

GETTING ABOUT IN FRESHFORD

THE SAFE INTEGRATION OF PEOPLE AND VEHICLES

A report by Freshford Parish Council

September 2009

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to provide the local authority, Bath and North East Somerset, with a comprehensive account of the many and various issues which face our community as we seek to achieve the right balance between people and vehicles. More than that, it is our wish to encourage an integrated approach to solving these problems not only so that all involved in this process can be clear about what we collectively are seeking to achieve in the short, medium and long term but also that any action taken can be seen in the context of taking planned steps towards achieving clear and specific objectives. A piecemeal approach often leads to poor decision making, a lack of consistency and continuity of approach and considerable duplication of effort and cost.

We want to be realistic in our aims and to then ensure that what can be realistically achieved is pursued doggedly and implemented. This is not a task that we undertake in isolation and we want first to acknowledge the full role played by the local authority in helping to move things forward both in terms of actions taken and in the level of consultation that takes place. We are grateful too for the work undertaken by many people in the local community, most recently in the production of the Parish Plan, and to the members of the Highways Group which was formed following the Plan's publication in 2008. The Highways Group was instrumental in following through the Hamilton-Baillie Report on Shared Space, commissioned by the Parish Council in 2008.

The Hamilton-Baillie Report was considered by the Transport Policy Team of B&NES in September 2008. While it would be true to say that the Authority did not readily embrace some of the key concepts proposed nevertheless the Council made clear that it would continue to assist in finding solutions that contributed to transport objectives of reducing CO₂ emissions, congestion and road accidents and improving accessibility by sustainable transport.

All these objectives are aimed at seeking to improve the general quality of life. We say that these are shared aims that can become a reality by working together to find practical solutions. We would seek to place the emphasis on what we have in common and not on what divides us.

This Report comprises two Parts. Part I sets out an overview of the current position together with our thoughts on how we would wish to see things resolved. Part II, based on those observations and on plans some of which are already in the public domain, provides practical solutions with drawings in an effort to assist those charged with assessing the viability of these schemes to bring them to fruition.

PART I

Objectives of the Parish Council

The Freshford Parish Plan was published in 2008. This may be viewed on the Freshford Village Website at:

www.freshfordvillage.co.uk/files/FreshfordVillagePlan.pdf.

From that Plan the PC developed five principal objectives:

1. To fulfil the legal and discretionary powers and duties placed on the Council effectively and efficiently and to keep the parish informed of what is going on.
2. To show leadership combined with a clear sense of purpose and place and to exercise influence for the general good of the community.
3. To preserve and/or enhance the distinctiveness of Freshford
4. To have regard for the general well being of the residents and to seek to improve the quality of village life.
5. To promote a vibrant and sustainable community

Such is the nature of road and traffic issues that we would say that they embrace to a greater or lesser degree all five objectives. But equally we know that this then leads us on to the specific issues that we must address. It is to the specific matters that we now turn.

The Safe Integration of People and Vehicles

The Highways Group comprises local people, both councillors and others, who have been examining a wide range of issues. They work closely with Freshford Primary School in so far as they share common aims to improve road safety for the area immediately around the school – the cross roads, the bus stop and the pavement and path to the Memorial Hall. Necessarily, the Group's remit is broader than this one specific project and they have now produced a comprehensive paper entitled:

Freshford. The Safe integration of People and Vehicles. (SIPV).

The Highways Group, supported by the Parish Council, see the need for layers of whole village measures which are to:

1. Ensure the village centre has “shared space” for people and vehicles so allowing people to move and socialise in safety.
2. Encourage through traffic and large vehicles to use the main through routes.
3. Physically discourage large commercial vehicles and ‘lost’ vehicles etc from using narrow lanes. Given the narrowness of our roads and lanes we think that it may be necessary to go one step further to positively discourage through traffic from entering the village. We say this against a background of seeing an increase in traffic as vehicles seek to find alternative routes from the A.36 to Bath, Bradford on Avon and beyond avoiding the traffic lights at the Viaduct.
4. Ensure traffic information, signage and all street furniture is placed appropriately, effectively, consistently and is fully compatible with the environment.
5. Tackle any specific problems that remain, in particular parking

We hope that the Authority shares these sentiments and can apply them in helping us arrive at solutions which improve the quality of people’s lives and which are sensitive to the local environment. In broad terms we would encourage the LA to take a holistic approach to problem solving and we say more about that below. But first we mention a specific instance which is unique and which calls for an individual solution.

A STAND ALONE CASE

Rosemary Lane faces particular problems with the anticipated increase in road traffic once the new Mill Housing Development opens in the Spring of 2010. We do not think that it can be resolved by a whole village solution. With 21 new housing units it is vital that steps are taken to ensure that traffic is routed through the village centre and not along Rosemary Lane. It requires BANES to exercise clear leadership in decision making and action within a time frame that allows for any authorised works to be completed before the housing is ready for occupation. We do not wish to see the issues resolved only once problems have been encountered in practice. We ask that the Parish Council be fully involved in this process and that throughout the consultation process proper regard is taken of the views of the PC and the views of local residents.

Recently discussions have taken place between the Parish Council and Ypres Rose (the Developer) to explore a range of measures to encourage motorists to use alternative routes. (See Part II of this Report for specific proposals for restricting the

width of the road at its junction with Rosemary Lane and for encouraging vehicles leaving the Mill development to use Crabtree Lane to exit.) The Rosemary Lane Residents Association petitioned BANES some two years ago to place bollards on the bridge over the River Frome and to create a turning circle at the north end of the bridge. The core of their concern was based on the findings of B&NES Highways Department at the time the Mill development was under discussion which stated that Rosemary Lane was unsuitable to cope with increased traffic – it was narrow, tortuous and steep. It lacked passing places in public ownership. That remains the case today.

During the course of preparing this report the Parish Council have been advised by the Highways Department of the imminent placing of traffic signs to warn large vehicles against using Rosemary Lane to access the Mill. We welcome this news. At the same time we have made clear that we will continue to press for a more satisfactory long term solution.

Attached to this paper in the **Appendix** is the report specific to Rosemary Lane (submitted to B&NES in August 09, following a chain of damage to private and public property caused by a rogue HGV) and in which we detail a range of physical alterations to the road layout that might help alleviate the present difficulties.

Lest it be thought that the situation is not as critical as we suggest we are maintaining a comprehensive list of the incidents of HGV's using the Lane. That list already reveals a pattern of misuse on a weekly basis. Worryingly, on a recent occasion two Fire Service vehicles, responding to an emergency call, sought to access the Mill via Rosemary Lane. Finding that the Lane was too narrow both vehicles then had to reverse back up the Lane before finally getting to the site via the village centre. On this occasion the delay was not critical but we draw no comfort from that.

We should mention also at this point the connected problems with Ashes Lane and its use by large vehicles. It forms part of the 'stand alone' Rosemary Lane case to the extent that many SatNav systems instruct drivers going to the Mill development to leave the A.36 at Ashes Lane and to then continue along the lower section of Abbey Lane and down Rosemary Lane.(see also Narrow Roads and SatNav below).

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

We invite the local authority to consider the wide range of issues that are described below and which often relate to specific rubbing points in the village. We ask that they be considered with a view to seeing whether it is feasible to put together a policy which would seek to deal with the issues in a coherent and integrated way. If there

could be a phased and planned programme of implementation we would welcome such an approach. In saying this we recognise that specific and separate pieces of work are most likely to be undertaken one at a time and over the course of months and years. Much will depend on the funding that is made available. All we ask is that whatever the work undertaken it can be seen as compatible with and helping towards achieving the wider objectives set for the village as a whole.

The Village Centre.

Improvements are needed to crossing the road on foot both by the school and on the road up to the Memorial Hall so that people can move safely. Some 140 children attend the school. We have developed with B&NES a proposal for junction improvements that reduces the width of the road, and provides improved and new pavements. (See Part II for specific plans for road and pavement layout.)

As part of this process we would wish to see resolved the pavement opposite the main school entrance. We say this in the context that a safe pedestrian way is needed between the school and the Memorial Hall and that need is greatest for the young and for the elderly. We see this scheme as viable and achievable as opposed to the more problematic scheme to provide a pavement/path on the other side of the road from the existing lay-by down to the school (and see next paragraph). Over time this section of pavement has become obstructed by vegetation and tree roots. This has led in turn to it becoming unsuitable for use by pedestrians and particularly by the disabled and by those with pushchairs. Consequent on its poor condition the pavement is now used on a regular basis for car parking. As a first step we would invite the Highways Department to acknowledge that the pavement is their responsibility, is unfit for purpose and that it should be restored so that once again it is capable of fulfilling its function.

We are presently in discussions with B&NES as to where to park the school bus. B&NES has identified two options – either in the lay-by with a path to the school (in the Village Green), or by the school using some of the Green. Further detail is being obtained from B&NES prior to selecting an option. Both have advantages and concerns. The former scheme seeks to enhance both the walk to the school and to the Memorial Hall and Shop for all residents, although it does raise a new problem of finding a place for the school cars to park.

