

FRESHFORD PARISH COUNCIL

10 October 2022

Report on meeting with National Highways about A36

Introduction

This is a note of a briefing by Sean Walsh and Jack Mason from National Highways on a number of matters relevant to the Parish on Friday 30 September 2022. The topics covered were:

- Speed Limits
- Accident data
- Severance Study
- RIS 3/Roads Period 3

Speed limits

National Highways has to support a national road network supporting the economy so unless evidence can be provided 60 mph is the default speed limit.

They have data taken from the Viaduct to Midford Road junction of 78,000 vehicles, finding that 85% of the cars are below 40.3 mph. Apparently it is quite a common fact that 15% of motorists ignore speed limits. Sean's point was the vast majority obey the law when it is reasonable for the road conditions.

For an open stretch of road away from residential dwellings, he believes that motorists would not see a 40 mph speed limit as reasonable and thus the rate of non-observance would increase.

A secondary and major consideration is what is acceptable to the police and would thus be enforceable.

The summary of that discussion was that the route to better outcomes for the residents of Freshford (and Limpley Stoke) are the solutions coming out of the Severance Study.

Accident Data

National Highways has evidence for 37 accidents reported to police in the period 2017 – 2021 in the stretch from Limpley Stoke to Woolverton.

For data protection reasons the data is not available in the public domain. Apparently it contains personal information such as name and addresses.

The alternative route to obtain summary data is from Paul.Garrod@bathnes.gov.uk, the Road Safety Officer at BANES. This is called STAT19 dataset.

Severance Study

The key point to understand is that this is following a nationally agreed process in three stages; A) Feasibility B) Design C) Delivery. It takes 3 financial years. The two crossings under discussion are Pipehouse Lane and Midford Lane/Church Lane.

We are at point (A), which would commence in Q1 2023/2024 (so by June 2023). If the business case is proven positive (benefits exceed costs) then it moves to the second stage Design. Benefits are monetised, in other words, the benefit of a parent and child crossing

the A36 is costed. The normal metric for approval is that value of benefits/cost of improvements must be greater than 1.5.

Design would follow in 2024/2025. Again, the cost/benefit case is assessed.

The final phase would be delivery which would follow in 2025/26.

The team have 50 schemes under consideration in the South-West, defined as Cornwall to Gloucestershire. There is a defined pot of money available for Severance.

RIS 3/Roads Period 3

RIS 3 is a study by National Highways at strategic long-term changes to the trunk road network. It is looking in the SW at north-south routing from the M4 motorway to the south coast ports – Poole, Southampton, Portsmouth. A review is underway to come up with alternative recommendations to Ministers for the cost options. The routes being considered are a) A46/A36 (the current main north-south route) b) A37 and c) A350. There would be some element of consultation with the public but ultimately this would be a central Government decision.

Observations and Recommendations

- 1 Speed limits – we are pushing against firm opposition for a reduction in the speed limit between Midford Lane and Branch Lane. The only way to fight this particular battle is with evidence, which moves me to point 2.
- 2 Accident data – I think Freshford PC should reach out to BNAES Safety Officer via Ward councillor to share the accident data for the A36, even in summarised form. This is the only way we can progress both Severance Study and speed limit reduction by making a business case that stacks up.
- 3 Severance Study –
 - a. I believe this is not a matter of applying pressure, but working within the process, evidence-based, to ensure that cost/benefit case is overwhelming. The timeline is extremely frustrating, but I don't think we (or even BANES) has the political influence to accelerate the 3 year timescale. The main point is that our two crossing points on the list of 50 schemes under review.
 - b. I strongly recommend that we keep up the dialogue with National Highways, maybe via the VPA. Sean has worked with the VPA and Hugh Delap before and is keen to rebuild his contacts with all the PCs.
 - c. I think we should offer to help in any way we can, using the Parish Email, to provide feedback from residents on the Feasibility and Design stages.
- 4 RIS 3 – one to keep an eye on, just in case they start proposing an A46/A36 link road. Our strategy would be to revise the VPA as a proper campaigning organisation & build alliances against it.

Julian Carpenter

1 October 2022