

LAVERSTOCK & FORD PARISH COUNCIL

Subject: Church Road Traffic and School Travel Plans

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Author: Nick Baker

1. Report Summary

1.1 A successful public meeting was held on Monday 8th March to discuss the progress of the joint working group on Church Road traffic involving the Parish Council, Wiltshire Council and local schools. There was considerable support for improving enforcement of traffic regulations, but opinions varied as to the different options. This report seeks guidance from the council as to whether the working group should further explore options including extending existing traffic controls, with a view to bringing back more specific proposals for further consultation with local residents and a formal decision by Parish Council.

2. Background

- 2.1 The working group has been meeting since autumn 2020 to review options to reduce traffic congestion, anti-social parking and other traffic problems associated with having 2,000 children educated in schools on Church Road.
- 2.2 The schools are working on developing their school travel plans and encouraging parents to use an app which provides more information on journeys and the opportunity to arrange car shares.
- 2.3 When the school travel plans are renewed this will allow the school to bid for funds for infrastructure projects to improve school travel.
- 2.4 Alongside this the group have been looking at other measures within the power of local councils and also at improving enforcement of existing measures.
- 2.5 The public meeting was attended by around 40 people, mainly local residents and further contributions were received by email. It aimed to provide information to residents on what had already been done and provide a forum for them to share concerns, comments on work in progress and other ideas to be considered to ensure that the working group was engaging with the local community.
- 2.6 The meeting was also attended by senior leaders from Wyvern St Edmunds and St Josephs School, and Wiltshire Council's Community Engagement Manager, Highways Engineer, School Travel Advisor and the division councillor.

3. Key Discussion Points from the Meeting

- 3.1 There was a repeated theme that residents want to see enforcement action alongside measures to tackle underlying problems (“stick as well as carrot” as one resident put it).
- 3.2 Concern was expressed that **people did not feel safe cycling** as the cycle lanes with dashed lines were indicative only, allowing cars to cross into them and park in them. The highways engineer advised that the width of the road would not allow solid line mandatory cycle way on both sides. A one way route might be possible, but would probably not be popular and had not been successful recently in Salisbury City. He also advised that unless there were yellow lines it was legal to park in the indicative cycle lanes
- 3.3 The width of the pavement and grass verge in front of the school was discussed as a possible opportunity to either improve traffic flow by creating off-road parking in a **lay-by**. This was a divisive topic, with opinions both for and against. There would only be limited capacity due to the need to accommodate the zebra crossing and school markings.
- 3.4 Wiltshire Council are in discussion with David Burton of the **Devenish Bradshaw Trust** about creating a safer walking or cycling route towards St Mark’s Roundabout across their land.
- 3.5 Many of the **existing parking restrictions** are either not enforceable at all due to lack of a Traffic Regulation Order or Signage, or are not easily enforceable, (e.g. the double yellow lines do not have a loading restriction, so tickets cannot be issued unless a vehicle is observed for at least five minutes to demonstrate it is not loading).
- 3.6 The current restrictions only cover a small area of Church Road and one option would be to **extend the area covered by parking regulations**. To prevent problems just being displaced the WC Highways Engineer said that if an extension was considered it would need to cover Woodland Way, Elm Close and the lower half of Duck Lane. Examples were given by residents in Elm Close and Woodland Way of problems that the lack of regulation cause them, but one resident of one of the small closes on Church Road said that he could foresee even part-time regulations causing problems as residents needed to use on street parking regularly to accommodate their cars. One correspondent felt strongly that more yellow lines would affect the semi-rural character of the village and create a less desirable suburban feel.
- 3.7 **Pollution** caused by people leaving their engines idling while waiting to pick up children was raised. This is a contravention of Rule 123 of the Highways Code and is probably enforceable by the police. Legislation exists to allow local authorities to take on enforcement powers for such offences but WC has yet to take up the power.

- 3.8 The promotion of walking and cycling was discussed at length. Several participants and correspondents commented on the **route from St Thomas Bridge to Bishopdown Farm**. The Parish Council have requested a road crossing review which will take place after lockdown. Action has also been requested to clear mud and plants from the path to maximise its width. It is unlikely to be possible to further widen the path or create barriers between traffic and pedestrians due to the width of the bridge and the need not to constrict an 'A Road' and leave sufficient width of footway for wheelchairs, however other improvements could be considered..
- 3.9 Some younger secondary school pupils have spoken about not feeling safe on the **footpath from the Sports Club to Bishopdown**. The School Travel Advisor suggested the school's encourage parents to come to informal arrangements to 'walk share' as formal walking buses were often hard to administer.
- 3.10 One teacher suggested the need for an improved cycle path network connecting up all of the major schools.

4. Items for Discussion by Council

- 4.1 This meeting was intended to ensure that the working group was informed by local opinion, not to be a decision making forum, and it served its purpose well. The working group will now need to consider it's next steps. These could include investigating detailed, costed proposals for some of the items discussed above which could then be the subject of more formal consultation, including with the Parish Council.
- 4.2 It would be useful to avoid the wastage of time to know whether at this point the parish council considered that at this point it definitely wanted to rule out any of the measures discussed, in particular extension of part-time parking restrictions across a larger area of the village and the creation of a lay-by.