

Proposals by National Highways to Improve Pedestrian Crossing of the A36 at Pipehouse and Church Lane/Midford Lane Junctions

Nick Stevens

The proposals put forward by National Highways seek to progress the long held aim of the Parish Council to provide pedestrians with safer crossing points across the A36 both to and from the hamlet of Pipehouse and to the housing in Limpley Stoke and Freshford which is grouped along Midford Lane.

The PC objectives are set out in the Report 'Getting about in Freshford' (2009) and in the Limpley Stoke and Freshford Neighbourhood Plan (2016):

Getting About in Freshford (2009)

The A36 - We would like to see a safe pedestrian link established to the hamlets of Freshford that lie to the west of the A36.

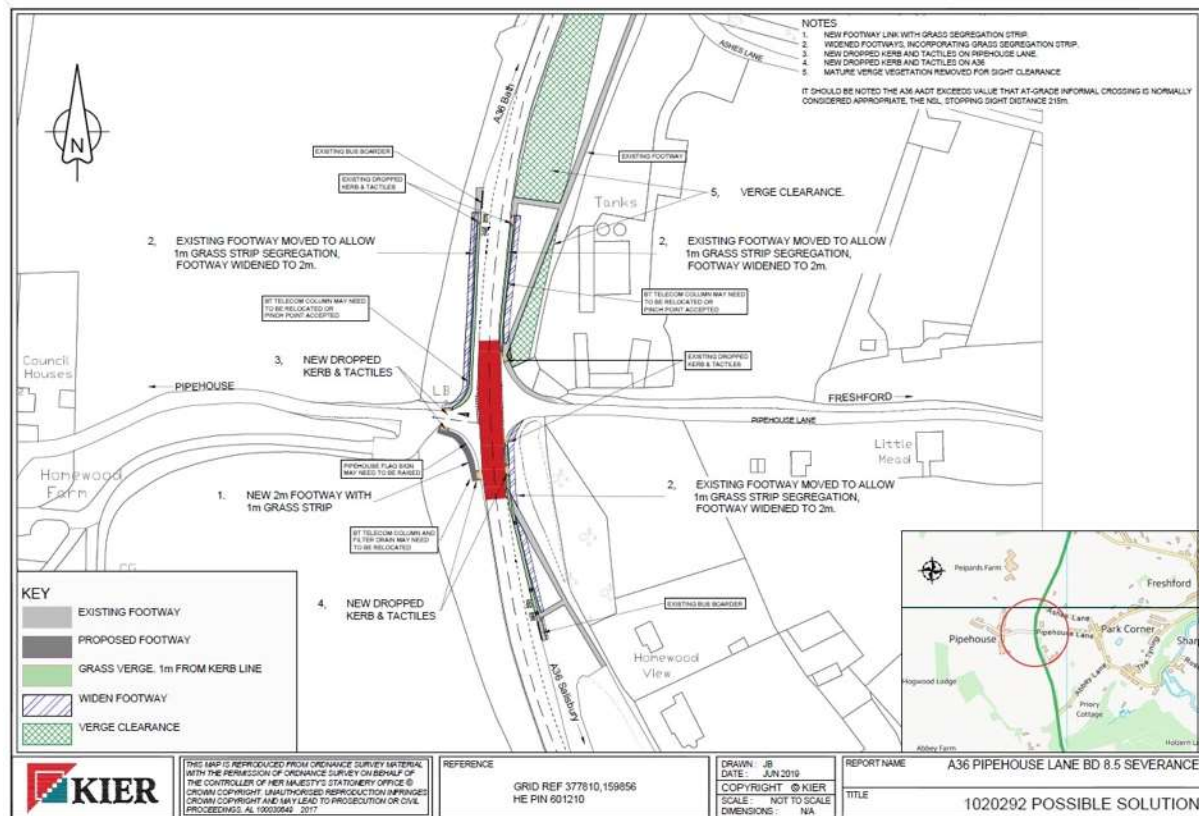
Freshford and Limpley Stoke Neighbourhood Plan (2015)

To improve the safety of residents crossing the A36 from Midford Lane and Pipehouse, seeking Highways Agency recognition in the consideration of lower speed limits and pedestrian refuges.

With the establishment of the VPA came the move for a Highways Group to be established with a remit which included an approach to Highways England (as then was) to see whether or not they would be interested in holding regular meetings with representatives of those parishes bordering the A36 to discuss matters of common interest - the A36/46 link, traffic speed, trunk road schemes and repairs, accident reports and so on.

The response of HE was positive and led to regular meetings taking place between HE and the VPA Highways Group. It was through these meetings that the issue of the severance of communities was first discussed. The commitment of HE to address the issue of severance of communities was demonstrated by the fact that funding was put in place by HE to carry out an extensive survey and report on severance issues along the length of the A36 from Bath to south of Warminster. The report was prepared by Keith Marsh of Transient Designs acting on behalf of HE and was circulated widely to VPA members. While it has been a long process the current proposals stem from that Report and form another step towards potential implementation of improving pedestrian road safety when crossing the A36.

