

Cricklade Neighbourhood Plan

Major traffic relief options

A brief review of schemes that have been proposed

Purpose and structure of this attachment

This attachment is part of the April 2013 neighbourhood plan consultation on “through traffic” issues and outlines various options that have over the years been suggested for alleviating the issue of through traffic, particularly HGVs, from the centre of Cricklade. For each of them it lists some of their advantages and disadvantages as well in some cases of ball park costs and how they might be funded. It is meant to be used as background information to provoke thought when responding to the questions in the business and traffic section of the consultation. No pretence is made that all possible schemes are covered or that all positive and negative aspects of each scheme are detailed. When responding to the questionnaire please feel free to suggest any ideas that you feel have been omitted and also to say if you feel that any of the statements made are either factually wrong or that you disagree with them.

It is structured into an introduction followed by a description of each of the “options” with some suggested advantages and disadvantages of each after which there is a section on funding specifically by accepting new housing development.

Introduction – major road schemes and neighbourhood plans

It is acknowledged that the schemes to provide significant relief from through traffic from the centre of Cricklade cannot be realised through the Cricklade Neighbourhood Plan development process on its own. This is for a number of reasons including:

- All but one of the options discussed involve developing new roads or the change of use of existing roads outside of the area covered by the Cricklade Neighbourhood Plan and are therefore outside the area of its competence.
- Major schemes of the type described would generally require an initiative to be lead by the local highways authority (in our case Wiltshire Council) with funding to be

agreed with central government. The process for this is due to change but will remain something that could not be made to happen purely by the community of Cricklade.

In view of this the question might be asked as to why the topic is being included at all in the process of developing a neighbourhood plan. There are at least three reasons. Firstly it is necessary to consider what the prospects of significant relief from HGV traffic over the plan period are in order to inform other policies about land use, for example where (if anywhere) new businesses that are likely to generate additional HGV traffic should be encouraged to locate within the parish. In this sense consideration of the matters in this note will inform the neighbourhood plan, even if no major scheme can be brought forward as part of it.

Secondly if a particular concept emerges as a “best option for the long term” even if there is little prospect of it being realised before 2026, it may be possible to plan other land use so as not to make this option more difficult if or when it can eventually be realised. This is a sensitive area as reserving any land for a future scheme can create planning blight around that area and if it is not realisable within the plan period public policy may be against designating the area until it is realisable.

Thirdly there has not been any general engagement between the community and Wiltshire Council on the subject for a number of years although local representatives have raised the issue with Wiltshire Council but with no substantive responses from Wiltshire Council that have been made public. If this is an issue that Cricklade residents feel strongly about then this consultation provides an opportunity to demonstrate this and put pressure on Wiltshire Council to engage on it.

In the light of the above it should be emphasised that when the terms “possible” and “options” are used in the document they describe concepts that are physically possible. They do not imply that realisation could be achieved within the neighbourhood plan period (to 2026) and in particular:

- There is virtually no likelihood that finance for some of the concepts will be available within the plan period, almost irrespective of how much new development the community might accept. Options for finance in terms of standard section 106 contributions for new homes / equivalent community infrastructure levy amounts are given at the end of this note.

- Irrespective of finance there is no certainty that the local highway authority (Wiltshire Council) would approve any of the concepts. In other words even if the money were available Wiltshire may not approve some or all of these concepts.

The “Options”

The aim of these “options” is to reduce or eliminate the amount of through traffic, particularly HGVs using Cricklade to get access to the A419. The local origins or destinations of most of the HGV through traffic are either the Chelworth Industrial Estate or the waste / recycling facility to the north of Purton. “Options” to reduce HGV through traffic that have been suggested include:

- **Ban vehicles over 7.5 t from Cricklade**
 - **without building any new roads, or**
 - **build a southern bypass, or**
 - **build a link to Fridays Ham Lane**
- **Allow Tadpole Lane to become a HGV through route**
- **Build a link road to access the Recycling site at Purton from the south west (B4696)**

Basically bypass roads can be categorised into whether they are primarily useful for taking traffic to the north or to the south / Swindon or both. The “southern bypass” would perform both functions, the Fridays Ham Lane extension would be of most benefit for traffic going north although some have advocated it to perform both functions whilst the Tadpole Lane and recycling facility to B4696 concepts are of most use for traffic going south.

