

REGULATORY COMMITTEE

7th JANUARY 2004

**CHIPPENHAM: OBJECTIONS TO PROPOSED CLOSURE OF
MONKTON HILL TO THROUGH TRAFFIC**

Purpose of Report

1. To advise Members that a substantial number of objections have been received regarding the above proposal, and to recommend that the Council does not proceed with the scheme in its present form.

Background

2. Chippenham station has been an important part of the fabric of the town since its construction in the 1830's. As with a number of the stations along Brunel's Great Western Railway, the buildings at Chippenham are listed and as such remain largely unchanged from their original form. More recent access and operational requirements have been incorporated into the station in a piecemeal way resulting in a rather haphazard layout that falls considerably short of current best practice.
3. There is a general desire from transport operators and representatives of the local community to see the facilities at the station brought up to a more appropriate standard. As part of the Local Transport Plan, the County Council has secured funding for the investigation, design and part of the construction costs of improvements. Discussions with the various parties to this bid and other relevant organisations have resulted in an agreed scheme, the purpose of which is to improve access to Chippenham station for all users in terms of convenience, safety, comfort and ambience. In particular it will provide an interchange facility to integrate bus and train services. The key features include:-
 - Bus interchange facilities
 - Segregated pedestrian/cycle routes
 - Parking for cycles and motorcycles
 - Convenient disabled parking provision
 - Defined taxi drop-off, collection and waiting areas with weather protection
 - General use set-down point
 - Signage for local facilities
 - Environmental enhancements
 - Improved ticket hall including low level counter for wheelchair users
 - New passenger information systems
4. The County Council is the principal project sponsor, with around £200,000 of Local Transport Plan funding being put towards the scheme. Other significant contributors are the Strategic Rail Authority who have awarded £250,000, £65,000 from the Railway Heritage Trust and £40,000 from First Great Western. The Contract anticipates completion in Spring 2004.

5. A small, but potentially valuable addition to the scheme, would be to improve pedestrian/cycle access between the town and the Station by the closure of Monkton Hill to through traffic. At present, the safety and convenience of a pedestrian or cyclist using the top end of Monkton Hill is significantly compromised due to the volume of traffic and limited space between boundary walls. Removal of through traffic would make a major difference for those users, but plainly it would remove what many car drivers consider to be a precious alternative when congestion builds at peak times.
6. The proposed closure of Monkton Hill was duly and properly advertised (see **Appendix A**), and although four letters of support were received, the Council received some 150 individual objections together with a 326 signature petition. The schedule of objectors and a summary of their objections is attached as **Appendix B**. The petition and representations will be available for inspection in the **Members' Room**.

Main Considerations for the Council

7. The closure of Monkton Hill to through traffic is not a crucial element of the overall scheme, however given the continued emphasis on investment in schemes where pedestrian/cycle safety and convenience carries a high priority, the Council has to consider whether:-
 - (a) the closure should be progressed as advertised
 - (b) any attempt to restrict vehicular access along Monkton Hill is abandoned altogether or
 - (c) not to proceed with the full closure but to give further consideration to options which secure improvements for pedestrians and cyclists, but still allow some movement of traffic.

Environmental Impact of the Proposal

8. There is no immediate environmental impact as a result of the proposal.

Risk Assessment

9. There is no increased risk to the County Council as a result of the proposal.

Financial Implications

10. There are no adverse financial implications resulting from the proposal.

Reasons for Recommendation

11. Given that the closure of Monkton Hill to through traffic is not crucial to the main Station Forecourt project, and further given the lack of local support, it seems appropriate to review the Council's position and consider less controversial options.

Recommendation

12. That:-

- (i) The proposal to close Monkton Hill to through traffic as advertised be not progressed, but that further consideration be given to devising an alternative that acknowledges the concerns expressed by the objectors, but nevertheless seeks to improve the safety and convenience of pedestrians and cyclists along this important link between the Railway Station and the Town Centre;
- (ii) The objectors be advised accordingly

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

None

