

TRAFFIC AND MOVEMENT

1. Introduction

The Neighbourhood Plan Working Group for Transport and Movement met on five occasions and an inventory of concerns was prepared under the headings Roads, Parking, the A36, Pathways, Footpaths and Public Transport. Reference was made to the extensive work carried out for the Freshford and Limley Stoke Village Plans, and work and publications prepared by the Parish Councils' Highways Working Groups.

Initial findings and proposals were displayed and discussed with village residents during four open days, and concerns, comments and recommendations are addressed in this document.

Where options are listed they include both the views of the Transport and Movement Group and residents. Recommended solutions are those evaluated as achievable and selected by the Group.

2. Roads: speed, safety and limited access

Speeding vehicles put pedestrians and cyclists' safety at risk. Pavements are narrow and obstructed by parked vehicles. Larger vehicle drivers fail to appreciate that access is limited, and our narrow roads and steep hills create problems for vehicles passing each other. Rat runs or through routes increase traffic at peak times, and the residential development at Freshford Mill could also increase the number of vehicle movements.

Options:

- Enforce 20mph speed limits.
- Ensure SATNAVs are designed to restrict large trucks to accessible routes (requires policy change – difficult with mobile phones also now being used for navigation).
- Adopt 'shared space' principles to reduce speeds.
- Provide signs (incorporated into 'Gateways') at village entrances to say that pedestrians and cyclists have priority over motor vehicles.
- Reduce the amount of through traffic at peak times by making the option less attractive by delaying journeys with speed and access restrictions.
- Woods Hill provides a way through Limley Stoke to the A36. The exit onto the A36 is dangerous, blind, sharp and steep. Woods Hill is a walk-to-school route to Freshford School, down to Lower Stoke or through footpaths to Middle Stoke. No measures to alleviate this have been agreed.
- Provide raised paved surfaces to road junction area in front of Hop Pole, and at the crossroad outside Freshford Primary School (design in hand by B&NES).
- Reduce the proliferation of road signs.
- Provide cobbles or granite set strips at strategic locations to encourage speed reduction.
- Encourage pedestrians to walk in the road to assert their priority.
- All options must allow emergency vehicle access.
- Reduce road widths at strategic locations to encourage lower speeds.

- Curve the Mill access road layout to encourage vehicles to access and leave the site to the south east.
- Provide a 'gateway' with width restriction (similar to other village entry points) to discourage use of Rosemary Lane as a 'through road'.

Recommended solutions:

- Provide carefully-designed 'gateways' at all village road entry points (incl. Rosemary Lane) to deliver key messages in a clear and concise way, possibly with symbols. Messages to include a speed limit of 20 mph, limited access in narrow roads, and pedestrian priority over cyclists and motor vehicles. The gateway sign design should be durable, use natural materials (possibly stone), the road width could be restricted and a textured surface material would encourage reduced speed. The reduced width design will also demonstrate that wide or large vehicles will encounter access difficulties in parts of the villages.
- Develop plans and construct raised paved road areas at the Hop Pole junction in Limpley Stoke and at the primary school crossroads in Freshford to create a sense that speeds need to be reduced.
- Solutions must provide emergency vehicle access.
- Adopt focused shared space principles to reduce speed and make villages less attractive for 'through traffic'.
- Form a single 20 mph speed limit for both villages.
- Canvass the residents of Woods Hill on possible solutions.
- Walking in the road has inherent risks, but where pedestrians are easily seen by drivers, this will encourage more cautious driving.

Beneficiaries:

- All pedestrians (families, the young and elderly) and cyclists will have increased safety, and local vehicle use will be reduced. Children will be able to walk to school more safely.

3. **Parking**

Increasing car ownership places demands on Freshford and Limpley Stoke, where roads are narrow and many houses have no on-site parking. The village hall in Limpley Stoke and residents needs more parking. New developments, the community shop, a proposed new village hall, the existing and proposed surgery, and the pre-school require increased parking capacity, and of course parking is required for visitors. The primary school has two crunch times every weekday, when children are delivered and collected by cars and buses. Safe pedestrian access, from parking the car to arrival at the school needs improvement. School buses require parking space to allow safe off loading and clear passage for other vehicles.

