

FRESHFORD PARISH COUNCIL

8 JUNE 2020

A36 Severance Study

Introduction

I was asked at the May PC meeting to investigate the status of the Highways Agency A36 Severance Study and to report back to the June meeting. My thanks to Cllr Adler and Cllr Stevens for their help understanding the background.

Background and History

The definition of Severance from Highways England is as follows: "Community severance can have physical and social impacts. The physical and psychological dimensions can be seen to create barriers to an individual's movement (either real or perceived). Community severance is increasingly being acknowledged as a principal barrier to social inclusion and wellbeing in the UK."

In 2018 the VPA was asked to provide input to an A36 Severance Study, looking at 17 potential locations between Bath and Warminster. This was based on a 77-page study by HE, based on 17 potential locations. In February 2019 the VPA recommended that attention be given to two locations on the grounds of the maximum number of impacted residents:

(6) Midford Lane/Church Lane, Freshford – Daily Traffic Count 14,010, Weekly 93,010.

(7) Pipehouse Lane, Freshford - Daily Traffic Count 13,972, Weekly 92,766

The criteria specified by Cllr Stevens to Neil Winter, Route Manager, HE, were as follows:

"We should aim first for schemes that provide the greatest benefit for the greatest number of residents. Priority should be given to schemes where there is clear evidence of communities being severed by the A36 and where severance denies residents ready access to local facilities and services, including buses and trains.

We should look also to schemes which are likely also to improve road safety at points where presently speed is unrestricted, where there is a recognised black spot and where the volume of traffic is particularly high."

Current Position

At a meeting between HE and the two Bathavon Ward councillors on 5/5/2020, Highways England has again asked for input from the 9 valley parishes. To that end a meeting has been organised on 3 June 2020 by Sarah Warren, BANES councillor for Bathavon North, including the chairs of all 9 parishes, and Cllr Neil Butters to consider the following:

"The purpose of the meeting is try to work out, as B&NES, what our priorities are, so that we can be clear in responding to HE."

My understanding from Neil is that the monies available for the two priorities are small.

The actual means of mitigating the severance effects of the A36 are:

- 1 A tunnel or
- 2 Traffic lights or
- 3 A bridge or

- 4 A pedestrian refuge in the centre of the carriageway.

It is assumed that (1) and (3) would massively exceed the HE budget available, but this needs to be verified. Traffic lights and/or pedestrian refuge were considered for Midford Lane/Church Lane junction as part of the Neighbourhood Plan process in 2012.

The Midford Lane/Church Lane junction separates the Upper and Lower Limpley Stoke communities, although the left side of Midford Lane does sit within the Freshford Parish. I have made contact with Ian Barnes, the transport representative from Limpley Stoke PC, to ensure we work together to promote this option within the VPA.

Update based on 3 June 2020 Meeting

- 1 The meeting proposed that the two recommended sites are (7) Midford Lane/Church Lane and (1) Bathampton Lane or (2) Bathampton Dry Arch Corner. The logic is the same as expressed in 2019 by Cllr Stevens, the priority should be for the separation of the greatest population by the A36. Using this criterion, Bathampton has a superior claim to Pipehouse Lane.
- 2 I took away action to write to Highways England asking for more information about the funding available and the cost of various solutions for mitigating the risk of crossing the A36. I have done this and I am awaiting a reply.
- 3 It appears that the relevant Highways England funding source is the Designated Funds 'Users and Communities' fund in RIS2 (2020-2025). The budget for 2020/21 has been fully allocated, so we likely to be looking at 2021/22 for funding. I have asked for this fact to be confirmed by Highways England.

Recommendations to the Parish Council:

- 1 That the Parish Council agrees with the amended priority locations, namely Bathampton and Church Lane/Midford Lane. The location for Bathampton does fit with the criteria suggested earlier by Cllr Stevens. This would seem to be a good compromise, agreed by the Ward Councillors and the members of the VPA.
- 2 Subject to budget I would recommend to the PC that the pedestrian refuge is the only practical solution. For Midford Lane/Church Lane I would propose that we push the HE for additional road markings, warnings signs and if budget permits, traffic lights.
- 3 Once the recommendations are agreed, we publicise via the Bulletin, email communications and the Website, the plans of HE in order to seek the views of residents. We have little power to influence the decisions of HE but we should at all times ensure that we fairly represent the views of all in the Parish.
- 4 It should be noted that if HE deliver this solution for Midford Lane/Church Lane, it would deliver one of the agreed proposals of the 2012 Neighbourhood Plan.

Julian Carpenter

Freshford PC

7 June 2020