

OLD CLEEVE PARISH COUNCIL

Washford Road Safety Plan

Introduction:

Old Cleeve Parish Council (OCPC) has received representations over time about traffic conditions and road safety in Washford. These primarily relate to the A39 but also apply to a lesser extent to other through routes such as Abbey Road and Huish Lane / Willow Grove.

OCPC recognises and sympathises with the concerns expressed but has limited powers to address these directly. OCPC has undertaken to collate relevant information and evidence and to pursue improvements where possible with the traffic authority – Somerset County Council (SCC). OCPC is keen to work with SCC to identify a package of measures that address the issues raised in this report and that satisfy and support the SCC aims and objectives.

The key OCPC aim is to reduce harm, the likelihood of harm and the fear of harm for its residents and other road users in Washford. Harm is considered to include physical injury, noise and/or air pollution and danger or damage to property.

Background:

Washford is small community with a population of around 600 people¹. The community is adversely impacted and severed by the A39. The road is narrow in places and footway provision is poor. Where there are footways, these are narrow and do not provide continuous or joined up routes. Generally, provision for pedestrians and other vulnerable road users is poor.

There are a number of valued facilities in the village such as the school, the village hall, local shops and bus stops etc. There are a number of attractions within the village such as Cleeve Abbey and the West Somerset Railway. The A39 serves as a vital access route to these facilities and also serves as the main route to other major local attractions such as Butlins and Tropicquaria.

OCPC is also aware of a number of other developments planned for the local area, which if implemented may worsen traffic conditions.

OCPC Residents' survey:

To better understand the concerns and needs of local residents, OCPC undertook a survey of Washford households in Summer 2018. The purpose of the survey was primarily to seek views on the need for, and preferred location(s) of, a pedestrian crossing.

A leaflet [entitled "How safe do you feel crossing the A39 in Washford?"] was delivered to all households in Washford. A representative sample of local residents was also asked for their view on a series of specific questions. The responses to these questions, from 140 households, are included in the Table below.

Table: Summary of responses from OCPC Residents' survey

| Q1. How frequently do you need to cross the A39 in Washford? | | |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------|
| | No. of responses | Percentage |
| Every day | 61 | 46 |
| Every week | 47 | 35 |
| A few times each month | 18 | 13 |
| About once a month | 0 | 0 |
| Less than once a month | 8 | 6 |
| Q2. What is the main reason you generally need to cross the A39 in Washford? | | |
| To get to school | 20 | 11 |
| To use the Quarry Road bus stop(s) | 16 | 9 |
| To use the Shepherds Corner bus stop(s) | 44 | 25 |
| To use local facilities, e.g. shops | 52 | 29 |
| To walk the dog | 26 | 15 |
| To go to church | 1 | 1 |
| To get or use car | 4 | 2 |
| To use the Station Road bus stop(s) | 1 | 1 |
| To go to work / volunteer at WSR | 4 | 2 |
| To visit family or friends | 4 | 2 |
| To go for a walk / other | 6 | 3 |
| Q3. Are you usually accompanied by children when you cross the A39 in Washford? | | |
| Yes | 28 | 23 |
| No | 95 | 77 |
| Q4. Please give details of any difficulties crossing the A39 in the last six months | | |
| Amount of traffic | 69 | 29 |
| Poor visibility | 42 | 17 |
| Time taken to cross | 49 | 19 |
| Parking (e.g. o/s Hairdresser, Abbey Road) | 7 | 3 |
| Speed of traffic | 72 | 30 |
| Amount / number of lorries | 2 | 1 |
| No problems | 1 | 1 |
| Q5. Would you be in favour of a pedestrian crossing at either of these points? | | |
| At the Quarry Road junction | 69 | 38 |
| At the Willow Grove junction | 82 | 45 |
| In Station Road | 5 | 3 |
| No preference – would approve any site | 25 | 13 |
| Not in favour – at any site | 1 | 1 |
| Q6. Which of the following age groups are you in? | | |
| 18 – 25 years | 7 | 5 |
| 26 – 45 years | 33 | 21 |
| 46 – 65 years | 43 | 28 |
| 66 – 75 years | 54 | 35 |
| Over 75 years | 17 | 11 |