Options:

- Provide new Freshford Lane off-road car parking along the NE edge of Galleries Field (identified by ESHA).

- New Freshford Lane off-road car park and school bus parking along the SW edge of The Tynning. This will connect to a new path providing safe access to school and shop.
- Land adjoining and in front of the Limpley Stoke telephone exchange.
- Provide a new Limpley Stoke car park at the start of the proposed cycleway/footpath from Lower Stoke to Freshford Station, accessed by a new road under the railway bridge.
- Reduce the need for parking by encouraging more walking with improved and new footpaths.
- Reduce the need for parking by encouraging use of public transport, and by providing good pedestrian/cycle access to station and bus stops.
- Provide bus shelter on New Road and at Hop Pole;
- Encourage parking at Brown's Field.
- Provide electric vehicle charge points.
- Develop St Mary's Church car park for all-weather use (grasscrete blocks or similar);
- Ensure non-enforceable parking advice (single white line) benefits the community rather than individuals.
- Expand Freshford railway station car park (difficult to achieve). Although we need to ensure increased rail utilisation, the car park is not necessarily an asset for the villages.

Recommended solutions:

- Encourage more walking and use of public transport.
- Develop a car park on land adjoining and in front of Limpley Stoke telephone exchange.
- Enable the car park at St Mary's Church to be available when not needed for church activities, and up-graded to an all-weather surface.
- Carefully develop landscaped off-road parking along Freshford Lane to provide parking for the school, school buses (with bus shelter), village hub, and visitors.
- Provide electric vehicle charge points in main parking areas.

Beneficiaries:

- Car owners with nowhere to park.
- Improved access to the Freshford village hub, surgery, shop and hall for elderly and less-mobile residents.
- Pre-school and primary school children and their families.
- Residents who have difficult parking close to their homes.

4. The A36 Trunk Road

The A36 divides both villages at Midford Lane and Pipehouse. Whereas it is difficult to join these two areas physically, it is important that residents can move safely to and from their residences and the main facilities and services in village areas.

Options:

- Re-align the A36 (unlikely to happen);

- Provide access bridge(s) for pedestrians (probably the most costly solution and pedestrian utilisation would need to be carefully assessed to establish if it would be an appropriate investment).
- Provide a pedestrian 'halfway island' and warning signs to allow safer road crossing between Pipehouse and Pipehouse Lane.
- Provide traffic lights on the A36 at the Midford Lane to Church Lane junction, with button-controlled pedestrian crossing. This would reduce vehicle speeds significantly and increase safety for all users.
- Extend 40mph speed limit on the A36 from junction of Midford Lane to Branch Road. Provide continuous double white line to prevent overtaking.

Recommended solutions:

- A pedestrian 'halfway island' and warning signs to allow safer road crossing between Pipehouse and Pipehouse Lane. May require night-time illumination.
- Traffic lights on the A36 at the Midford Lane to Church Lane junction with button-controlled pedestrian crossing.
- Extend 40 mph speed limit on A36 from junction of Midford Lane to Branch Road and provide continuous double white line to prevent overtaking.

Beneficiaries:

- Pedestrians and car-owning residents of Midford Lane and Pipehouse.
- Pedestrians, car-owning residents and visitors who wish to travel out of the villages to Midford Lane, Pipehouse and beyond.
- Residents living along the A36.

5. Footpaths, Pavements, Cycleways and Lighting

Footpaths and pavements are a feature of our villages that allow us to walk in safety and leave our cars at home; they connect us to our beautiful countryside, schools, surgery, village halls, playing fields and public transport. Disabled access in our villages is almost non-existent.

Footpaths

Existing footpaths have all been mapped, some of these have accessibility problems and new paths have been proposed:

Options:

- The existing footpath from St Mary's Church to the Galleries Shop /Memorial Hall provides a direct link for residents of Limpley Stoke. The existing path is steep in places, muddy at times, unsuitable for buggies and animals graze in the field. The alternative route via Church Lane is approx. 2.5 times further. A new footpath is proposed with hard surface and a fence along the perimeter of Church Field from St Mary's Church to the Memorial Hall play area. Part of the footpath on the slope would require shallow, buggy-friendly steps.
- The existing footpath/pavement link between the Galleries Shop/Memorial Hall and Freshford School is narrow in places, and almost non-existent in front of the school.

