

WILTSHIRE COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM NO. 7

AMESBURY AREA BOARD 25TH March 2010

AMESBURY AREA BOARD – MOTION FROM CLLR IAN WEST

Purpose of Report

1. The Amesbury Area Board is asked to consider a motion put by Cllr Ian West and seconded by Cllr Graham Wright concerning the proposed closure of the A344.

Background

2. Cllr West would like the board to consider the following question:

“If the proposed closure of the A344 goes ahead what contingencies have Wiltshire Council put in place to safeguard the communities of Bulford, Durrington, Larkhill, and Shrewton and the other villages in the Till Valley which will be affected by the extra traffic generated by this closure, especially on Telegraph Hill and Shrewton High Street?”

3. A briefing note from officers has been submitted to assist the board in its consideration of this question (see attached at appendix 1)

Motion

That the Amesbury Area Board request the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport to :

- (a) take into account the concerns and comments of the Amesbury Area Board regarding the proposed closure of the A344 when submitting Wiltshire Council’s views via the public inquiry process**
- (b) submit a report to the Amesbury Area Board at the appropriate meeting following the outcome of the public inquiry to explain what contingency plans Wiltshire Council will put in place to safeguard the communities of Bulford, Durrington, Larkhill, Shrewton and the other villages if and when the A344 closures go ahead, specifically Telegraph Hill in Bulford, Larkhill Road and The Packway in Durrington and the High Street in Shrewton.**

Briefing Note for Amesbury Area Board – 25th March 2010.

The planned closure of the A344 is forecast to result in more trips being assigned to some local routes. It is known that the A303, in the vicinity of Stonehenge, is currently working at or beyond capacity at times, the situation being particularly evident at weekends during the summer period. Constraints have been identified as Longbarrow and Countess junctions and the link east of Longbarrow to the dual carriageway section. The single carriageway Stonehenge section link is sometimes operating at capacity.

The Highways Agency commissioned a report 'A303 Stonehenge Improvement Scheme Review Partial Solutions A303/A344 Junction Closure' in 2007. The full report can be found at:
http://www.highways.gov.uk/roads/documents/A303_A344_Junction_Closure_Report.pdf

A further (2008) report 'A303 Stonehenge Improvement Scheme Review Partial Solutions Options Analysis', which deals with Longbarrow and Countess improvements, can be found at:
<http://www.highways.gov.uk/roads/documents/P1B-HIG-SOR-R007.pdf>

The first study found, in terms, that by 2012 the A303 constraints will lead to an increasing tendency for traffic to divert from the A303 via The Packway, for less traffic to use the A344 because of difficulties in leaving/joining the route at Stonehenge Bottom, and for Countess to be approaching capacity at all peak times.

By 2027 the report indicates that the A303 would be at capacity for prolonged periods, intensifying problems for A344 users, and exacerbating safety concerns, long queues would occur at Longbarrow during peak periods, and Countess would be operating over capacity at peak times, with lengthening queues.

The study found that the closure of the A303/A344 junction at Stonehenge Bottom would result in additional traffic transferring to the A360/A303 (via Longbarrow Crossroads), with some also transferring to The Packway. The following effects are forecast to arise:

- The single carriageway section of the A303 past Stonehenge would be under greater stress, with more frequent breakdowns in the smooth flow of traffic and a higher incidence of congestion and queuing traffic.
- Longbarrow Crossroads would experience greater levels of congestion, particularly on the A303 West and the A360 North approaches to the roundabout, with the junction reaching capacity two or three years ahead of when it would reach capacity in the Do-Minimum scenario.

- At Airman's Corner, the main traffic movement would become that between the A360 West and the A360 South. This would mean that the junction layout should be modified for safety reasons to accommodate the changed turning priorities.
- The closure of the A344 would make little difference to the operation of Countess Roundabout. The closure of the junction would remove a hazardous junction, reducing accidents at that location, but these may be partially offset by additional accidents elsewhere arising from the diverted traffic and increasing congestion.

The second report found that 'the disbenefits of closing the A303/A344 junction at low growth are almost offset by improvements to Longbarrow Crossroads' and that the scheme is 'sufficient to overcome the potential disbenefit of the A303/A44 junction closure under high growth'

In answer to the questions put in Cllr West's Motion, the following arrangements are already in place:

The Highways Agency has planned an upgrade of (i) the Longbarrow roundabout junction, with works provisionally programmed to commence in September 2011, (ii) the Countess Junction (details of which have previously been advised to the Area Board), with works provisionally programmed to commence in January 2011, following traffic diversions associated with the Bulford Bridge contract.

Assuming the A344 closure goes ahead as part of the SEIP, Wiltshire Council will oversee the Airmans Corner improvement, which will be changed to a roundabout junction. The A303/A344 junction will be closed when the A344 is stopped up.

All three schemes are predicted to provide additional capacity and improved safety compared with the existing junction arrangements.

These improvements alone will help mitigate the impact of the growth in traffic on the A303, and, in turn on Bulford, Durrington, Larkhill, and Shrewton and the other villages in the Till Valley. No specific schemes are envisaged on the particular roads mentioned i.e. Telegraph Hill and Shrewton High Street, but routes are regularly monitored in relation to traffic use, and the authority is in a position to undertake 'after' surveys to test impacts. If impacts are materially different from forecast flows associated with background growth, or if specific issues arise, then interventions can be considered.

Given that the Highways Agency study found that, with the A344 closure, Longbarrow Crossroads would reach capacity only two or three years ahead of when it would in a 'Do Minimum' scenario, it is highly unlikely that levels of traffic on the alternative routes would experience material changes as a direct result of A344 closure, compared with those changes associated with forecast traffic increases affecting the A303. The alternative routes do not generally

exhibit capacity issues (undue delay or congestion), and the environmental impacts are most likely to be perceived as the issue to be addressed.

Examples of forecast traffic changes to specific routes

Figures extracted from Highways Agency Reports

http://www.highways.gov.uk/roads/documents/A303_A344_Junction_Closure_Report.pdf (Fig 3.2)

<http://www.highways.gov.uk/roads/documents/P1B-HIG-SOR-R007.pdf> (Figs 2.1, 4.1, 6.1)

Road	2006 Baseline traffic	2027 Low growth Daily traffic	2027 High growth Daily traffic
C32 - No Scheme	8100	10100	12100
C32 - A344 closed		10100	12100
C32 - A344 closed /Longbarrow		10000	12100
C32 - A344 closed/Countess		10000	11900
Packway (B3086) - No Scheme	3600	4700	6800
Packway (B3086) A344 - closed		5300	7200
Packway (B3086) A344 closed /Longbarrow		5000	6600
Packway (B3086) - A344 closed/Countess		5000	6800
A360(w) - No Scheme	9600	9800	11400
A360(w) - A344 closed		8100	10700
A360(w) - A344 closed /Longbarrow		8800	11500
A360(w) - A344 closed/Countess		8800	11400
B3083 - No Scheme	900	800	1300
B3083 - A344 closed		900	1400
B3083 - A344 closed /Longbarrow		800	1400
B3083 - A344 closed/Countess		800	1400
Packway (e) - No Scheme	11500	12800	17500
Packway (e) - A344 closed		13700	17600
Packway (e) - A344 closed /Longbarrow		13600	17700
Packway (e) - A344 closed/Countess		13600	17500