The Mouchel Parkman 2004 report “Cricklade - Ashton Keynes - Leigh Freight Management Study” commissioned by Wiltshire Council concluded that “In view of the current impact of HGV’s and the increases that are likely, it is the Consultants’ view that the long-term approach in the study area should involve the creation of additional road capacity, to reduce HGV’s through Cricklade”.

Ban vehicles of over 7.5 tonnes from Cricklade without building any new roads

This would be cheap to implement but costly for HGV operators as it would involve extensive additional distances. The route to the north would be via Chelworth, the B4040 and the B4696 up to the spine road and then to the A419. The same route could be used to the south / Swindon although journey's to the south and south west in particular may be via the B4040 to Malmesbury or southbound on the B4696 and on to Junction 16 of the M4. Advantages and disadvantages include:

Advantages

- Cheap, involving only the cost of road signs
- Quick to implement
- No countryside lost to new roads

Disadvantages

- Extensive additional distances for HGV traffic, particularly for traffic wanting to head south or into Swindon along the A419. It may increase the cost of some businesses to an extent that they become unviable leading to job losses / loss of business rates etc.
- There would be a significant additional volume of HGVs on the B4040 and B4696 which would lead to a decreased amenity value on those living nearby, in particular on the outskirts of Ashton Keynes and in the Leigh.

This concept might however, like the Fridays Ham Lane concept (see later) be considered in conjunction with a scheme that accommodates traffic heading from Chelworth etc. in a southerly direction. Indeed the concept of this for northbound traffic in conjunction with Tadpole Lane for southbound traffic has been put forward as part of the 2012 Cricklade Town Plan.

Ban vehicles of over 7.5 tonnes from Cricklade and build a southern bypass

This is regarded as the holy grail of reduction in through HGV traffic and has been under discussion since at least the late 1980s. The basic concept is a link from somewhere along the Purton Road to the south of the Town Centre to the Cricklade A419 junction, allowing HGVs (and other traffic) from Chelworth and points south access to the A419 without

coming through Cricklade. It would allow sensible access to the A419 for traffic heading either north or south.

There is to the best of our knowledge no single definitive route for this. The earliest proposed route is a reference to a route that would go to the back of Paul's Croft i.e. would join the Purton Road opposite the Forty. Clearly this is now much too near the Cricklade built up area given the Byre Close etc. developments. Other suggested routes join the Purton Road in the region of Noah's Ark. A number of sketches of possible routes have been made over the years. It should be noted that there is also a scheme that was suggested by a local businessman for a scheme that as well as providing the common Purton Road to A419 link, extended a new road to provide a link to the B4696. Given the cost of the "basic" southern relief road it is proposed to disregard that even more ambitious scheme.

Because the route crosses a flood plain it would have to be slightly raised and there would also have to be provision for it to cross the canal and / or railway components of the Cricklade Country Way project. Wiltshire Council provided a ball park estimate of its cost in January 2004 of £7.5m and taking inflation etc. into account a current very approximate estimate of cost would be about £10m.

The main advantages and disadvantages of this scheme include:

Advantages

- Takes HGV traffic away from Cricklade town centre without adding extra distance to their journeys – indeed it shortens them slightly and should entail more fuel efficient journeys
- Allows non HGV traffic from Purton / West Swindon and surroundings to access A419 without going through Cricklade town centre.
- Should allow freer access to High Street shops by car, allowing for increased non Cricklade customer business (but see counter view under "disadvantages")

Disadvantages

- Cost
- May encourage more traffic to use the B4553 from West Swindon

- May divert non HGV traffic away from High Street leading to loss of business for shops (but see counter view above under “advantages”)

Ban vehicles of over 7.5 tonnes from Cricklade and build the “Fridays Ham Lane extension”

This scheme has been under consideration for over ten years and would extend Fridays Ham Lane to Waterhay so providing a route between Chelworth etc. and the Spine Road via the B4040 and Waterhay. It would provide a shorter route between Chelworth and the Spine Road than the existing roads and pass to the east of Ashton Keynes rather than the west. It would also be further away from housing on the edge of Ashton Keynes.

Wiltshire Council provided an estimated cost of the scheme of just under £6m in 2009. No attempt has been made either to sense check or update this figure.