A new footpath between the school and the Galleries Shop/Memorial Hall will have a pedestrian crossing from the Galleries Field side to a new footpath on the bottom of the Tynning.

- There is no direct footpath link from The Glebe to the school across The Tynning. A new footpath has been proposed, but the likely utilisation is not clear.
- The footpath from Midford Lane to the A36, leading on to Middle Stoke, is dangerous as there are steps in the footpath leading directly onto the A36 with no guard rail. A new guard rail is proposed.
- Improve disabled access where feasible. A proposed separate study will identify priorities, practicalities and recommendations.

Recommended solutions:

- New footpath through Church Field from St Mary's Church to the Memorial Hall play area.
- A new footpath link between the school and Galleries Shop/Memorial Hall on The Tynning.
- New safety barrier at the end of the footpath on the A36.
- Undertake a study to consider the implications, priorities and practical solutions to improve disabled access.

Beneficiaries:

- Residents of Middle Stoke, Midford Lane and Woods Hill who will be able to walk to the Memorial Hall and Galleries Shop and leave their cars at home.
- Pedestrians (families, children and the elderly) will have safer walking route from the school to the Memorial Hall and play area.
- The disabled and elderly will be accommodated in new footpath designs in the hub/school area of Freshford, all other areas will be considered under a more detailed study.
- Walkers will be encouraged to stop before crossing the A36.

Pavements

Narrow and uneven pavements prevent safe pedestrian access around our villages. Many of these are narrow because roads are narrow. Our proposal to provide priority to pedestrians will warn drivers to expect people to be walking in the road, particularly where wider pavements are not possible.

Options:

- In Lower Stoke there is no pavement from just the Hop Pole car park to the junction with the B3108 (Winsley Hill). The road is narrow, visibility poor and there is nowhere for pedestrians to shelter from vehicles. Wiltshire Council has produced a feasibility study recommending how a raised pavement could be provided with passing places for vehicles.
- On The Hill in Freshford the pavement changes from one side of the road to the other, at a place where it is difficult to see passing vehicles. It is proposed to relocate the pavement to the lower part of The Hill to the other side of the road. This will

provide a continuous pavement from the Inn to the High Street, safer walking to school and safer access to houses with front doors opening directly on to the road.

- There is no pavement from Park Corner to the top of Rosemary Lane. Initially a painted pavement is proposed with a view to replacing it with a more durable natural surface when funds permit.
- Pavements for the lower part of Church Lane are too narrow for pushchairs/strollers and the road width is too narrow for vehicles to pass. Wider pavements to be provided where necessary with passing places for vehicles. In these areas pavements will be ramped and pavements will not have kerbs.
- Improve disabled access where feasible. A proposed separate study will identify priorities, practicalities and recommendations.

Recommended solutions:

All of the above.

Beneficiaries:

- Pedestrians who wish to safely access Limpley Stoke, the 264/5 bus service, Winsley Hill, the Kennet and Avon canal, and businesses at Limpley Stoke Mill.
- Pedestrian who would be encouraged to leave their cars at home.
- Pedestrian walking to school, the Inn at Freshford and walks beyond.
- Pedestrian walking from Rosemary Lane to the Memorial Hall, Galleries Shop and the school.

Cycleways

Cycling is growing and becoming the preferred means for many to travel to work and for leisure. The closest main cycleway link to Limpley Stoke and Freshford is the NCN4 which runs between South Wales and London. It includes an eight-mile journey into Bath following the Kennet and Avon Canal towpath. Access to the network is good from Limpley Stoke via the B3108 but not so from Freshford. There is a need for an improved cycleway/footpath from Limpley Stoke to Freshford Station.

Options:

- Provide a fenced cycleway from Lower Stoke, accessed under the railway bridge, along the top of the field by the boundary of the rail track to Freshford Station.
- Provide a new cycleway via a bridge over the River Avon to link up with the Kennet and Avon Canal towpath.

Recommended solutions:

- Both of the above

Beneficiaries:

- Residents from Limpley Stoke who will be able to cycle or walk to Freshford Station and leave their cars at home.

