# Cigarette-themed bollards in Swindon divide opinion but spark calls for more street art



Bollards in Swindon painted to resemble cigarettes have sparked a debate among residents, with reactions ranging from amusement to outrage. These distinctive installations, positioned on Hythe Road, feature a striking design of white and orange that mimics the appearance of cigarettes. While some locals find the transformation humorous and commend the anonymous artist for enhancing the street's aesthetic, others have condemned it as "disgusting" and inappropriate.

The contrast in opinions highlights a broader societal conversation regarding public art and urban aesthetics. One resident noted, “I probably would’ve preferred it not to be cigarettes if given the choice, but honestly it looks much better than it did when they were just bollards.” This sentiment reflects a growing trend where residents are calling for more creative expressions in public spaces, notwithstanding the material chosen. Another added, “I hope they’re allowed to stay as they are. It's a fun little joke, and it isn’t harming anyone,” suggesting that such playful modifications could invigorate local culture.

Public responses to unconventional street furniture have historically been mixed. For instance, back in 2017, Iver Parish Council introduced life-sized bollards designed to resemble children, a strategy intended to enhance road safety near schools. However, this initiative met with significant criticism, as many residents found the figures unsettling and ‘creepy’. Such reactions underscore the fact that while innovative solutions can engage communities, they may also elicit discomfort when taken to extremes.

The emergence of these cigarette-shaped bollards also invites a reconsideration of public space usage amid ongoing discussions about urban clutter. In 2010, prominent government officials, including then-Communities Secretary Eric Pickles, called for a review of excessive street signs and furniture which detracted from the aesthetic character of British streets. Their objective was to create less cluttered environments that would not only enhance safety but also improve the overall visual appeal of urban settings.

Moreover, Swindon has seen its share of challenges related to street aesthetics in recent years, as witnessed by the borough's crackdown in 2011 on unsightly advertising signs. This initiative aimed to address concerns voiced by the public regarding the proliferation of unattractive commercial signage that littered key thoroughfares, reinforcing the notion that the town's appearance directly impacts residents’ quality of life.

While some will continue to voice their dissatisfaction over the cigarette bollards, local enthusiasts hope that this bold art piece inspires more creative projects that blend humour and utility. As urban landscapes continue to evolve, balancing aesthetic appeal and practical function remains a crucial discussion, one that community dialogue will shape moving forward.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2059957/fury-over-uk-town-bollard-cigarettes), [[2]](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/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[2]](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/), [[3]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2010/aug/26/signs-bollards-streets-character-eric-pickles), [[4]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/the-filter/strange-road-safety-innovations/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2010/aug/26/signs-bollards-streets-character-eric-pickles), [[5]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-wiltshire-14198841)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-wiltshire-22338210)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2059957/fury-over-uk-town-bollard-cigarettes), [[7]](https://www.swindonadvertiser.co.uk/news/20015545.100-000-illegal-cigarettes-seized-raids-four-swindon-shops/)

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## 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.shropshirestar.com/news/viral-news/2017/09/04/this-councils-new-bollards-look-like-small-children-and-theyre-as-creepy-as-that-sounds/> - In 2017, Iver Parish Council in Buckinghamshire introduced life-sized bollards painted to resemble children, named 'Billy' and 'Belinda', to slow down traffic near schools. While intended to enhance road safety, residents found them unsettling, with some describing them as 'creepy' and 'awful'. The council had already purchased 11 such statues, with eight installed and one in storage, indicating a commitment to this unconventional traffic calming measure.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2010/aug/26/signs-bollards-streets-character-eric-pickles> - In 2010, UK government officials, including Communities Secretary Eric Pickles, initiated a review into the proliferation of street signs, bollards, and advertising hoardings. They expressed concerns that excessive street furniture was diminishing the 'English character' of streets and wasting taxpayer money. The review aimed to provide guidance to councils on reducing unnecessary street clutter, emphasizing the need for uncluttered streets to enhance safety and aesthetics.
4. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/the-filter/strange-road-safety-innovations/> - This article highlights unconventional road safety measures implemented in the UK. Notably, it discusses the installation of life-sized child-shaped bollards in Iver, Buckinghamshire, designed to slow down traffic near schools. While intended to improve road safety, these bollards received criticism from residents who found them 'creepy' and 'unsettling'. The piece also covers other unique traffic calming initiatives, showcasing the diverse approaches to enhancing road safety.
5. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-wiltshire-14198841> - In 2011, Swindon Borough Council launched a crackdown on illegal and unsightly advertising signs cluttering the town's streets. The initiative targeted unauthorized signs on main routes, including Cirencester Way, Cricklade Road, and Thamesdown Drive. Businesses failing to remove their signs faced potential seizure and charges for recovery costs. The council's goal was to enhance the town's appearance and address public complaints about the proliferation of unattractive street advertisements.
6. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-wiltshire-22338210> - In 2013, double yellow lines were mistakenly painted in a narrow alleyway off Newhall Street in Swindon, leaving only a 13-inch gap. Residents criticized the error as 'totally ridiculous'. Swindon Borough Council acknowledged the mistake, stating it was a 'temporary measure' and that the lines would eventually be 'burnt off' by the contractor. The incident highlighted the challenges of ensuring accurate road markings in constrained spaces.
7. <https://www.swindonadvertiser.co.uk/news/20015545.100-000-illegal-cigarettes-seized-raids-four-swindon-shops/> - In 2022, a joint operation led by Swindon Trading Standards, HMRC, Wiltshire Police, and South West Illegal Tobacco resulted in the seizure of over 100,000 illegal cigarettes and 30kg of tobacco worth more than £81,700. The operation targeted four shops and several associated vehicles. Councillor Cathy Martyn emphasized the importance of such operations in protecting residents and combating the risks associated with illegal tobacco sales, including links to organized crime.