

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."

The intention is that I and Cllr Adler will attend that meeting and report back to the June PC meeting.

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

The actual means of mitigating the severance affects 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.

Recommendations to the Parish Council:

- 1 We work with the VPA and the two Ward councillors to a) confirm the recommendation of the meeting of 27/2/2019 and b) make a joint representation to the Highways England via Neil Winters to press for the two severance locations (6) and (7).
- 2 I would personally favour the pedestrian refuge as the only practical solution, if it included road markings and road sign warnings.
- 3 Once the results of the study are known, we publicise via the Bulletin, email communications and the Website, the plans of HE and 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.

Julian Carpenter

Freshford PC

31 May 2020