](https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/roadworks-and-road-closures/major-roadwork-projects/active-travel-fund.aspx), [[7]](https://www.hertfordshiremercury.co.uk/news/hertfordshire-news/cgis-show-plans-new-dutch-5635488)

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2061017/controversial-2m-roundabout> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.road.cc/content/news/outrage-over-first-its-kind-cycling-roundabout-311975> - Hertfordshire County Council has initiated the construction of a 'Dutch-style' roundabout at Boundary Way in Hemel Hempstead, aiming to enhance safety and reduce congestion by providing dedicated cycling spaces separated from vehicular traffic. The project has faced criticism from local residents who argue that the roadworks will significantly disrupt daily life and lead to increased traffic gridlock. The council maintains that the design will improve access, health, air quality, and alleviate congestion, with completion expected in the summer.
3. <https://www.mynewsmag.co.uk/going-in-circles-dutch-style-roundabout-in-hemel-hempstead-receives-mixed-responses/> - Hertfordshire County Council is implementing a 'Dutch-style' roundabout at Boundary Way in Hemel Hempstead, featuring dedicated cycling lanes, widened footways, and pedestrian crossings. The project has sparked controversy, with residents launching a petition to keep Three Cherry Trees Lane open during construction, citing concerns over significant disruptions. The council's executive member for highways and transport, Phil Bibby, discussed the project on TalkTV, emphasizing its potential to prevent future gridlock due to increased local employment.
4. <https://www.hemeltoday.co.uk/news/people/ps26m-more-funding-to-develop-walking-and-cycling-projects-in-dacorum-including-a-dutch-style-roundabout-in-hemel-hempstead-3714457> - Hertfordshire County Council has secured an additional £2.6 million from the Department for Transport's Active Travel Fund to develop walking and cycling projects in Dacorum, including a 'Dutch-style' roundabout in Hemel Hempstead. The proposed design aims to enhance safety and encourage cycling by providing dedicated spaces for cyclists, widened footways, and pedestrian crossings, with a reduced speed limit of 20mph on all approaches. The project is part of a broader initiative to promote cleaner, greener, and healthier travel options.
5. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c23vjkzy5dro> - Work has commenced on a 'Dutch-style' roundabout in Hemel Hempstead, marking a first for Hertfordshire. The design prioritises cyclists and pedestrians by providing dedicated spaces separated from vehicular traffic, along with widened footways and new pedestrian crossings. The council aims to create a 'cleaner, greener, healthier Hertfordshire' through this initiative, with completion expected in the summer. The project has led to temporary road closures and diversions, with some residents expressing concerns over potential disruptions.
6. <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/roadworks-and-road-closures/major-roadwork-projects/active-travel-fund.aspx> - Hertfordshire County Council has been awarded £9 million since November 2020, plus an additional £4.6 million in May 2023, from Active Travel England's Active Travel Fund. These funds support schemes across the county, including the 'Dutch-style' roundabout at Boundary Way in Hemel Hempstead. The initiative aims to make walking and cycling safer and more accessible, improving health, air quality, road safety, the local economy, and reducing traffic congestion.
7. <https://www.hertfordshiremercury.co.uk/news/hertfordshire-news/cgis-show-plans-new-dutch-5635488> - Hertfordshire County Council has unveiled computer-generated images (CGIs) for a proposed 'Dutch-style' roundabout at Boundary Way in Hemel Hempstead. The design includes a dedicated circular cycle route around the roundabout, separated from the carriageway, widened footways, pedestrian crossings on all arms, and a reduced speed limit of 20mph. The project aims to enhance safety for cyclists and pedestrians and is part of the Buncefield Lane quietway initiative, connecting less trafficked streets along Buncefield Lane.