Through Routes. For through routes we require large vehicles and visitors to use the main recognised routes (Abbey Lane, Church Lane and the Hill). In adverse weather conditions it is these roads only that are gritted as a matter of course. Other access

points to the village - Ashes Lane, Pipehouse Lane, Mill Lane, and Iford Lane need a combination of items as an active discouragement against use and to be specifically and consistently signed. (And see Part II. Traffic management). It is intended to involve B&NES and their expertise to identify options in taking this forward.

The Pipehouse road (on the west side of the A36) is a no through route so is protected. Midford Lane is used as a short cut to the Midford Road. Its wide entrance from the A.36 belies the reality that along most of its length it is narrow and has few passing places. The majority of the Lane lies in Wiltshire but since the A.36 junction is in B&NES the situation calls for the Highways Departments of both Authorities to link effectively with each other to apply a consistent approach to e.g. road signs and speed limits.

Narrow roads.

There are home entrances close to or directly fronting these roads which are used by people on foot. We need to discourage vehicles and large vehicles in particular, from using them. We are concerned with Rosemary Lane off Abbey lane, Ashes Lane and Pipehouse Lane off Park Corner, Park Corner itself, Sharpstone by the School, The Hill by the Church and Dark Lane. (Part II Traffic management) It is the intent to propose “shared space” concepts with protruding pavements or cobble stones into the road. These have been shown to have the same effect as physical bollards and they discourage most vehicles while still allowing access to emergency traffic or to enable vehicles to turn.

Satellite Navigation (SatNav).

Large commercial vehicles often use Sat Nav which compounds the problems described above. The village centre, Dark Lane, Ashes Lane, Pipehouse Lane and Rosemary Lane have all featured on SatNav systems to the despair of local residents who often feel powerless in seeking to get the position rectified. Such is the assertive power of SatNav that it seems capable of overriding the use of common sense by drivers. They disbelieve the evidence of their own eyes. Locally it is an issue which is currently exercising the minds of Don Foster M.P., Neil Butters, councillor for Bathavon South Ward, and officials at the Department for Transport. (See Part II).

The objective of removing the village centre and our narrow lanes (Ashes, Pipehouse Rosemary, and Dark Lane) from the software is fully supported. Quite how this can be tied in with allowing continued access to those smaller commercial vehicles which are providing a delivery service for local people is a matter requiring further thought.

There has already been some success to the extent that a local resident has managed to have Ashes Lane and Rosemary Lane removed from the Navteq system. However it will take a considerable amount of time and effort to seek to effect comprehensive removal of these routes from all SatNav systems. In addition, discussions have just taken place between Neil Butters and Ray Gercans, Head of Traffic Management, Strategy and Advice at the Department for Transport about introducing signs that indicate where sat nav instructions should be ignored. (See Part II.) It appears to be the case that central government see this as an issue that should be devolved for local resolution.

Speed restrictions.

The common cry from all village residents is to see vehicles driving at a safe speed on village roads. For this purpose we would define village roads as commencing from their junctions with the A.36. We maintain that this requires an absolute maximum speed limit of no more than 30mph and in some instances much less than that. (See Part II.)

The existing 20mph zone is considered appropriate and has the intent of protecting the zone around the school. Extending that zone up to and even beyond the Memorial Hall would appear beneficial and particularly so now that the community shop is open at that site as is the new pre school. We recognise that any extension of the 20 mph zone might dilute the effectiveness of the existing school protection but would welcome a considered dialogue with the traffic authorities as to how best to ensure that vehicles drive at a safe speed along Freshford Lane.

We are monitoring the debate in Limpley Stoke, who at present are seeking to introduce a 20mph limit. If their initiative leads to a general revision of speed limits throughout the village of Limpley Stoke then we would wish to keep in step and seek conformity and consistency of approach on all the roads which serve the two communities. Information on the Limpley Stoke proposal may be viewed and downloaded from <<http://groups.google.co.uk/group/limpleystoketraffic?hl=en>>.

Most but not all of the village roads are supported by a 30mph limit. The initial 60 mph limits when turning off the A36 towards the village centre seems inappropriate. A particular concern is Abbey Lane where the wide and straight section of road is likely to lull motorists to speed. Abbey Lane is now one of the 'Walk to School' routes which makes it even more vital that a speed restriction is introduced. The PC has requested that BANES moves this 30 mph limit to the junction with the A36. That may require further revision to a 20mph limit being introduced as it is not just the walk to school initiative but also there are a number of children who walk to the

Tennis Club evenings in the summer months and at weekends and during the holidays children from the village go up Browns Field to play football.

We are aware too of a current proposal to extend the 40mph limit on the A.36 as far as Branch Road. Any move to implement that proposal would lead us to at least review these current suggestions so that once again an approach is taken that is consistent and sensible.

Despite the speed restriction signs on sections of the A.36 there is continued and persistent speeding – particularly at night. It is not unusual to witness vehicles travelling at well over the authorised speed. It is a fact that the quality of the road and of the road surface has had the perverse effect of encouraging motorists to drive more quickly. It may be that some simple and effective solutions might be found and we would ask that the Highways Department advise on this. Equally a high profile campaign by the police to fine speeding drivers may be effective. A police presence on the ground acts as a reassurance to residents that action is being taken. And it seems to be a fact of life that news of speed traps or similar spreads like wildfire through the motoring community.

Pipehouse Lane does not have any speed restrictions but its narrowness and no through road status achieves speed reduction without the need for signage. Midford Lane off the A36 on the west side has no speed restriction despite it being narrow with a number of blind bends. Part of that lane lies in Freshford and part in Limpley Stoke.

One way systems for Ashes Lane and Rosemary Lane.

There have been suggestions by officers of BANES and by some residents for one way systems in these roads. This is not supported by the Parish Council mainly because it has an unwelcome knock on effect. The roads become “rat runs” because drivers know there is no oncoming traffic (noting that homes, people and children exist on the edge of these roads and need to enjoy the roads in safety). The traffic would be transferred to other lanes that already have constraints and would be subjected to increased pressures. We should also mention that the Parish Council has been approached by residents keen to get support for some roads to be closed off permanently –Dark Lane and Sharpstone are those most frequently mentioned. We do not support this approach and in general terms we are against road closures. We would welcome the views of the Local Authority on this issue.

The Hill. The safe crossing of the road is of concern to pedestrians, due to the lack of pavements. Similarly vehicles drive close to walls and cause damage. Proposals have

been drafted and are soon to be submitted to BANES to modify the pavements. These could extend to putting the footpath on the west side of The Hill all the way from the Inn. Similar concerns have also been expressed about the sharp left hand bend at the junction of Rosemary Lane and Abbey Lane where a number of ‘near misses’ have been recorded over the years. Traffic should be encouraged to slow on the approach to these blind bends. (See Part II.)

Signage.

There are too many signs, and there are inconsistencies in the signage. These degrade the local environment. For example, In the 200 metres from Pipehouse Lane to Park Corner there are eleven road signs. A survey (including road markings) has been undertaken enabling us to submit these to the Highways Authority for rationalisation. (See Part II).

Parking

The Parish Plan identified the need to take account of the expressed wish of many residents to resolving the problem of their not having sufficient space to park. The problem is at its most acute for residents of Sharpstone and the village centre by the school and on The Hill. The Highways Group could not find a solution capable of satisfying existing planning constraints. We invite the local authority to accept the need for resolution of these difficulties and to work with us in seeking a solution.

Street parking is at a premium throughout the village and thoughtless parking causes particular concerns both in terms of road safety and in the wider context of denying access to emergency vehicles – flooding has been a real problem in recent times. Parking at the time of the two daily school runs is chaotic and dangerous. The safety of the school children is put at risk. (See also Village Centre above). The Parish Council is working closely with the school and with the police on solving this problem as it affects the school children but once again if this aspect is pursued in isolation of other connected traffic issues the results are likely to be less than satisfactory.

Pot Holes

We recognise fully that the past winter added substantially to the demands placed on the Highway Authority to repair pot holes. But we do question the wisdom of current policy which affords priority to the worst pot holes while leaving those which are not in the 'priority' category to be filled in on another occasion. This has led to some bizarre results with every other pot hole being resurfaced in some instances while their companions have been left unattended. Often, by the time that the work is actually done the unattended pot holes have deteriorated to the same degree as the ones filled in. Surely this is not making best use of existing resources and it would be far more cost effective to have an entire section of road made good at the same time.

Road maintenance

The excellent surfacing of the A.36 with its noise reduction qualities only serves to highlight more strongly the pitiable state of the roads and pavements leading off it. The main through route – Church Lane, the High Street and Staples Hill is in appalling condition and exacts a heavy toll on tyres, suspension and brakes. Cyclists are particularly vulnerable as road users to the uneven surfaces that they encounter. It is difficult to extol the virtues of walking and cycling when the evidence points to a seeming indifference to a sustained and planned maintenance programme for the roads and lanes which serve to tie the community together.