Pipehouse Lane Proposals



The Pipehouse Lane proposals as specified on the plan are:

1. New footway link with grass segregation strip
2. Widened footways incorporating grass segregation strip
3. New dropped kerb and tactile (tactile paving slabs?)
4. Mature verge vegetation removed for sight clearance

Additional Notes

"It should be noted the A36 AADT (Annual Average Daily Traffic) exceeds value that at-grade informal crossing is normally considered appropriate the NSL (National Speed Limit) stopping sight distance 215m."

Comments

The proposals seek to provide two new/enhanced crossing points on the A36 trunk route for pedestrians and to "hopefully allow people to be able to access some of the local amenities on foot. There is potential to link these facilities with more improvements." There will be two crossing points north and south of the junction with improved/new footpaths to encourage pedestrians to cross at these points.

The proposals span the parish boundaries of Freshford and Hinton Charterhouse.

The comment shown on the plan that "It should be noted the A36 AADT (Annual Average Daily Traffic) exceeds value that at-grade informal crossing is normally considered appropriate the NSL (National Speed Limit) stopping sight distance 215 m." is not entirely clear in its meaning but seems to suggest that an informal crossing point is not considered

an appropriate option given the sight distances and the existing speed limit of 60 mph. While the sight lines are reasonably good at the Pipehouse junction the fact remains that vehicles travelling at 60 mph will travel 27 metres per second (89 feet) so will cover the distance of 215 metres in some 8 seconds. Stopping distance at 60mph is 73 metres (240 feet). Since traffic can be approaching the junction at that speed from both directions it requires pedestrians to remain extremely vigilant in assessing whether or not it is safe to cross the road.

The speed limit should be reduced from 60mph to 40 mph. Freshford PC has long pressed for a reduction of the speed limit along this stretch of the A36 to 40mph and if residents crossing the main road at this point are to use the improved footways and crossing points with confidence then there is every reason to make the case for a 40mph limit.

National Highways should be encouraged to move away from the seemingly fixed notion of the need to maintain the 60mph limit which is in place to ensure that traffic moves swiftly and without obstruction along national routes.

There is no acknowledgement that traffic journey times along this stretch of the A36 is determined primarily by the traffic lights at the bottom of Brassknocker Hill. The 60mph limit does no more than deliver cars more quickly to a stopping point on the approach to the traffic lights. There is seldom any point of the day when vehicles are not stuck in a queue at this traffic light junction.

The point is further made that in recent months there have been temporary traffic lights on the southerly approach to the lights. This has in reality eased and improved the flow of traffic at the junction itself and is a further indication that the speed of approaching traffic could be lowered to 40mph without any discernible difference to overall journey times while simultaneously improving the safety of pedestrians crossing the main road and as importantly sending out the clear message that the rights of pedestrians to access and use local facilities and to be provided with safe crossing points form an integral part of National Highways strategy.

It should also be noted that travelling from Bath along the A36 towards the Brassknocker junction there is now in place a substantial section of the road subject to a 40mph limit. It begs the question as to why a 40mph extended restriction on the southerly approach should not be considered.

