

REGULATORY COMMITTEE
5th FEBRUARY 2003

**CHIPPENHAM WITHOUT: WILLOWBANK -
PROPOSED ROAD CLOSURE**

Purpose of Report

1. To consider objections to a proposed Traffic Regulation Order to close Willowbank to through traffic.

Background

2. Willowbank is a minor residential road within the Cepen Park North development in Chippenham. The road connects the estate feeder road Stainers Way with the A420 Bristol Road. The plan at **Appendix 1** shows the area concerned. Several residents of Willowbank have been concerned for a number of years about the volume of through traffic using Willowbank and have been keen to pursue a road closure.
3. The Chippenham Local Transport Plan Working Group put forward a scheme to deter through traffic on Willowbank as a contender for funding from the 2003-2003 Local Transport Plan allocation. At the March 2002 meeting of the Regulatory Committee, funding was approved.

Detail

4. Representation was received from the residents indicating that the preferred option was a physical road closure.
5. On the basis of this, formal consultations were carried out during September/October 2002 for a permanent road closure. No objections were received from the Police, Fire and Ambulance Services. Chippenham Town Council recorded no objection subject to consultation and support from local residents. North Wiltshire District Council expressed its general objection to a road closure, which reduces the permeability through a modern estate. Chippenham Without Parish Council has also indicated support for the scheme.
6. The legal Traffic Regulation Order required to introduce a Prohibition of Driving was then advertised.

Objections

7. Thirty-one letters of support and thirty-one letters of objection to a road closure have been received, twenty-seven of the support letters being a standard letter which states "As a resident of the Willowbank estate I wish to formally indicate my support of the proposed road closure." The objection letters received, together with the main reasons for objecting to the closure are listed in **Appendix 2**. The letters of support are listed in **Appendix 3**. Full copies of the letters are available in the **Members' Room** and from the Environmental Services Department prior to the meeting.

Considerations

8. Many of the residents supporting the closure have stated that they purchased their properties on the basis of developers' plans showing Willowbank being constructed as a cul-de-sac. The development of Willowbank was undertaken by two separate developers, and both developments were constructed in accordance with Local Planning Authority approval.
9. Other common reasons for supporting the closure include the amount of traffic using Willowbank as a 'rat-run'. The counts undertaken show a relatively low level of traffic using Willowbank during the am peak. It is accepted that some traffic from the rest of the Cepen Park Estate may use Willowbank as a through route. However, modern development design would favour this approach to allow permeability through the estate.
10. The objections mainly relate to the difficulties faced by local traffic, which will be forced to exit via the Stainers Road roundabout junction. The existing peak hour queues on West Cepen Way cause some delays for vehicles trying to exit Stainers Way.
11. Many of the residents living south of the proposed closure objected to the scheme as it would mean that their only choice of exit would be via the A420. During peak hours, the existing traffic flows make executing a right hand turn out of Willowbank difficult.
12. Other reasons for objection include that the existing traffic calming is adequate and a road closure is not justified. Manual speed counts would support this view. The manual counts were undertaken to establish the volume and speed of traffic on Willowbank and were carried out between 7.30 am and 9.00 am on a Thursday. A total of 190 vehicles were recorded with an 85%ile speed of 23 mph towards Bristol Road and 21 mph towards Stainers Way.
13. Several residents also expressed concern at the removal of the local bus service through Willowbank which would result from a closure. Service 99 currently uses the route and is operated with a large coach. The Passenger Transport Unit has indicated no objection to the diversion of the route via West Cepen Way and Bristol Road.
14. Interrogation of the accident database has revealed that there have been no recorded injury accidents on Willowbank in the past three years.

Conclusions: Options considered

15. Abandon the scheme.
16. Implement the closure as advertised.
17. Implement additional traffic calming features in an attempt to dissuade rat-running traffic.

Recommendation

18. That:-
 - (i) The proposed closure be not pursued. However, entry treatment be introduced at the junction of Stainers Way and Bristol Road to discourage rat-running traffic.
 - (ii) The objectors be informed accordingly.

Reason for Recommendation

19. The severing of a public highway is not a decision to be taken lightly and current development standards would require an estate of this size to have more than one entrance/exit. It is difficult to justify this closure, particularly as it does not have the clear support of the majority of the residents.

RICHARD J. LANDER

Director of Environmental Services

The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report:

Letters of objection.

Environmental impact of the Recommendations contained in this Report:

None.