The A36

The A36 geographically divides the Parish of Freshford in two. While most villagers live to the east of the main road the two hamlets of Pipehouse and Upper Stoke lie on the west side of the road and residents feel physically isolated from the remainder of the village.

We sense that there is a weary acceptance of this main trunk route. We are well aware of the benefits derived from it while simultaneously cursing its dominant and brooding presence. Its closure for a period of some three months during the spring of last year eloquently attested to the quality of life that would exist without it.

We have referred already to the proposal that the 40mph limit on the A.36 through Limpley Stoke be extended as far as Branch Lane. It seems to us incongruous that existing road signs on Freshford land indicate that drivers are entering the village of

Limpley Stoke yet no similar courtesy is given to advising drivers that they are entering the village of Freshford. If signs to that effect were placed on the A.36 just to the south of Branch Lane then that in itself would help to reduce speed.

What we wish to encourage also is any move that would help to link safely the two sides of the parish. A foot bridge to link with Pipehouse has been mooted. We support that idea and would like to see it taken forward at least to the extent of a feasibility study.

A safe link with Upper Stoke is more problematic but we would be keen to see what might be done. Anyone seeking to cross the main road at this point (opposite the junction of Church Lane) – and people do so to use the bus service – takes their life into their hands. Visibility to the right is extremely limited.

Cycling

The Parish Plan put it thus: ‘the removal of the dominance of motorised transport through Freshford would enhance the possibility of other forms of transport becoming safer and more attractive. At its simplest, within the village, it might encourage those who can to cycle or walk more than they do at present.’

In addition to calling for safer cycling throughout the village and for the provision of more cycle stands (now installed) the Parish Plan invited thought to be given to two specific projects: first, a new safe cycle and pedestrian link to Hinton Charterhouse and Midford and second, a new cycle and pedestrian bridge across the river Avon at a point that would go on to link conveniently with the canal path by Murhill and the right of way to Turleigh, Winsley and beyond.

While these two schemes represent long term ambitions for the future sustenance of the village we do ask that careful thought is given to them and that they be included in any deliberations that take place on planned future development and economic growth.

MOBILITY AND ACCESS

Underpinning all that we have said is an acknowledgement of one of the central findings of the parish plan that local facilities will need to reflect the changing demography that people are living longer lives. Over the next 25 years there will be an additional 4 million citizens of this country over the age of 65. The greatest growth in life span will be in the 85+ age group. We pose the question in respect of people and vehicles of just how we are to meet the mobility and access needs of those who are

elderly and who need help and of those of all ages who have special needs. It seems to us that more attention will need to be focused on wheelchair users and/or those who have visual impairment or who physically cannot easily negotiate steps or pavements and curbs.

To touch briefly on just some of these issues we take the view that improvements to our public transport services could at least alleviate some of the present problems: improved accessibility to the bus for the elderly and for people with pushchairs, an extended bus timetable into the evening, improved access to the Bradford bound station platform. These are relatively small and simple changes that nevertheless could have a significant impact on improving the quality of life for residents.

Liaison with Police

Overall we believe that the community, including the school, has developed strong and effective links with the police and this includes the new Community Police Support Officers. Discussions cover a wide range of issues such as minor crime and disturbances and have extended to road safety and parking issues. The police-led PACT meetings have been useful too, although at times they can be deflected into one parish's particular problem which is of little or no relevance to the remainder.

Consultation with residents

Residents are kept informed of the work being undertaken through publication of the local newsletter – The Freshford Bulletin. The Bulletin, published quarterly, has also featured a series of articles on Road Signs for Tourism, Advertising Signs adjoining the highway and Fingerposts. The findings of the Highways Group have also been presented to a core of Freshford residents (mainly those involved with the preparation of the Parish Plan) who are supportive of the work undertaken and who act as a reminder of the need to adopt a whole village approach and to do what we can to protect the local environment.

Consultation with the wider community.

The Highways Group also participates in the Bradford on Avon Priority for the People working groups. These groups are contemplating improvements to the roads and pavements in all of the Parish Councils around Bradford on Avon and in particular, Westwood and Limpley Stoke. Again, the Parish Council advocate a coherent and consistent approach for all those villages that connect to Freshford. For instance the concept of introducing gateposts (e.g. those at the bottom of the lane at Claverton near the junction with the A36) is being examined to reinforce the feeling that strangers are entering a 'special place' and would therefore drive more considerately. Due to its

geographical location on the county boundary it will be recognised that Freshford often links in with Wiltshire to discuss these common areas of interest. That in itself creates its own distinct challenges as we seek to reconcile different policies and working practices set by the two Authorities. In a wider context we should mention that we are in favour of joint schemes which can be of mutual benefit to the community and that to this end we are linking with Limpley Stoke to progress a scheme for affordable housing.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED ACTIONS AND CURRENT WORKS

Introduction

The objective is to provide the local authority with a comprehensive report on the issues as we seek to achieve a correct balance between people and vehicles. We wish to encourage an integrated approach to solving these problems.

Objectives of the parish council

The objectives of the parish council embrace the wide range of traffic and environmental issues.

The Safe Integration of People and Vehicles

The Highways Group of Freshford have produced a paper which spells out the need for layers of whole village measures.

A stand alone case.

As a matter of priority we invite the local authority to seek to first resolve the particular issues facing Rosemary Lane. Appendix I details recent events.

An integrated approach

The parish council calls for the local authority to put together a policy that deals with the issues in a coherent and integrated manner. We look for a phased and planned programme of implementation.

The village centre.

Improvements are needed to crossing the road on foot both by the school and on the road up to the Memorial Hall. Junction improvements to the roads and pavements are sought.

The school bus needs to be able to be parked safely and school children need then to be able to access the school in safety.

Through Routes

We require that large vehicles and visitor traffic be encouraged to use only the main recognised roads through the village.

Narrow Roads

We would wish to discourage vehicles and large vehicles in particular from using the narrow roads in the village. We would very much like to encourage a sense of these roads being shared between pedestrians and vehicles.

SatNav

We would like to see a positive move from SatNav companies to remove from their Computer systems the recommended use of narrow and inappropriate village roads

Speed restrictions

As a first step we would like to see speed restrictions of no more than 30mph applied throughout the village. We say that the case for a 20mph blanket limit may in time become irresistible and that in any event there should at least be a consistency of speed restriction as between Freshford and its sister village Limpley Stoke.

We believe that there is a case for the A.36 to be restricted to 40mph along its length throughout the parish. We advocate signs on the main road advising motorists that they are now entering the village of Freshford – in other words adopting the same approach as the signs on the main road for Limpley Stoke.

One way systems

We do not support turning the more narrow lanes into one way systems. This would encourage a ‘rat run’ approach and may encourage drivers to go faster.

The Hill

We seek improvements to the pavement so that pedestrians can walk in safety. And see Part II of this report for improvement plans.

Signage

We would like to see fewer signs. Also where signs are necessary they should be consistent with each other and rational.

Parking

Parking space is at a premium. More parking spaces are needed for residents in some parts of the village. Also, inconsiderate parking undermines road safety measures and the safety of school children. It may also hamper emergency vehicles. Solutions need to be considered alongside other road traffic issues to achieve an integrated and sensible response to existing difficulties.

Pot Holes

Existing local authority resources should be managed more effectively to ensure that sections of road are identified for repair rather than individual pot holes.

Road Surfaces

Many of the pavements and roads in the parish are in a poor state of maintenance and repair. We call for a sustained and planned maintenance programme.

The A.36

We would like to see a safe pedestrian link established to the hamlets of Freshford that lie to the west of the A.36

Cycling

We wish to encourage both walking and cycling. In the long term we think it may be feasible to establish a new footbridge and cycle way across the river Avon to link with the existing network of paths

Mobility and Access

We pose the question of just what needs to be done to ensure that the mobility and access needs of a growing elderly population are met. There is an unmet need for improvements to public transport services

Liaison with the police.

We report of the strong and effective links with the police

Consultation with residents and the wider community

We say something about how we seek to consult and inform the community about what we do. We stress that we link closely with the communities in Wiltshire and urge the local authority to remain as flexible as is possible in seeking cross county solutions.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We have sought in Part I of the Report to capture a broad view of the movement of people and vehicles in Freshford – how they relate to each other and just what might be done to make life better for all. We hope that this is a vision which you can share with us and which can be endorsed and implemented over time.

In Part II which now follows we have sought to draw together the various plans and diagrams both new and old so that all can see what is at stake and what might be achieved in practical terms.

We commend this Report to you. We look forward to its use as a basis for discussion, decision and action.

