

Dear Colin,

I write to ask if Todmorden Town Council could help with a problem in the Halifax Road area.

For a few years, several properties have shaken when heavy vehicles travel along the Halifax Road. Unfortunately, this has been getting steadily worse. The intensity of the vibrations has been increasing, as has the effect on the buildings and the number of buildings affected. Significant cracks have appeared in the wall and ceiling junctions within some of the houses. Unless something is done, there is likely to be irreparable damage done over the next few years. Houses immediately next to the road are being affected (e.g. 2A Der Street, 134 Halifax Road, 137 Halifax Road, 142 Halifax Road). However, the vibrations spread out like waves and can be felt further away, as well. For example, the owners of 1 Back Der Street and 6 Sanworth Street can sometimes feel vibrations in their houses.

One possible explanation for what is happening is that the water table in the area is rising. In effect, the houses and the Halifax Road are finding themselves sitting on boggy land instead of a firmer foundation. The problems have become noticeably worse since Lidl was built. However, it may be too simplistic to place all the blame there. Another theory is that the rebuilding of the river wall is to blame. Not only does the new wall keep the river water in, it also keeps the underground water out. Water that enters the water table finds it difficult to flow away from the area, as the river walls may be helping to contain it. About 30 years ago, I dug a hole in my cellar to install a sump pump and non-return drain. I eventually reached what I believed to be the water table. Recent observations have led me to believe that the water table is about a metre higher than it was back then. Also, at a meeting of the Todmorden Flood Group, I was informed that the water table is rising. However, it would be valuable to have a much more authoritative opinion on what is happening to the water table and, especially, what effect this is having on the surrounding area.

Before the last Town Council elections, the Development Committee agreed to investigate whether the water table was rising. A letter was sent off (sorry, I don't know to whom). Regrettably, a rather valueless reply was received, stating that they measured the water table in Halifax. Largely because of the forthcoming elections, the investigations got shelved. Will it be possible to resume these investigations, please?

Perhaps the damage that is occurring to the properties is due to another cause. Please will you consider if there are any ways you could help with this problem?

Just before sending off this email, I discovered that a structural engineer from Calderdale Council has inspected 132 Halifax Road and found there are problems in that property, already. Councillor Ken White has more knowledge about what the engineer said.