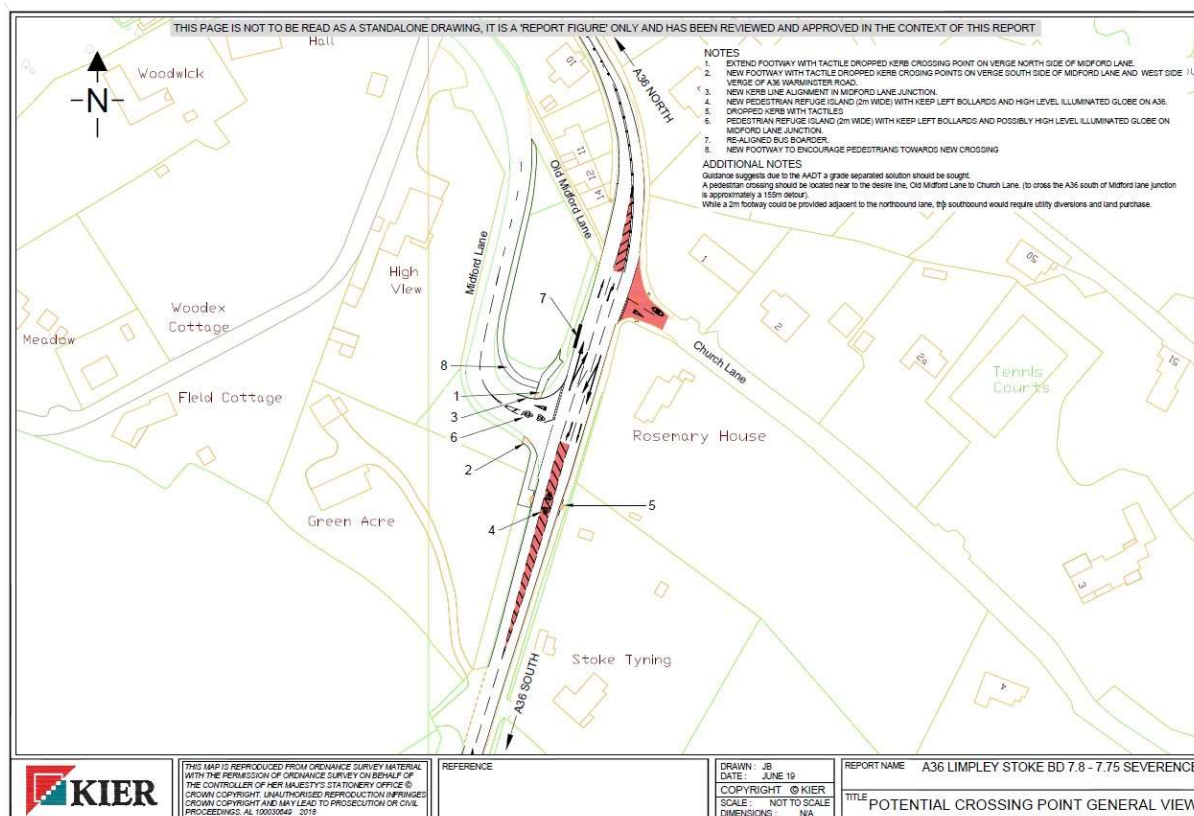
The Pipehouse Junction has had more than its share of road traffic accidents over the years and has long been recognised by the Highways Authorities as an accident black spot. Other road junctions have had a higher count of accidents and so have rated as deserving greater priority to make them safer but the fact remains that the incidence of road traffic accidents at Pipehouse continues to be a cause for concern. The incidence of road traffic accidents impacts on the perception of pedestrians about road traffic safety at this point.

National Highways should be made aware of the Section 106 Pipehouse development requirement that a new footpath is installed to run from Merchants Lane to the A36. The NH proposal should seek to ensure that the two schemes are complimentary to each other and merge together to form a coherent footway from the A36 to the Pipehouse hamlet. (See Appendix A)

Hinton Charterhouse PC to be advised of the NH scheme since part of it lies within their parish.

The residents of Pipehouse have over the years been consulted and made their views known on road traffic issues. The PC might also wish to let them know of what is being proposed.

Church Lane/Midford Lane Junction proposals



Proposals

1. Extend footway with tactile dropped kerb crossing point on verge north side of Midford Lane.
2. New footway with tactile dropped kerb crossing points on verge south side of Midford Lane and west side verge of A36 Warminster Road.
3. New kerb alignment in Midford lane junction.
4. New pedestrian refuge island (2 metres wide) with keep left bollards and high level illuminated globe on A36
5. Dropped kerb with tactiles
6. Pedestrian refuge island (2 metres wide) with keep left bollards and possibly high level illuminated globe on Midford Lane junction.
7. Re-aligned bus boarder.
8. New footway to encourage pedestrians towards new crossing

Additional Notes

Guidance suggests due to the AADT grade separated solution should be sought. A pedestrian crossing should be located near to the desire line Old Midford Lane to Church Lane (to cross the A36 south of Midford lane junction is approximately a 155m detour) While a 2m footway could be provided adjacent to the northbound lane, the southbound would require utility diversions and land purchase.

Comments

The proposals span the parish boundary with Limpley Stoke.

The plan to be updated to take account of new build close to the junction with Midford Lane.

The main road is subject to a 40mph limit.

The proposals are welcome and in line with the PC's stated policy to improve and make safer pedestrian access and crossing the A36. Could we have clarification as to what is meant by "grade separated solution should be sought."

The location of the junction limits the options that might otherwise fall to be considered and the proposed crossing point is in reality the best that can be achieved given the sight restrictions on traffic coming up the hill travelling south toward Warminster.

To encourage pedestrians to use the crossing point the scheme proposes to make a new footpath which will run adjacent to the road up to its junction with the A36 and so dissuade pedestrians from using the cut through along Old Midford Lane. The new footpath will also provide better access to the existing bus stop.

If the scheme is to work then it is vital that pedestrians accept the new lay out and use it.

As is stated on the plan the detour to the crossing point is some 155 metres, so pedestrians will, I hope, think that for their own safety it is a worthwhile diversion.