Signed:

September 2009

Hugh Delap,
Chairman, Freshford Parish Council

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GETTING ABOUT IN FRESHFORD

PART II

THE SAFE INTEGRATION OF PEOPLE AND VEHICLES

Here in Part II of this paper are set out the specific proposals for a whole village “layered” approach that aim to achieve:-

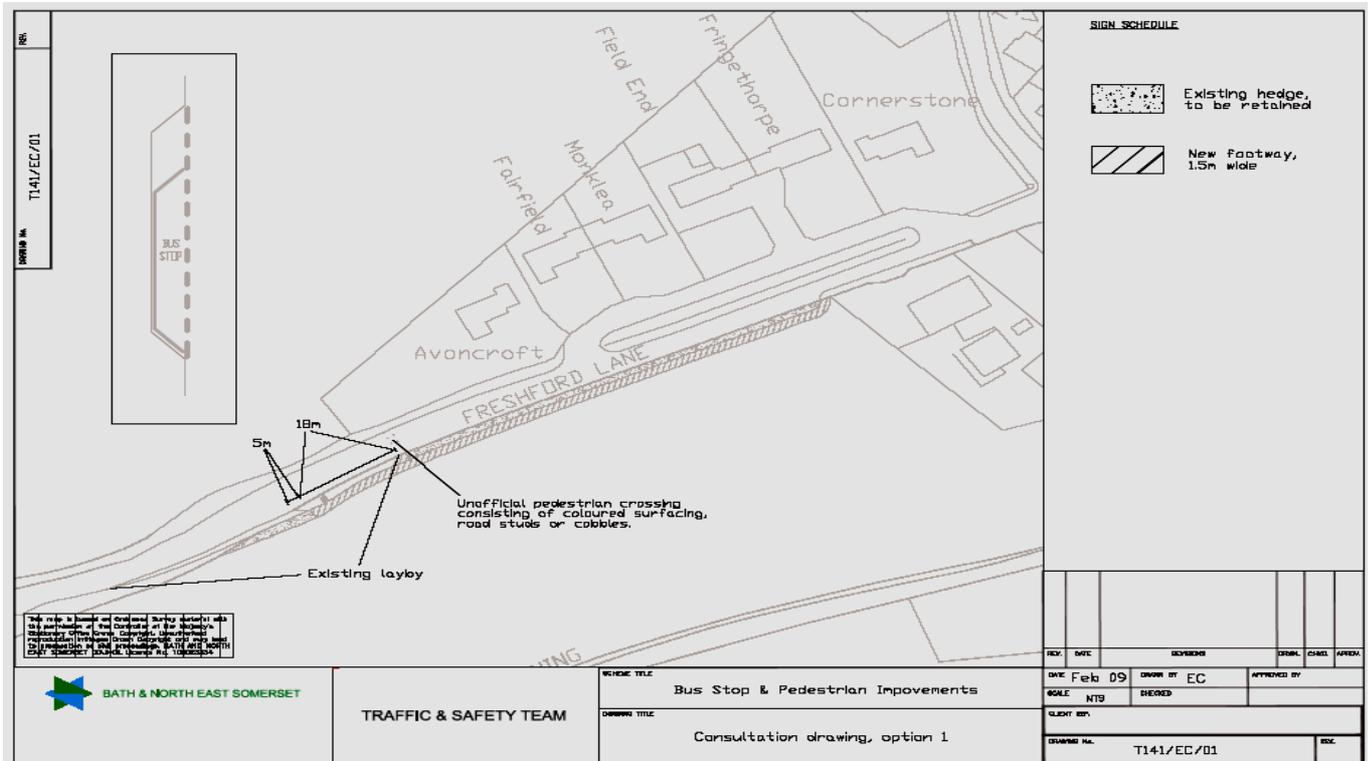
1. Safe walking (particularly for children to school and the elderly), and social interaction.
2. Appropriate vehicle speeds
3. Rebalancing vehicle use away from our narrow lanes (and people living areas) to the through route.
4. Enhancement of the irreplaceable rural environment.

The layered approach involves four themes

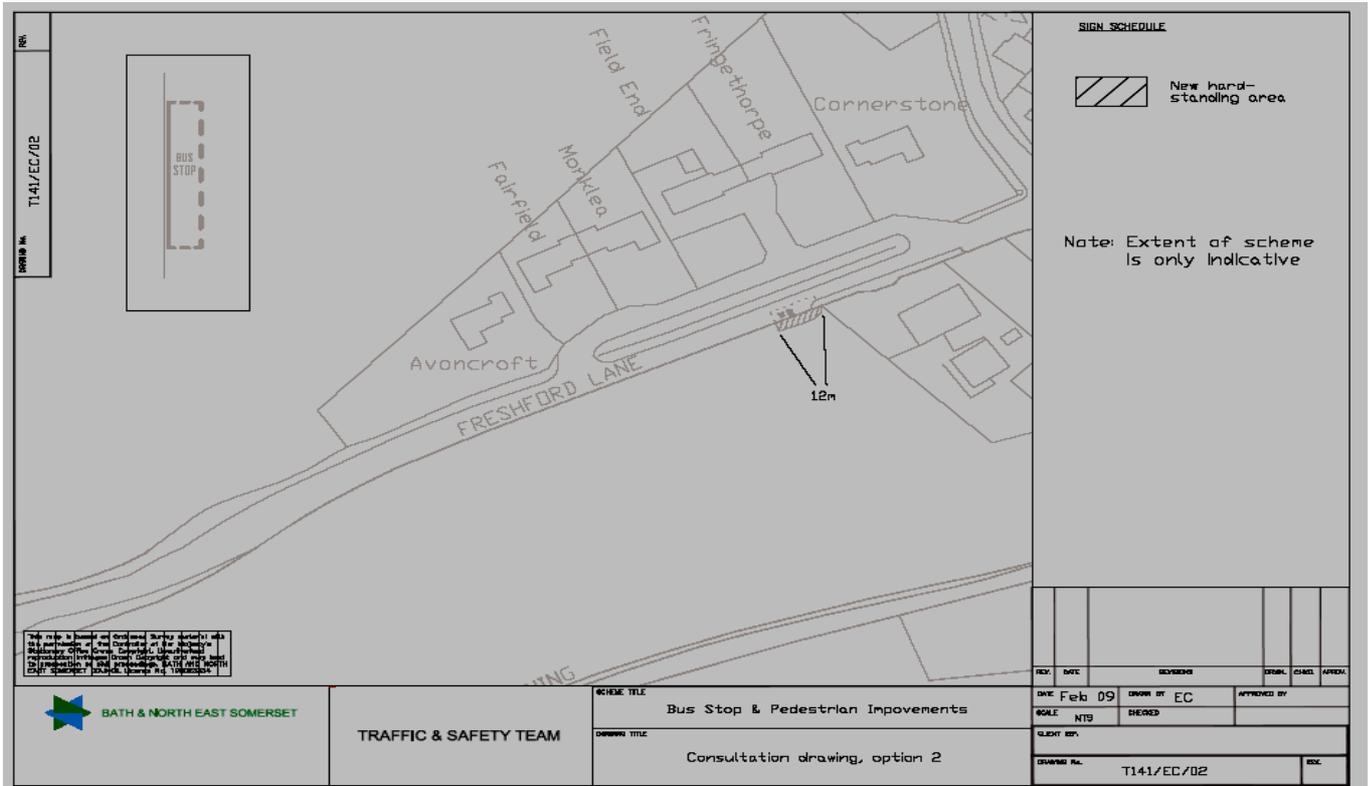
1. Village centre changes including the safe walking to school initiative
2. Enhancing the through roads and restraining the use of lanes.
3. General traffic Management (incl. sat nav and signage)
4. Specific problem areas.

1. VILLAGE CENTRE. Including the School and up to the Memorial Hall and Shop.

position) or in the village green by the school. The plans for this scheme, prepared by B&NES, are set out in drawings 2 and 3 below

