

Report on the Houghton & Wyton 2014-2016 Street Lighting Replacement Programme

Introduction

In July 2011, the 25 year PFI contract between Cambridgeshire County Council and Balfour Beatty to replace and maintain street lights and illuminated road signs began. One of the key aims was to reduce costs so a target of a 10% reduction in the number of lights was set.

The PC's involvement started with a briefing by Cambridge County Council officers in Huntingdon Town Hall on 11 June 2012 and the schedule showed H & W planned for 2016. The first contact with Balfour Beatty was in April 2013.

There follows a summary of the main issues that we experienced.

County Council Inventory

Many of the problems that we have had result from the inaccuracies in the Cambridgeshire County Council streetlight inventory for our parish.

The roads in Wyton were wrongly classified as being in Wyton on the Hill and St Ives Road in Houghton was also classified as Wyton on the Hill.

The lights in Green Lane were omitted completely and the County Council, inspite of a formal complaint, disagreed that these lights were their responsibility. It is presumed that somebody is paying for the electricity for these lights and it isn't the Parish Council !!

Schedule changes

The initial Balfour Beatty schedule showed Houghton and Wyton due for work in 2016.

Houghton was then brought forward to 2014 without due notice to the Parish Council

Arbitrary decisions

It was originally planned to replace the Heritage lights in Huntingdon Road with modern style but the PC prevailed to preserve Heritage lights in the Conservation area.

St Ives Road Houghton was classified by Balfour Beatty as a traffic route and therefore a lighting design was carried out which resulted in the heritage lights being replaced on a 1-for-1 basis but with lights 6 m in height rather than the existing 5m in order to ensure the correct lighting levels and coverage

Huntingdon Road Wyton was not classified as a traffic route in spite of it being the other half of the same main route through the village. As a result one in two of the modern lights in Huntingdon Road were removed leaving severe lack of coverage !!

For no apparent reason and none has been provided, it was decided that the Heritage lights in the other roads in Houghton would be replaced with six meter lights even though the existing five meter lights gave adequate illumination. This seems to have been done without any concern for the visual impact on the street scene in this historic village setting. The result is lanterns in the middle of trees and outside people's bedroom windows.

Again, for no reason, it was planned that the two heritage lights on Rectory lane would be replaced by modern lights, making this road an exception to the rest of the historic parts of the village. This was obviously not acceptable to the residents of Rectory lane nor to the Parish Council.

A light which was no more than a few years old in Warren Close was removed and then the next light, which was old, was replaced with a new one even though we had pointed out that it made more sense to remove the old one and leave the relatively new one in situ. This would have saved the installation of one new modern light.

Scheduling of work

For whatever reason, the work to replace the existing lights never went according to the schedule or the published timescale to cover the various steps in the process.

Poles were planted and then no work happened for many weeks, poles with lanterns were installed and again not connected for many weeks.

Communications

Communication between Balfour Beatty staff and ourselves was always professional and was efficient when the issue was of importance to Balfour Beatty, for example getting agreement to the street lighting plans and preparation for work to commence.

However when the issues were specific to ourselves the efficiency disappeared.

Quality of work

The one positive aspect of this whole process has been the actual work carried out by the different tradespeople. There have been no complaints from residents and the work was always done efficiently and tidily with tarmac being neatly repaired and grass areas levelled and re-seeded.

Parish Contribution

In spite of making a formal complaint to Cambs CC, the PC was obliged to make a financial contribution of approximately £9000 in order to resolve some of the issues as follows:

- The PC agreed to pay the extra initial and ongoing costs for the 2 lights in Rectory Lane to be Heritage type. These lights were already on the County Council's inventory.
- The County Council offered to provide 2 modern lights in Green Lane (this is the route to the school) to replace the existing Heritage ones however the PC decide to fund the extra costs for these to be Heritage type. These lights will be adopted by the County Council and become their responsibility.
- One of the lights removed on Hill Estate (inspite of the PC's request to remove an alternative) left a very dark area and so the PC decided to fund a replacement modern light.
- The payment for these lights includes electricity and maintenance for 21 years. The original quotations are attached at the end of this report.

Summary

This has been one of the most frustrating exercises with which we have ever been involved.

In order to replace 141 street lights in the village with 123 lights, a 13% reduction, it has taken approximately 2 years with work finally being completed in December 2016.

There have been a few complaints about light pollution in 1st floor windows which were resolved by Balfour Beatty fitting screens inside the lanterns.

Apart from that the new white lights have been accepted and indeed welcomed . People have also appreciated the reduction in "sky glow"

All lights in the village (see schedule at appendix A below) are the total responsibility of the County Council (via Balfour Beatty).

Prepared by Cllr D B Bonny and approved by the Council on 1 Feb 2017

Appendix A Houghton & Wyton 2016 Street Light Inventory

Attachment: Quotation for Green and Rectory lanes and Hill Estate.

Appendix A

Street Lighting Inventory

Road	Modern	Heritage	Area	Old Light Identifiers
Ansley	2		Houghton	
Brookside	5		Houghton	lost CC1
Chapel Lane		4	Houghton	
Green Lane		2	Wyton	
Hill Estate	5		Houghton	lost CC19
Home Farm Road	13		Houghton	
Huntingdon Road	5	12	Wyton	lost CC 22,24,26,28,31
Leslie Green Road	2		Houghton	
Loxley Green	3		Wyton	lost CC3
Manor Close	4		Wyton	
Mill Street		6	Houghton	
Rectory Lane		2	Wyton	
St Ives Road	2	6	Houghton	
St Margarets	12		Wyton	lost CC 6, 10
Splash Lane	2		Wyton	
The Green		1	Houghton	
Thicket Road		7	Houghton	lost CC 3, 6, 9
Townsend	3		Wyton	
Victoria Crescent	13		Wyton	
Ward Close	3		Houghton	lost CC 3
Ware Lane	4		Wyton	lost CC 2, 4
Warren Close	4		Wyton	lost CC 2, 4
Wessel	1		Houghton	
Modern total =	83	Houghton =	33	Original total = 141
		Wyton =	50	Lost total = 18
Heritage total =	40	Houghton =	24	Reduction = 12.8%
		Wyton =	16	
Overall total =	123	Houghton	57	
		total =		
		Wyton Total =	66	

Roads in green include Heritage lights. Numbers in green are Heritage lights.