

CABINET MEMBER HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT – COUNCILLOR BRIDGET WAYMAN

HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT

OFFICER CONTACT: Kevin Gale tel. 01225 718023

REFERENCE: HTW – 05 - 20

PROPOSED APPLICATION TO STOP UP HIGHWAY ADJACENT TO 14 WHITEHILL LANE, WOOTTON BASSETT

Purpose of Report

- 1 To ask the Cabinet Member to consider whether the Council should grant a request to apply to the magistrates' court for an Order stopping up part of the highway adjacent to 14 Whitehill Lane, Wootton Bassett on the ground that it is unnecessary for public use or any other highway-related purpose.

Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

- 2 As part of the Council's drive for strong communities, people in Wiltshire are encouraged to take action on what is best for their own communities. It also feeds in to the aim of being an innovative and effective council as part of its focus on generating income by adopting a more commercial approach in what we do.

Main Considerations for the Council

- 3 Case law has clarified that in deciding whether to make an application to stop up highway (including highway rights for varying categories of user), the Highway Authority must consider all the factors which would be relevant to the consideration by a Magistrates' Court of whether an Order should be made. As well as whether the highway is needed for passing and repassing, issues such as safety, e.g. for visibility splays or potential development access, should also be considered.
- 4 The central question to be addressed is: what function is performed by the relevant part (or right) of the highway and whether it is unnecessary for that function to be performed by that part or the whole of the highway. If it is unnecessary, it must also be considered whether there are any other reasons why a stopping-up application should not be made.

Background

5. The area of land concerned is owned by Mr. & Mrs. Lawson, with highway rights running over the surface. Should a stopping-up order be made, Mr. Lawson would lawfully be able to continue to use the land as part of his driveway. The photograph shown at **Appendix 3**, shows the area concerned directly behind the fence. As can be seen, there is no encroachment onto the adjacent footway.

6. Under the Highways Act 1980, Magistrates' Courts have a power to authorise the stopping up or diversion of highway. Section 116 (1)-(4) provides as follows:

(1) Subject to the provisions of this section, if it appears to a magistrates' court after a view, if the court thinks fit, by any two or more of the justices composing the court, that a highway (other than a trunk road or a special road) as respects which the highway authority have made an application under this section –

(a) is unnecessary, or

(b) can be diverted so as to make it nearer or more commodious to the public, The court may by order authorise it to be stopped up, or as the case may be, to be so diverted.

[sub-section 2 has been repealed]

(3) If an authority propose to make an application under this section for an order relating to any highway (other than a classified road) they shall give notice of the proposal to –

(a) if the highway is in a non-metropolitan district, the council of that district; and

(aa) if the highway is in Wales, the Welsh council for the area in which it is situated if they are not the highway authority for it; and

(b) if the highway is in England, the council of the parish (if any) in which the highway is situated or, if the parish does not have a separate parish council, to the chairman of the parish meeting; and

(c) if the highway is in Wales, the council (if any) of the community in which the highway is situated;

and the application shall not be made if within two months of the date of service of the notice by the authority notice is given to the authority by the district council [or Welsh council] or by the parish or community council or, as the case may be, by the chairman of the parish meeting that the council or meeting have refused to consent to the making of the application.

(4) An application under this section may be made, and an order under it may provide, for the stopping up or diversion of a highway for the purposes of all traffic, or subject to the reservation of a footpath, bridleway or restricted byway.

7. Should the application be made and granted, the public would no longer have the right to pass and repass along the highway concerned and the Council would no longer be responsible for maintaining it. It is not clear how long the area of highway has been enclosed. The current Area Highway Engineer is not aware of any changes at this location since he took on responsibility for the area in September 2016. Whitehill Lane will have been routinely inspected for highway safety defects approximately every 3 months as part of the Council's Safety Inspection regime. However, as the enclosed section does not appear, on the ground, to be part of the highway, inspection of it would not have occurred. The Area Highway Engineer is not aware of any complaints with regard to the enclosure.
8. Officers consider that the highway is unnecessary for public use or any other highway-related reason. They are therefore willing, subject to the consent of the Cabinet Member, to make the proposed application.

9. Royal Wootton Bassett Council has consented to the proposed application and a copy of its consent is shown at **Appendix 2**. The local member, Councillor Chris Hurst has been consulted and has not objected.

Safeguarding Considerations

10. There are no relevant safeguarding considerations.

Public Health Implications

11. There are no relevant public health implications.

Environmental Impact of the Proposal

12. There is no negative environmental impact to the proposal.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

13. Officers consider that there is no equalities impact of the proposal because, in practice, the area of highway concerned serves only the owner.

Risk Assessment

14. Officers have no concerns with regard to risk in relation to the proposed application.

Financial Implications

15. Mr. Lawson has agreed to meet the legal costs of an application. Even if one does not proceed, he would still be liable for preparatory costs. Accordingly, officers are satisfied that the application would have no negative financial impact upon the Council.

Legal Implications

16. As highway authority, the Council has a discretionary power, rather than a duty, to make such applications.
17. If an application is not made or if one is made and the Magistrates are minded not to make the Order, Wiltshire Council would continue to have a legal responsibility for the maintenance of the highway concerned.

Options Considered

18. The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport may resolve to:

- (i) Refuse to give consent to the application in which event, reasons should be given for doing so.
- (ii) Consent to the application.

Reason for Proposal

- 19. Officers are satisfied that the section of highway can be stopped up as it is unnecessary for public use.

Proposal

- 20. It is proposed that the Cabinet Member adopt the option at 18(ii) above.

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