Key points from OCPC Residents' survey:

As can be seen from the summary of survey results:

- a) The majority of respondents need to cross the A39 daily or weekly. Many referred to using the car instead as it is "too difficult" on foot.
- b) Most people cross the road to use local facilities or bus stops.
- c) Most people crossing the road are unaccompanied by children possibly indicating that children are crossing unaccompanied (not included in the survey) or that parents consider it too dangerous, so use a car instead.
- d) The speed and amount of traffic are seen as the biggest difficulties and barriers to pedestrian (particularly children, elderly and disabled) movement.
- e) Many respondents acknowledged the difficulty in siting a formal pedestrian crossing but the majority favoured one near Willow Grove closely followed by one near Quarry Road.
- f) There were a considerable number of less able or elderly respondents.

Other issues:

A number of other road safety issues have been raised via the survey and/or from previous OCPC meetings. These are noted below together with some relevant background information that is currently available:

Traffic flows – SCC published 2016 traffic flow dataⁱⁱ shows that the Annual Average Daily Total flow on the A39 is around 11,000 vehicles (11,424 at Dragon Cross and 10,450 at Mamsey Bridge). The 2016 data shows an increase from 2015 of 8.2/8.3% and this is amongst the highest increase in the county. HGVs are assumed to average around 4.5% of the total flow. The A39 through Washford is a County Freight Route.

Collisions – Only those collisions that result in personal injury have to be reported to the Police. In the 5 calendar years from 2013 to 2017, there have been 8 reported injury collisions on the A39 within Washford.ⁱⁱⁱ 6 of these 8 collisions occurred at junctions – 2 at Abbey Road, 1 at Quarry Road and 3 at Huish Lane. Local residents have reported collisions that are not recorded and evidence of debris on the road suggests a number of damage-only collisions also take place.

Speed limits and speeding – The whole of Washford is subject to a 30mph speed limit. It is acknowledged that enforcement of the existing speed limit is the responsibility of Avon & Somerset Police. The village does have several natural 'traffic calming' features such as the two near 90° bends at both ends and the narrow section just west of Quarry Road.

The existing speed limit terminal signs are poorly placed and are regularly obstructed by foliage. Speed limit repeater signs are not permitted as there is a system of street lights along most of the length of the A39 subject to 30mph.

Road alignment, & width of A39 – This is not considered suitable for the current level of traffic. The needs of vehicles are prioritised over the needs of other road users, particularly pedestrians. It is acknowledged that there is no easy or even possible solution to this due to the proximity of buildings to the road.

A39 Severance – The A39 runs directly through the centre of the village and effectively cuts the community in two. The traffic flow and speed of traffic is seen as detrimental to the community and inhibits pedestrian movement. Crossing the road on foot or accessing the A39 by vehicle are seen as hazardous and difficult due partly to poor visibility.

Footways & footpaths – There are footways along short lengths of the A39 although where these exist they are narrow and difficult to use as they do not provide a continuous route. There are a number of public rights of way as shown on the Definitive Map that start, end or go through Washford. These too do not provide a continuous route along or across the A39.

Public Transport – There are a number of bus stops on both sides of the road throughout the village. Some of these have bus shelters. The locations of these or need for more stops is not seen as an issue. Visibility to and from the bus stops has been raised as a problem but the main cause for concern is the need for a safe route to/from the bus stops.

Street lighting – All street lighting Washford is the responsibility of SCC. OCPC are not a local lighting authority and have no desire to become one. In general, OCPC does not see the need for any additional lighting but would wish to see the existing lighting maintained.