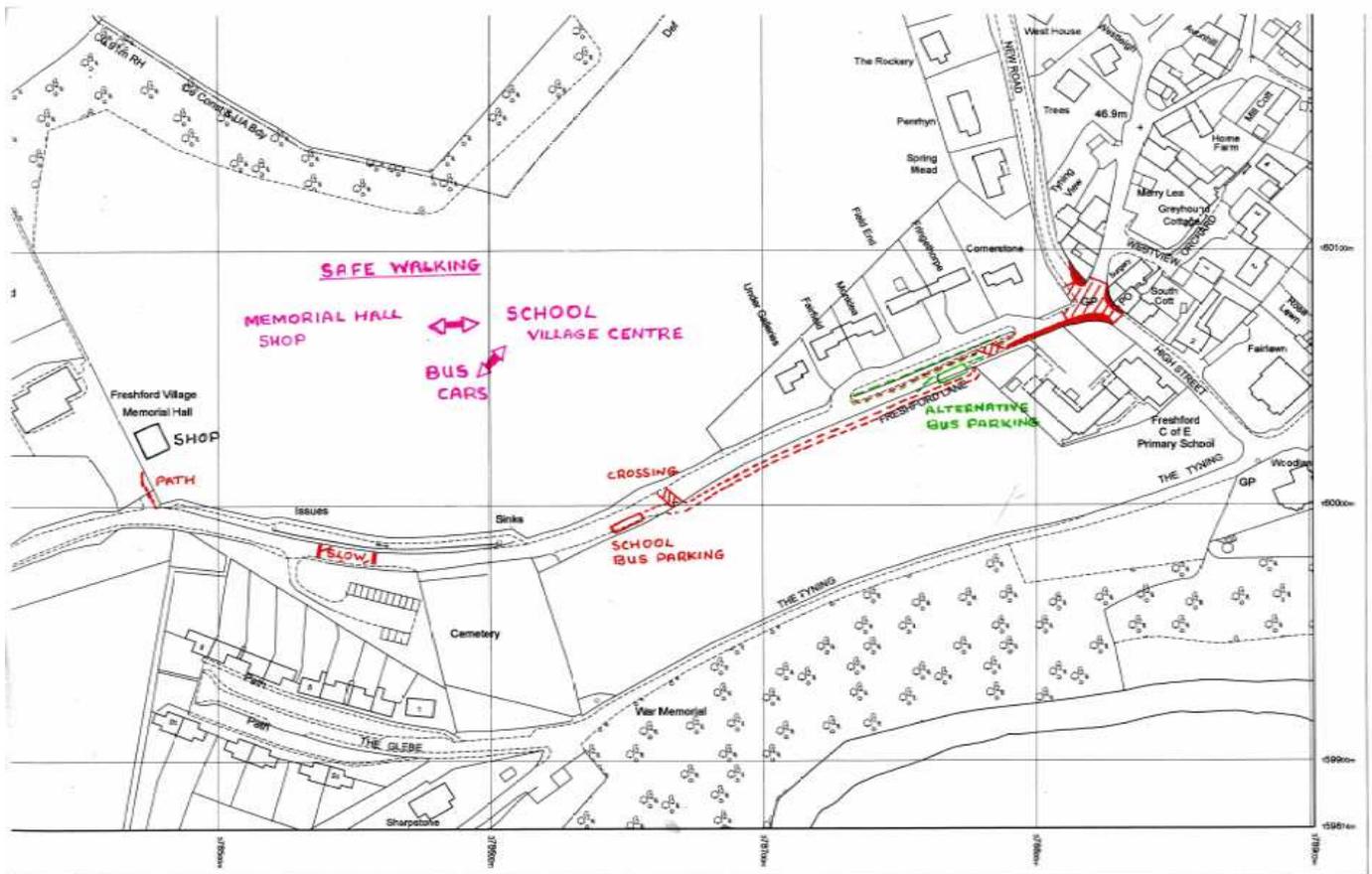


Drawing 2. Bus parking in the lay-by



Drawing 3. Bus parking in the “village green option” by the school

The integration of these proposals is shown on drawing 4 below. Note that the “footpath” opposite the school remains a real concern as it is not fit for purpose. It needs attention. Photograph 1 below illustrates this.

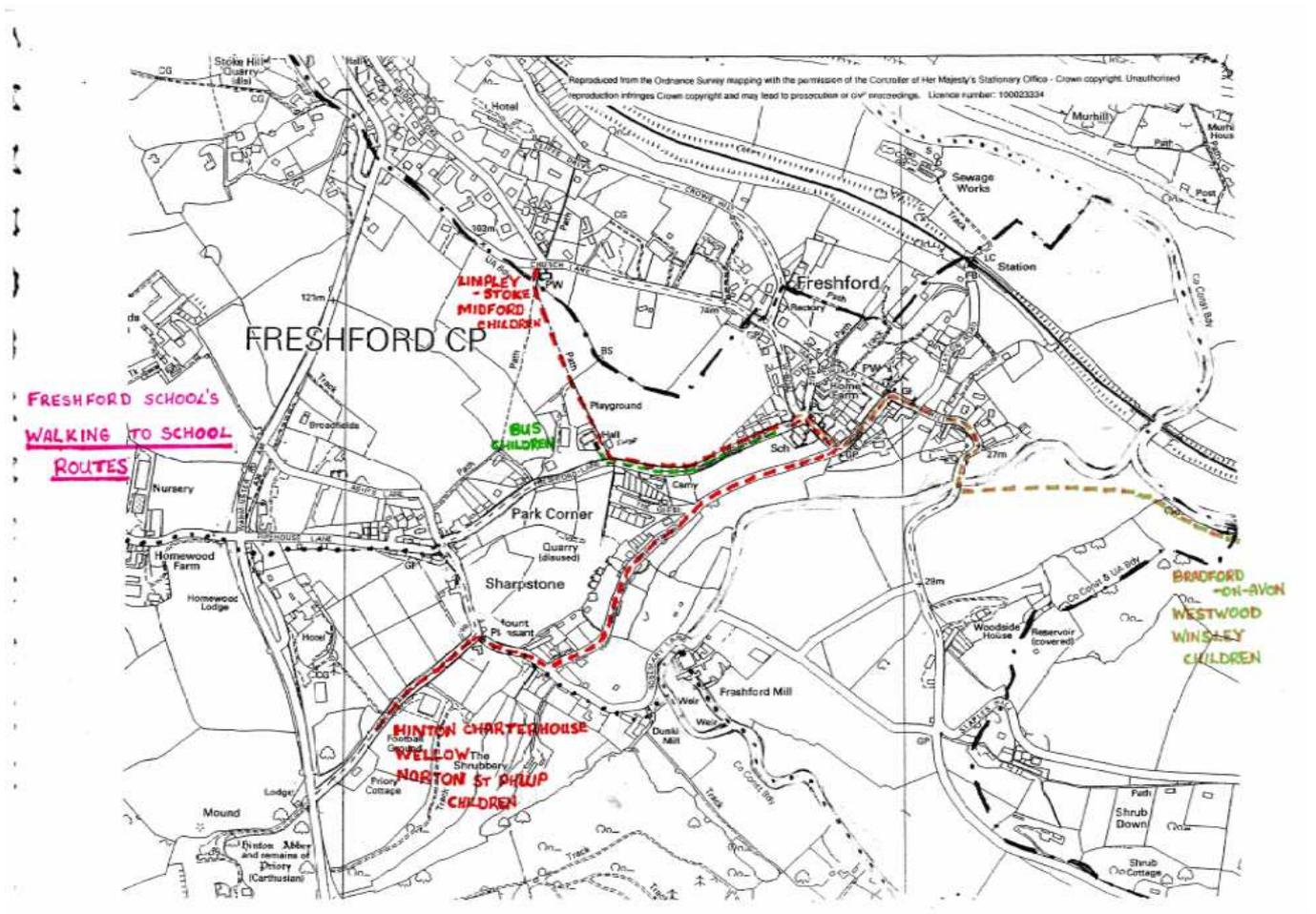


Drawing 4. Overall improvements in Freshford Lane.



Photograph 1. Inadequate Footpath

Walking to school is a key feature of the School travel plan and drawing 5 illustrates the routes taken by the children. Note. Safety of this is to be enhanced by the above and the traffic management proposals (see below).