I question whether sufficient account has been taken of the fact that the Midford Lane junction was designed to ensure that large vehicles accessing the stone mine in Midford Lane could so far as possible have unobstructed access into and out of the Midford Lane junction. Bollard placed at the entrance to the junction will necessarily prevent large vehicles from "sweeping " into the junction and may also hamper emerging vehicles - the progress of emerging heavily laden vehicles is painfully slow.

I suggest that it would be helpful for National Highways to speak to the owners of the Bath Stone Group Ltd to get their views on the proposals. Their knowledge and experience will be particularly helpful and pertinent.

As a regular user of Midford Lane I question whether sufficient account has been taken of vehicles emerging from Midford lane and turning right onto the A36. I hope that the new pedestrian refuge onto the A36 does not interfere with sight lines of approaching traffic on the main road. Also, the painted arrows on the surface of the A36 do not take account of vehicles undertaking this manoeuvre and I wonder if more could be done with road markings to facilitate safe access turning right onto the main road?

Some motorists travelling towards Bath along this stretch of road travel well above the 40mph limit and seem to enjoy the sensation of heavy and late breaking just before the bend. If the speed limit were to be reduced to 40mph along and beyond the Pipehouse stretch of the A36 this would improve also the safe crossing of the road at the Midford Lane junction. Further, I question whether it is appropriate to provide a pedestrian refuge so close (some 100 metres) to the present speed limit signs reducing speed from 60mph to 40 mph. To my mind this is a further compelling reason to introduce a 40mph limit along the entire stretch of the A36 as it passes through the parish.

I have concerns over the placement of high level illuminated globes at the pedestrian refuges. If they are to be constantly illuminated for 24 hours a day they will be visible from nearby houses and cause further light pollution. Given the low footfall of pedestrians I question whether they are either necessary or desirable.

Appendix A

Footpath from Pipehouse Development to A36

From: Claire Cornelius <Claire.Cornelius@bathnes.gov.uk>
Date: Mon, Feb 6, 2017 at 4:34 PM
Subject: s106 Money for Pipehouse Footpath, Freshford
To: cllrneilbatters@aol.com <cllrneilbatters@aol.com>
Cc: Thomas Hayward <Thomas.Hayward@bathnes.gov.uk>, njsfreshford@googlemail.com <njsfreshford@googlemail.com>, ingrid.maherroberts@gmail.com <ingrid.maherroberts@gmail.com>

Dear Councillor Butters,

Apologies for the delay in responding. I think I have tracked down the development you refer to but just to check, was it:

Planning Applications Reference: 14/01495/FUL

Address of Proposal:	Rentokil Tropical Plants Pipehouse Nursery, Pipehouse, Freshford, Bath, Bath And North East Somerset, BA2 7UJ
Parish:	Freshford
Ward:	Bathavon South
Proposal:	Erection of 10 no. dwellings, including access road, car parking and hardstanding, landscaping and associated works and services following demolition of existing buildings and structures.

If so the S106 requires a sum of £24,0000 for a new footpath from the site to Warminster Road. I have copied extracts from the S106 below for your information.

“Footpath Contribution” shall mean the sum of Twenty Four thousand (£24,000) Index Linked to be applied towards all legal, administrative, compensation construction costs and such other costs arising as a consequence incurred by the Council in connection with the promotion/creation of the New Footpath.

“New Footpath” means new public footpath from the Land to Warminster Road arising as a consequence of the Development and shown for identification purposes only by a red line on Plan 2.

9. The Owner shall pay the Footpath Contribution prior to the Commencement of Development.

10. The Owner shall not Commence Development until the Footpath Contribution has been paid to the Council.
11. In the event that the level of any compensation payable by the Council in payment of compensation to any landowner affected by the creation of the New Footpath results in the sum of £19,000.00 of the Footpath Contribution being insufficient to meet the total costs of the New Footpath the Owner shall hold the Council harmless and keep the Council indemnified from and against any such claim for compensation (including any sums which the Council may be required to pay to any person) arising at any time in connection with or incidental to the promotion creation or use of the New Footpath and any charge fee cost or expense incurred by the Council arising out of any such claim for compensation and the Owner shall pay such sum to the Council within 28 days of receipt of a written demand by the Council . PROVIDED ALWAYS THAT the Council shall first use all or part of the remaining £5,000.00 of the Footpath Contribution as may be necessary to reduce any shortfall before demanding any further sums from the Owner

I am informed by the S106 officer that the Developer has made this payment and the monies can be held for 10 years. This means that the works are on our Forward Programme for delivery. Due to our heavy design and delivery programme together with pressures to spend S106 monies or risk having to give them back on other Developments currently this project is earmarked for the 2020 horizon. I have copied this email in to our Programme Manager Thomas Hayward who will let you know if this should change.

If you need any further information please let me know.

Regards, Claire.

Claire Cornelius, Highways Development Control & Transport Policy Manager

Ends