

CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT – CLLR R TONGE

HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT SERVICES

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REFERENCE: HT-053-12

HOLT MANOR - REQUEST FOR CHANGES TO HIGHWAY SIGNING AND THE PROVISION OF PASSING BAYS ON LEIGH ROAD AND SUMMER LANE

Purpose of Report

1. To consider a request from the owner of Holt Manor for changes to highway signing and the provision of passing bays on Leigh Road and Summer Lane, Holt, Wiltshire.

Background

2. The owner of Holt Manor has raised a number of concerns relating to the use of the UC6020 that runs though the Manor estate and has, of his own volition, undertaken some works to try and alleviate his concerns. One of the proposals he has put forward for consideration by Wiltshire Council, in its role as local Highway Authority, is for permanent changes to direction signs that would seek to remove extraneous through traffic from the UC6020, particularly visitors to Great Chalfield Manor, and divert them onto Leigh Road and Summer Lane. Such changes would not require a traffic regulation order to be made. It should be noted that the UC6020 is the former private driveway of Holt Manor but was dedicated in 1928 to the then Bradford Rural District Council and has been an adopted highway since that time. The owner of Holt Manor has offered to contribute to the costs of the signing changes, as well as improvements to Leigh Road and Summer Lane that would allow easier passage by two-way traffic.
3. Under its powers as Highway Authority, Wiltshire Council could determine this proposal without reference to interested parties. However, it is known that there are strong views held by the local community, represented by Holt Parish Council, that the proposed changes are unnecessary and indeed unwarranted. It was therefore considered that it would be appropriate that Holt Parish Council should be consulted before any decision was taken.
4. In addition, the proposals were discussed at the July meeting of the Bradford on Avon Area Board, at which time the opportunity was given to the agent for Holt Manor to present the proposals to the Board and for the Board to hear the views of Holt Parish Council. Prior to the meeting a number of the Board members undertook a site visit to familiarise themselves with the area.
5. A copy of the proposal submission from the agent of Holt Manor, that includes details of the problems being experienced and the changes sought to address these, is included at **Appendix A**. The views of Holt Parish Council are included at **Appendix B**. An extract from the minutes of the Bradford on Avon Area Board is included at **Appendix C** and a further letter from the agent of Holt Manor is included at **Appendix D**.
6. It should be noted that this report only covers the proposed changes to highway signs and the provision of passing bays on Leigh Road and Summer Lane. Other matters, including the diversion of footpaths, bollards, and boundary gate signs, are not covered by this report.

Main Considerations for the Council

7. The Council needs to consider the views expressed by the various interested parties and make a decision on the way forward.
8. The landowner at Holt Manor has raised concerns that changes at Great Chalfield Manor (creation of a new car park at Great Chalfield Manor, a National Trust Property) is likely to increase the number of visitors to the area and may lead to more drivers unfamiliar with the local road network driving past Holt Manor. Discussion has taken place with Great Chalfield Manor and they have advised that the car park is intended to provide for their existing visitor number levels and they are not seeking to increase visitor numbers beyond their current level which is 20,000 visitors per year. Currently, no car park is available at Great Chalfield Manor, which unfortunately increases the likelihood of parking on verges in the immediate vicinity of the Manor. Great Chalfield Manor is not signed in any way using either conventional highway signs or brown tourism signs and they have indicated that they do not wish to be signed as their facilities for visitors are inadequate to cope with any increase in numbers.
9. One of the main reasons put forward for change by the owner of Holt Manor is that of safety and conflict between opposing motorists. An investigation of the collision database shows that there have been no recorded personal injury collisions in the last ten years on either the UC6020, Leigh Road or Summer Road or at any of the junctions between these roads. It is accepted that the collision database does not record all incidents that take place on the public highway but the absence of any recorded collisions indicates that this area is not one of concern to the Highway Authority.
10. The owner of Holt Manor raise a number of concerns which appear to relate more to security and inconvenience rather than safety. It is considered that these instances could be addressed by the provision of modest signing; for example, those indicating the name of the property and its private status.
11. There is little justification for the proposal put forward by the owner of Holt Manor in safety terms (i.e. safety of all users of the highway, both motorised and non-motorised) given the lack of any recorded personal injury collisions and the suggested changes put forward by the owner of Holt Manor for the junction of Leigh Road and Summer Road may introduce additional safety issues for users of the highway
12. Under Section 130 of the Highways Act 1980, local highway authorities have a duty of care to assert and protect the rights of the public to use and enjoy any highway for which they are highway authority – this duty of care applies to all users of the highway – both motorised and non-motorised. As Highway Authority the Council is therefore required to ensure that all rights of way for which it has responsibility allow unrestricted and safe use by all users of the highway. Unfortunately, the proposal suggested by Holt Manor’s proposal could be perceived to be detrimental to this principle.

Environmental Impact of the Proposal

13. Additional highway signs and the provision of passing bays could be seen as being visually detrimental to the environment.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

14. Not applicable.

Risk Assessment

15. Not applicable.

Financial Implications

16. The level of contribution from the owner of Holt Manor is unknown. No cost estimates for the proposed works have yet been calculated and no budget provision exists.

Legal Implications

17. The Council's decision could be challenged in the courts (by way of an application for judicial review which could potentially incur legal costs of approximately £20,000 - £50,000. However, it is considered that such an application would be unlikely to succeed.

Options Considered

18. To:
- (i) Agree to the proposals put forward.
 - (ii) Not agree to the proposals put forward.

Reason for Proposal

19. From a highway authority perspective there is no recorded evidence in the context of safety to justify any change to the highway network and to the highway signage on this part of the highway network and one of the proposed changes may indeed increase the risk to the safety of users of the highway. Furthermore, the proposals put forward are not supported by the local community representatives (Holt Parish Council or the Bradford on Avon Area Board).

Proposal

20. That:
- (i) The request from the owner of Holt Manor be refused.
 - (ii) The owner of Holt Manor, Holt Parish Council and the Bradford on Avon Area Board be advised of the decision taken.

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

None