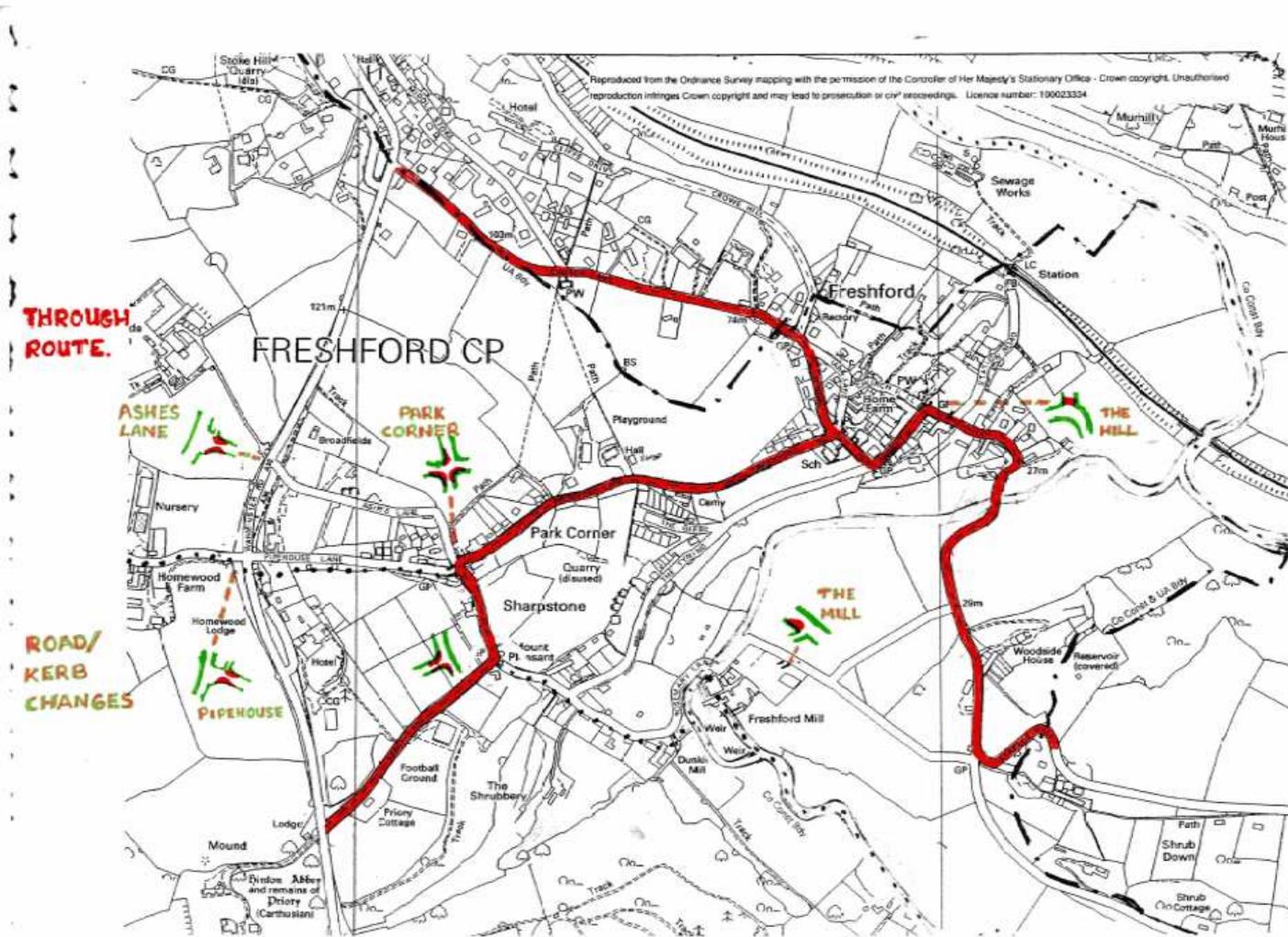


Drawing 5. Walking to school routes

2. ENHANCE THROUGH ROUTES and RESTRAIN the use of the LANES.

Method.

Encourage through traffic to use the preferred route through Freshford (which is also the route that is frost treated (gritted) in the winter), and deter the traffic from using the narrow lanes which would result in damage to walls and banks or often becoming blocked, with inevitable implications to pedestrian safety. Drawing 6 (below) shows the preferred route.



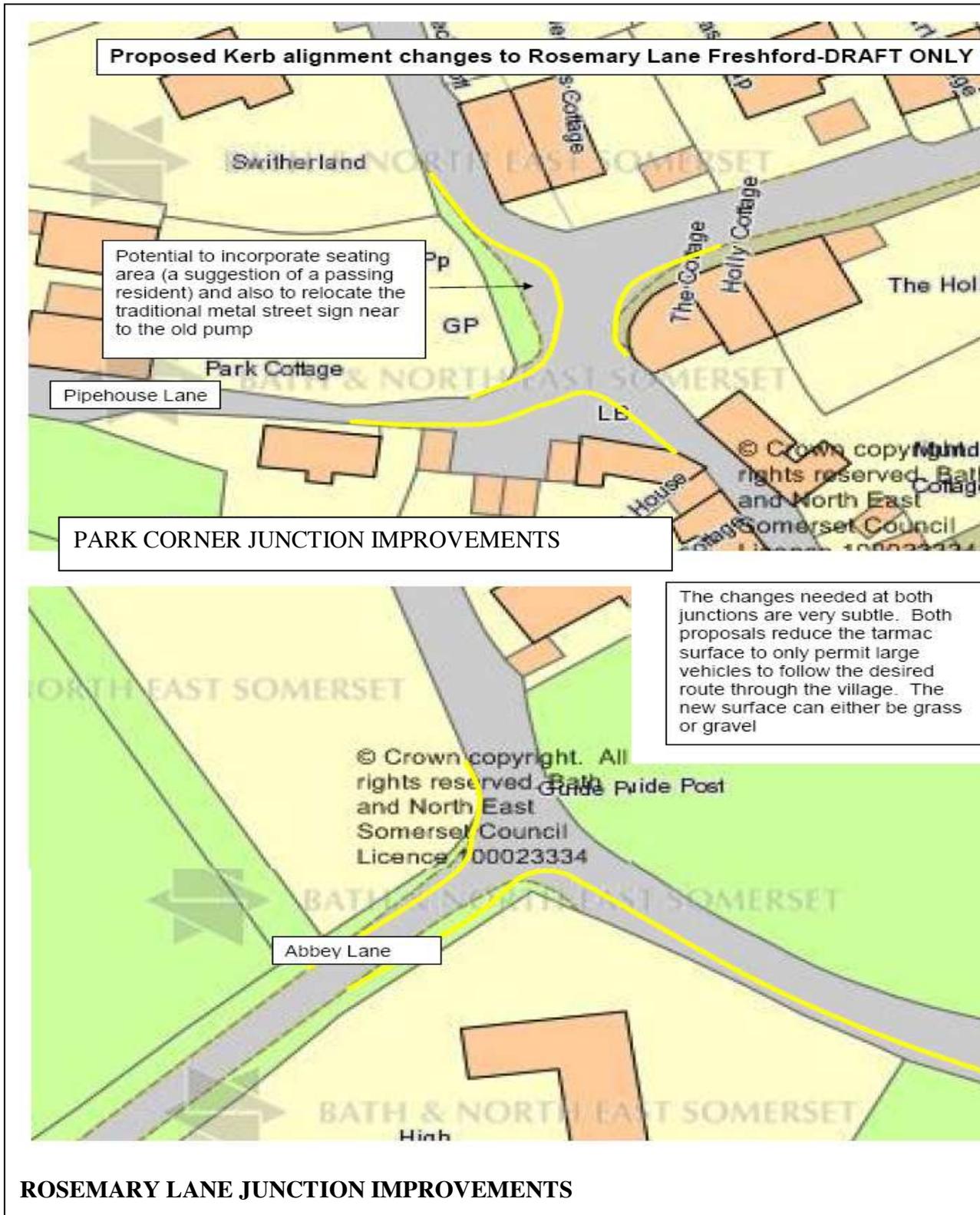
Drawing 6. Freshford's main through route, and changes at road junctions.

RESTRAIN the USE OF IN APPROPRIATE ROADS

Other routes should constrain the use of vehicles. This includes the entrances to the Parish from the A36 and the narrow lanes. Hence the entrances to these lanes require changes, probably to the curbs and to the road width that physically deters vehicles. Use can be made of protruding and slightly raised curbs or different material. These measures would not prevent emergency services from entering. Drawing 6, above, includes sketches of the relevant entrances and proposals.

Of particular concern is the inappropriate use of Ashes Lane and Rosemary Lane where vehicles become stuck and cause hazard to pedestrians. Evidence of such incidents has been recorded and is separately collated. The drawing 7 overleaf shows the proposals in more detail.

PARK CORNER IMPROVEMENTS.



Drawing 7. Park Corner and Abbey Lane junction improvements.

3. TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT.

(a) Sat Nav changes.

We have considered this and if the present discussions within B&NES and Dept of Transport propose a solution then this should be considered. e.g.