The main advantages and disadvantages of this scheme include:

Advantages

- Allows traffic to avoid the more populated outskirts of Ashton Keynes
- Saves some additional distance from Chelworth etc. to the A419 compared to using the B4696
- Cheaper by perhaps around 40% than the Cricklade Southern bypass

Disadvantages

- Still a considerable additional distance from Chelworth etc. to the A419 compared with the status quo or the Cricklade southern bypass
- Unlikely to be an acceptable (though it is acknowledged that this is a subjective term) Chelworth to A419 southbound alternative to the status quo or a Cricklade southern bypass

As it appears to offer more advantages to traffic heading north than south it should therefore be considered in conjunction with schemes that may be able to accommodate traffic heading south and towards Swindon. These are considered below.

Allow Tadpole Lane to become a HGV through route to Blunsdon and the A419

The idea of upgrading Tadpole Lane to take HGVs in a West to East direction only was discussed in the 2004 Mouchel Parkman report, having first been suggested (but as a two way HGV route) in 2002. This would not have eliminated HGVs between Blunsdon and Chelworth etc. having to travel through Cricklade. Those travelling from Blunsdon would still travel through Cricklade. The reasons that they gave for not implementing two way HGV working was that there was building to the south of the road but not the north and the geometry was such that there would be extra cost in modifications to accommodate HGVs in the other direction.

Subsequently the Cricklade Town plan suggested that the use of two way working on Tadpole Lane be investigated in conjunction with a route for north bound HGVs via the Spine Road to the A419. The Fridays Ham Lane extension would make an alternative (but higher cost) route for northbound traffic.

All of this was before the Tadpole Farm development to the north of Tadpole Lane received planning consent. That development actually downgrades Tadpole Lane itself as a through route with the “main road” being diverted along part of its way to the north through the new development.

In view of this it is considered that, unless the Tadpole Farm housing development does not proceed, it is not worth any further consideration of this as an “option”. Contrary views would of course be welcome. Its major advantages and disadvantages include:

Advantages

- Makes use of existing road with relatively minor enhancements required

Disadvantages

- Would create new route for HGVs where one side of much of the road is already bordered by residential properties and there are plans for similar development on the other side of the road.
- There are also plans to downgrade the road from its current usage – any proposal to reverse this is likely to meet very strong opposition from Swindon Council

Build a link road to access the Recycling site at Purton from the B4696

This new road would run from just to the north of Purton to the B4696. It would thus allow access from that area to either the Spine Road or Junction 16 of the M4 without going through Cricklade. It is likely to be significantly cheaper than either the Cricklade bypass or the Fridays Ham Lane extension. Advantages and disadvantages of this road include:

Advantages

- Relatively inexpensive compared to other new road concepts
- Would provide good access southbound for both the Recycling Centre area and Chelworth and also from the former area northbound to spine road and hence the A419

Disadvantages

- Would be a significant additional distance between Chelworth and A419 northbound
- If the above were mitigated by this scheme in conjunction with for example the Friday's Ham Lane extension for northbound access the combined cost of both schemes is likely to approach that of the Southern bypass.

Funding of new road schemes

Finance for new roads can come from a number of sources. The most common methods, aside from county or central government funding, are section 106 contributions from new developments which will be largely replaced by the new community infrastructure levy. The amount that could be raised from this is discussed at the end of this section.

There have been discussions in the past about financing the southern relief road from landfill tax receipts.

There was a period when it appears that there was a feeling that new development in / on the edge of Swindon might provide a source of funding. It is now clear that this is unlikely to be the case with Swindon giving priority to the Purton Iffley relief Road. It appears that the massive Tadpole Farm and Ridgeway Farm developments on the edge of Swindon (the latter actually in Wiltshire) will not lead to any funding for a Cricklade Southern bypass or alternative relief road.

Whilst major road schemes are not usually funded totally from section 106 (to be replaced by the community infrastructure levy) receipts it is instructive to see what would be necessary if this was to be used as the main means of funding. Wiltshire Council are proposing a levy that would yield about £5,000 per new detached market price house (but nothing for low cost / social housing), with 25% of this to go to the local parish.

As this would be an unusual way of funding significant new roads and in any case new roads are not a parish responsibility it will be assumed that 100% of the community infrastructure levy (rather than just the 25% normal parish share) is available for any major new road scheme. This is of course an overestimate as there are bound to be other legitimate demands on these receipts. Nevertheless with these assumptions and assuming £5,000 per new market priced detached house the number of such new houses required to fund two of the schemes mentioned are of the order of:

- For the Cricklade Southern bypass @£10m approx – 2,000 new houses
- For Friday's Ham Lane @£6m approx – 1,200 new houses

Wiltshire proposes a zero levy on new retail units but would levy on new supermarkets / warehouses etc. so there may be some scope to substitute some of this type of development.