Parking restrictions – There are some parking restrictions at bus stops and in Abbey Road. Requests have been made by residents for further restrictions in Abbey Road but these have been rejected by SCC. OCPC has accepted this position and does not wish to pursue further restrictions.

Traffic signs – There are a number of signs in the village to warn of hazards and to provide information to road users. These have been provided over time and many are often obscured by overgrown foliage. OCPC does not want to add to the general street 'clutter' that can be very urbanising but does want to see all the hazards well and consistently signed.

Tie in with SCC objectives:

OCPC is aware of the current SCC objectives as stated in the Future Transport Plan 2011 – 2026 (FTP)^{iv} and in Safe Roads in Somerset: Road Safety Strategy 2017 – 2026 (SRiS)^v. OCPC recognises the constraints on SCC resources but is keen to work with SCC to identify measures that address the issues raised in this report and that satisfy and support the FTP and SRiS aims and objectives.

Actions already in hand:

OCPC understands that the previously requested advisory 20mph signs complete with wig-wags will be erected shortly. OCPC welcomes this and looks forward to their implementation.

As part of the feedback provided to the proposed 40mph speed limit west of Bilbrook on the A39, OCPC has become aware of a planned review of the 18km stretch of the A39 from Dunster Steep to Williton. This review will look at the large number of collisions on that stretch and what measures may be possible to prevent further collisions and improve road safety. As Washford is within that stretch, it is hoped that issues raised in this report will also be considered as part of that process.

Proposals / actions recommended:

In light of the issues raised in this report and following the OCPC Residents' Survey, OCPC recommends that SCC consider and take action as follows:

Short term (this financial year):

- a) Implement advisory 20mph signs & wig-wags, then monitor effectiveness;
- b) Include issues raised in this report as part of the A39 Dunster Steep to Williton review;
- c) Commence dialogue between OCPC and SCC re: issues raised in this report and what is possible to address the issues raised.

Medium term (next financial year):

- a) Review existing traffic signs & road markings, and undertake improvements so that all are relevant and visible;
- b) Consider how pedestrian facilities can be improved – to include consideration of formal or informal crossing(s), improved facilities for wheelchair users and better connectivity of pedestrian routes;
- c) Review speed limit(s) in and on approaches to Washford. To include consideration of mandatory 20mph speed limit as exists on A39 in Porlock.

Long term (not currently recommended by OCPC but raised during Survey):

- a) Road realignment and/or junction improvements, e.g. possibility of a mini-roundabout at A39/Abbey Road junction;
- b) Improved footways and footpaths, including possibility of re-allocating existing road width to better provide for pedestrians;
- c) Traffic lights at narrowing west of Quarry Road (similar to Dunster).

Note: The need for Bypass was raised by many respondents but it is acknowledged that this is a strategic matter and not within the scope of this report as it is likely to affect other areas, not just Old Cleeve Parish.

Conclusions:

OCPC has considered the issues raised by residents and mentioned in this report and acknowledges that some of these are not easily addressed.

In particular, OCPC acknowledges the difficulty in siting a formal pedestrian crossing due to the restricted visibility, poor alignment and lack of continuous footways on both sides of the road. There is clearly a desire locally, which is supported by OCPC, for some sort of improvement to help pedestrians, particularly the young, elderly and less able.

Notwithstanding the obvious constraints, OCPC does not think that this should prevent action being taken to develop a package of measures to improve conditions for all road users but especially pedestrians.

OCPC requests that SCC consider the issues raised in this report and begin a dialogue with OCPC on how the issues highlighted can be addressed and/or improved.

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ⁱ www.citypopulation.de/php/uk-england-southwestengland.php?cityid=E34002935

ⁱⁱ <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/EasySiteWeb/GatewayLink.aspx?allId=127843>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.crashmap.co.uk>

^{iv} <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/EasySiteWeb/GatewayLink.aspx?allId=43041>

^v <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/EasySiteWeb/GatewayLink.aspx?allId=133388>