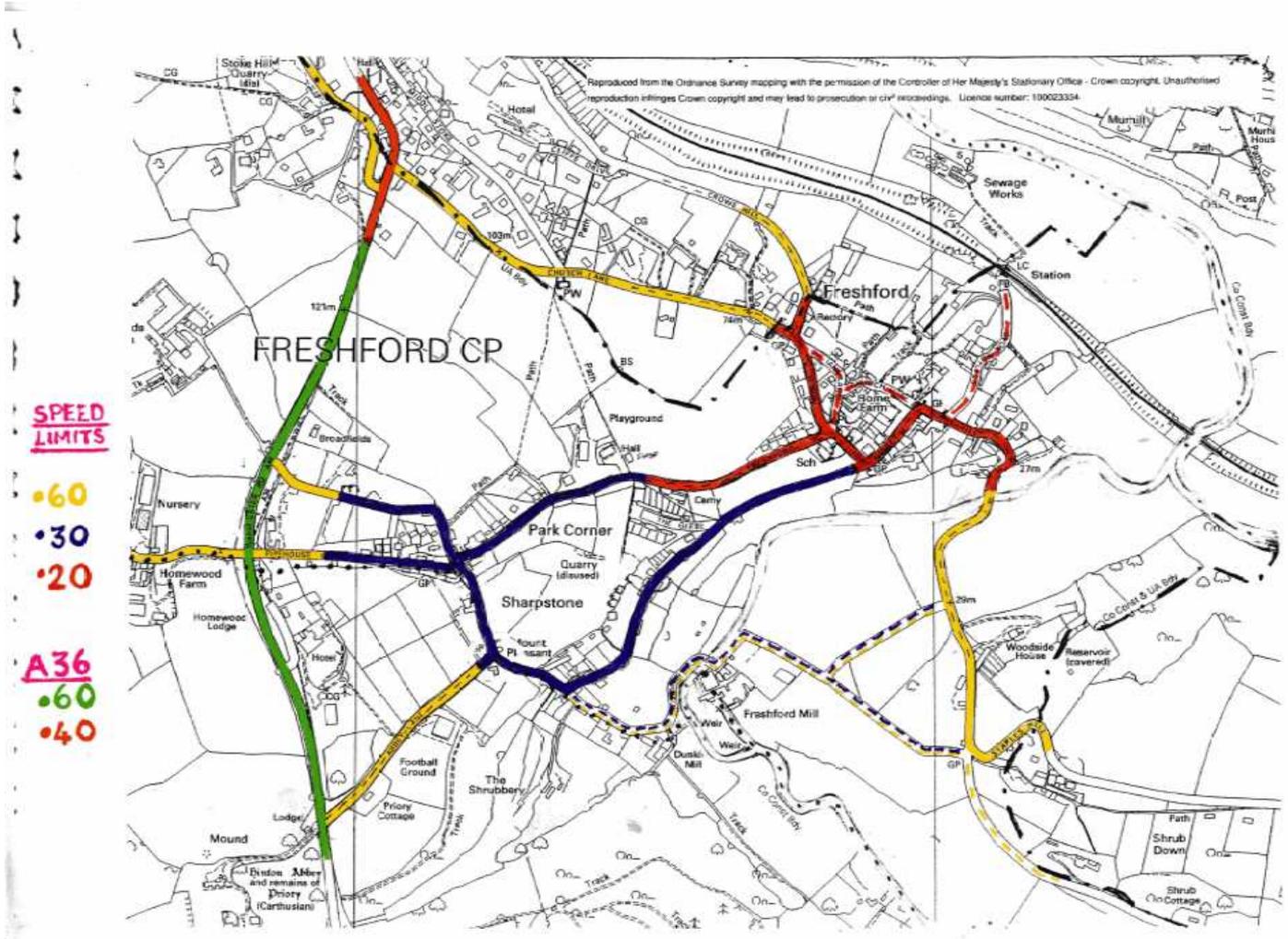


However rather than signage we prefer the commercial sat nav software to be changed to delete narrow lanes. We would wish to wait the outcome of this and concentrate our use of lane restrictions (as outlined above) to deter use.

(b) Speed

We have 20mph in the centre of the village by the school. We need 30 mph elsewhere. Hence roads off the A36 at 60mph should be altered to 30mph. Some others are

60mph e.g. Pipehouse, but it is impossible to drive that fast. Is there any point of extra signs for speed reductions, when speed is already difficult? The following diagram shows the existing limits. We are hopeful that road restrictions will achieve sensible driving speed. The drawing 8 below shows existing limits throughout the village.

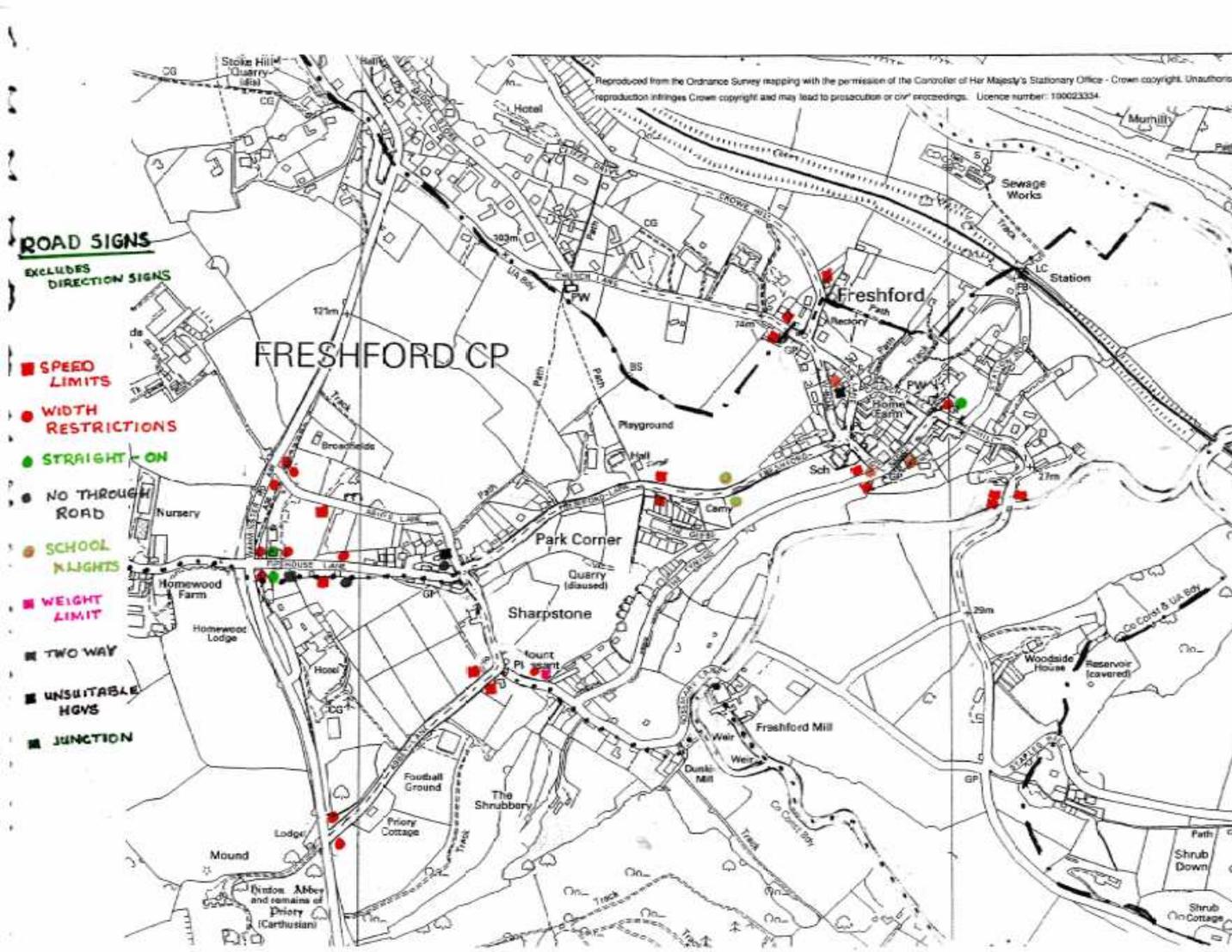


Drawing 8. Freshford's speed limits

To assist drivers to readily distinguish speed restrictions we would favour a strip of different road surface as you enter the village at its entry points (not dissimilar to the new road strips on Branch Lane at Hinton Charterhouse) or a sign stating this is a village and is a residential environment.

(c) Signage.

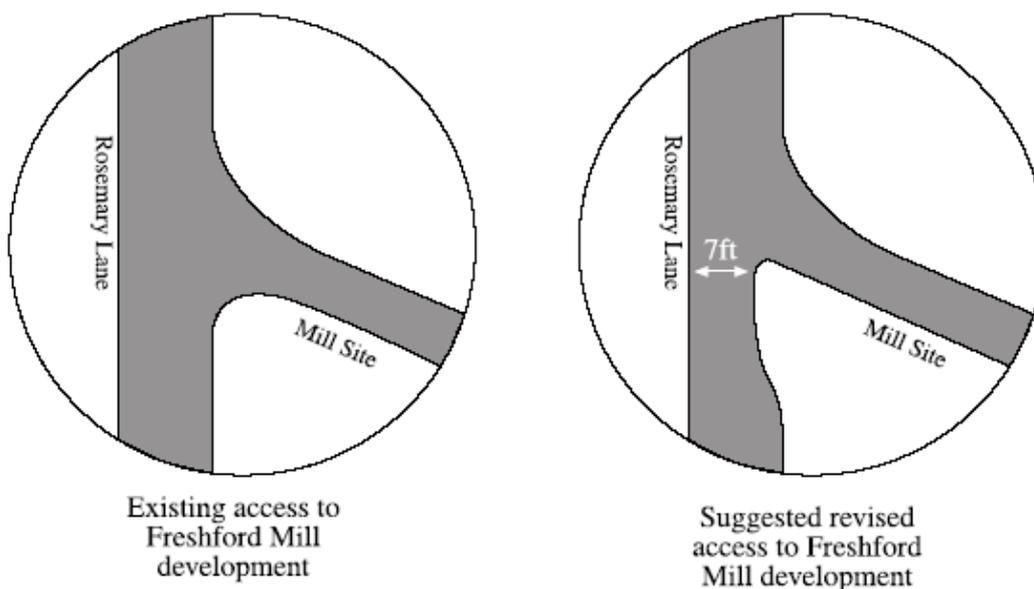
In spite of the above, all signs spoil the environment. Also, too many are not helpful to motorists. We need just the essential signs. The drawing 9 below illustrates the signs (but excludes the direction signs). There are many anomalies. For example, the lane from Pipehouse to Park Corner (200 meters) has 11 signs. Other signs are positioned in impractical sites so that they are of no benefit to drivers. A full survey is required.