- Residents from Freshford and Limpley Stoke who will have improved cycle and footpath links to the canal towpath, giving access to Bath, Bradford on Avon and beyond.

Lighting

Pedestrians should not be deterred from walking at night due to poor artificial lighting. Lighting on Station Road to the Freshford Station is particularly poor. At the same time solutions to street lighting should not pollute the night sky, should be efficient, economical and aesthetically attractive.

Options:

- Prepare a master plan for the two villages to upgrade the coverage, efficiency, economy, environmental acceptability, and options for vehicles, pedestrians and security. To include conversion of existing, provision of new lighting, capital and running costs, and comparison with existing arrangements.

Recommended Solution:

As above

Beneficiaries:

Pedestrians who will walk within the two villages safely at night. Drivers and cyclists will see pedestrians, and residents will feel more secure in the homes with adequate lighting. Council tax payers will also have reduced recurrent street lighting costs.

6. Encourage and Support Public Transport

With increased car ownership costs and a need to take greater care of our environment, we are encouraged to make greater use of public transport. Our villages are fortunate to have good, easily-accessible bus services and rail connections from Freshford to almost anywhere. Access to Freshford Station is not quite so easy for Limpley Stoke residents, but improved pedestrian and cycle access has been proposed. Older residents enjoy free bus services, and younger and older residents have reduced rail travel costs.

The 94 Bus

The 94 bus is operated by Libra Travel under contract to Wiltshire Council (contract expires March 2013, but could be extended for a further year). 56% of the subsidy is paid by Wiltshire Council, 44% by B&NES, based on route mileage in the respective local authority areas. The bus runs every 2 hours during the day with one driver, and another who covers the lunch break. Current manning arrangements limit the frequency and hours of service. Changes will increase costs to an extent that the viability of the service will be put at risk. Also, timetables are geared to servicing school travel and changes again would cause significant problems. At certain times of the day, utilisation levels are very low. Owing to disability regulations, the 94 bus will need to have a low floor from 2015. This type of bus is wider and recent trials highlighted issues regarding poorly parked cars and steep hills.

264/5 bus service

Runs half hourly Monday to Saturday. The evening service is reduced to every 95 minutes, due to a change in contract and low utilisation, there is no bus after 7.30pm on Sunday.

X80 bus service

This Saturday bus to Bath stops opposite the Rose and Crown pub (on the busy A36), returning approx. four hours later. Most people have never heard of this service.

RUH Hopper

The RUH Hopper is a demand-responsive service and operates Mon to Fri only (excl. public holidays). It picks up and drops in both villages. Buses arrive Royal United Hospital every hour from 7.20am to 5.20pm, return departures at 0730hrs and every hour until 1730hrs.

School bus

School buses for children attending Freshford School from outlying villages and school buses collect in Freshford for Ralph Allen School, Bath.

Transport Link Service

The Link is a charitable organisation serving the community and providing volunteer drivers for appointments/shopping etc when public transport may be inconvenient or unavailable.

Community bus

The option of a bus that could be driven by volunteers in the community was put forward. Since we already have regular bus and train services that need our support, the option was not considered further.

Car-sharing

Many people in the villages who do the same school or work journeys every week could save money if they considered car sharing. This is both environmentally and economically beneficial and would reduce vehicle movements in the village.

Limpley Stoke Station

It is neither economically viable nor possible to reopen the station due to the cost of new platforms, bridges and likely low utilisation.

Freshford Station

The current franchise runs to July 2013. A total of 44 trains (20 in one direction and 24 in the other) run every day from the station. Utilisation has significantly increased over the past six years and there will be a guaranteed 42 stopping trains for the new operator for the next 14 years.

Station Accessibility Issues

Some people find the footbridge is difficult to access, owing to the steps, but there is no current disability legislation requiring the footbridge to be changed. A ramp option would have significant cost implications.

Parking is restricted and present capacity is largely taken by non-residents. There are only six registered parking spaces but there are often up to 16 parked cars, sometimes blocking access for Network Rail and Wessex Water.

Network Rail has the option to add additional parking at the side of the station, but the Parish Council has been opposed to this.

Public Transport Options:

Bearing mind that there is little scope for change, it is critical that residents fully use the services that are attractive to them to ensure that they remain sustainable and survive.