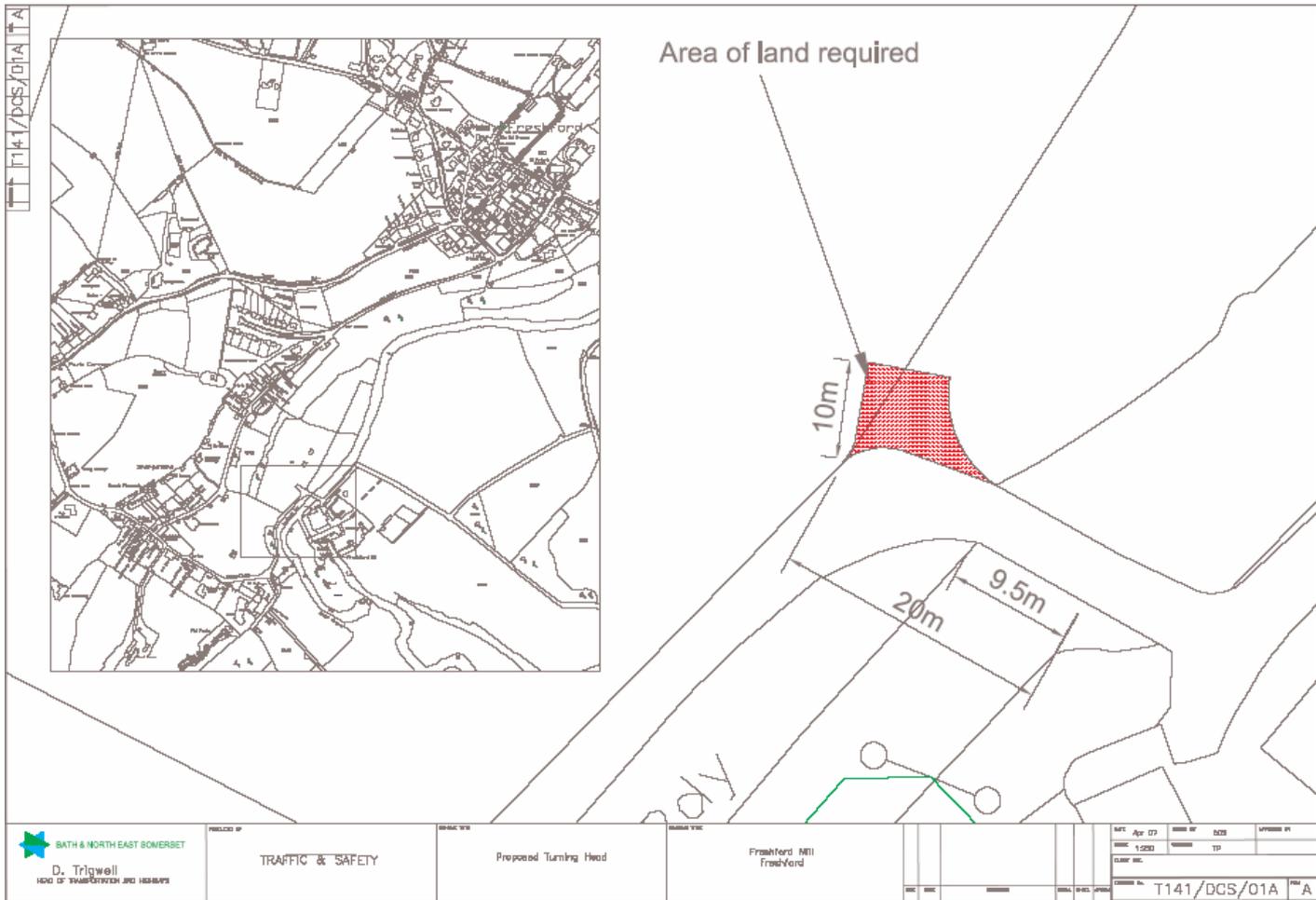
Drawing 9 Freshford's road signs.

The Mill development.

Traffic to and from the site should use Crabtree lane not the very narrow Rosemary Lane. The following illustrates the changes at the exit from the mill site.



Also a turning circle at the bridge for any vehicles that do manage to get down Rosemary Lane but are then too heavy to cross the bridge, and need to turn round as illustrated in the B&NES drawing. (drawing 10)



Drawing 10. Rosemary Lane turning area.

APPENDIX

ROSEMARY LANE, FRESHFORD

THE SAFE INTEGRATION OF PEOPLE AND VEHICLES

On the 6th August an there was an accident in Rosemary Lane - an accident which in the minds if many of the residents of the Lane was waiting to happen. The driver of an HGV vehicle on its way to the Mill development having ignored the warning signs as to the unsuitability of the Lane for HGV's nevertheless pursued his course. He careered into a parked vehicle, destroyed a substantial section of verge, damaged a Wessex Water hydrant, damaged a stone wall and then by hitting a telegraph pole narrowly averted demolishing a resident's front porch. As it is, there may yet prove to be structural damage to the property.

In the space of a couple of minutes the driver's vehicle had caused damage running into thousands of pounds. Fortunately, no one was injured. But more importantly the accident has increased the very real concerns of residents as to their personal safety and the safety of their families. The Lane is steep and along much of its course is bounded by high walls. It has no pavements and is used by pedestrians - old and young alike. On any day of the year it would be usual to see also mothers pushing children's buggies and riders on horseback. If any vehicle on the Lane lost control, little or no protection would be afforded to pedestrians or riders. People do not feel safe.

The Radstock Police were called to the scene and we understand that residents were interviewed and made statements. We believe too that the driver was interviewed and advised that a prosecution may follow. The Parish Council has made contact with the office of the Chief Superintendant of Police and with the Police Traffic Management officer at H.Q. Our interest has been discussed and recorded.

Coincidentally Freshford Parish Council are on the verge of submitting to B&NES a comprehensive report on the Safe Integration of People and Vehicles in Freshford. The draft report suggests a road traffic policy of 'whole village measures' to improve the current position but – and this is crucial – recommends that Rosemary Lane is a stand alone case which needs urgent consideration and resolution.

At the same time the Highways Department made contact last week with the Parish Council to seek its view over the proposal to place advice signs at strategic points around the village warning HGV's as to the unsuitability of some of the local roads.

It has not been possible for the Parish Council to meet in formal session to discuss this matter but from the contact that councilors have had with each other we would like to set out our position. We would ask that you accept that this is a provisional statement of intent and we will seek to formally clarify our thoughts at our next meeting.

ROSEMARY LANE, FRESHFORD

ACTION

- The new traffic signs proposed by the Highways Department should be installed. Clarification is needed in some instances not only as to their precise location but also as to which way they are to face. Consistent with the PC's policy on the need to avoid a plethora of signage, the opportunity should be taken to review what signs exist at present and to remove any that are superfluous or inconsistent with the new signs to be erected.
- While we hope that the new signs will ease the problems of HGV's using the narrow lanes, we believe strongly that the placement of new signs marks just one small step in the process of finding a permanent and satisfactory solution to diverting large vehicles from using this route. Most of the present difficulties seem to stem from the use of this route by construction traffic at the Mill development. However, once the buildings are complete and occupied we believe that similar difficulties may arise particularly in relation to service and other deliveries to the new properties.
- A range of proposals for improvement have been put forward which include:
 1. Physically narrowing the entrance to the Lane at its juncture with Abbey Lane to restrict vehicles to a width of 2 meters. As to the southern entrance to Rosemary Lane discussions are taking place with Ypres Rose Development to encourage traffic leaving the site, once completed, to turn right rather than left so using the main thoroughfare through the village.
 2. Placing physical obstacles on the road – concrete blocks, temporary metal fencing or large cones. This might extend also to a physical barrier which restricts vehicles over a certain height from entering.

3. New curb stones, raised surfaces, distinguishing surface colours. To many this is the preferred solution and one that would fit most sympathetically with its environment.

This list is not exhaustive. In these matters we place considerable reliance upon the expertise that exists not only within the Highways Department and Planning Department but also within the Avon and Somerset Police to arrive at the best possible solution. We think it feasible that some if not all these works might qualify to be incorporated into this year's budget under the Transport Capital Programme 2009/10 announced by Councillor Charles Gerrish (Safe Walking to School & Road Safety Improvements). Coincidentally we had already been in contact with his office to draw attention to existing proposals already listed in the Tasks Register.

We look to the Council to provide a lead on this. It is a recurring problem that needs urgent resolution. The situation is likely to be exacerbated by increased volumes of traffic once the Mill development of new homes is complete in the summer of 2010. We ask that you do all you can to help us overcome these present difficulties.

Freshford Parish Council
August 2009

