

Lacock Public Consultation – Pedestrian Safety - 30 September 2024

Apologies were received from:

Ruth Hopkinson – LFHIG Chair

Gemma Winslow on behalf of others at WCC Highways

James Bradshaw & others – National trust

Sune - Wadsworth

We heard from those most immediately affected by recent enforcement of unofficial 'stopping up' – the removal of planters and other objects from frontages which currently serve to protect pedestrians using these key premises: village shop, school and Red Lion.

There appears to have been no 'sensible solution' offered by Highways to replace these safety measures. The village shop in particular receives hundreds of customers and many mill around in front of the previously protected space outside.

It was felt that there was a lack of compromise and a "hardening" of the language being used within correspondence between premises and Wilts Highways; no-one present at the public meeting had enjoyed the benefit of any face-to-face consultation. Specifically, there is an issue with Highways failing to engage with the Village shop to make a visit to see the circumstances on the ground. There has also been emailed intimation that Highways would charge for their time in responding to emails when the shop owners are trying to resolve matters.

School children most afternoons stream across the road from school to the shop and back again. There is no longer any protection for them and no line of sight for oncoming traffic either to see the children or the children to see vehicles when they now emerge from between parked cars.

Visibility of pedestrians is an issue at School, Village shop and Red Lion. At the pub, there is an added line of sight issue with cars exiting the car park. Previously the planters created space in front of the pub allowing drivers to see between planters to observe oncoming traffic. There is now a risk that parked cars in front of the pub will obscure that visibility for those exiting the car park.

Anecdotally, since enforcement action, there have already been small mini-buses parking in the newly vacated space in front of the Red Lion.

It was noted that the WC library bus regularly obstructs the High Street by parking in the main carriageway for an hour without a driver.

It was further noted that there appears to be no legal definition of 'obstruction to the highway', nor is there a legal right to park.

School identifies drop-off and collection times as key when they need to know that the pupils are safe to reach their parents, no matter whether on foot, car or other transport. Currently, there is no safe barrier allowing children to congregate without the risk of cars

now attempting to park in the newly available space where the planters previously protected a walkway. Ultimately, if school had to evacuate for fire or other reasons, the children would not have a safe exit and teachers would need to guide them to exit over the playground wall and between parked vehicles. Equally, emergency services needing to attend would not have free access to the school.

Many concerns were re-stated regarding the safety of pedestrians and in particular children following the removal of the physical objects, placed on-street to enhance their safety, to provide "safe zones" for congregation and to maintain "sight lines" for vehicles. School Staff are now at increased hazard as they are physically standing in the street to provide a safe corridor for children to enter and leave the school premises.

It was noted that WC enforcement of "stopping up" remains inconsistent across the village, many properties with "streetside items" not having been communicated with by WC. It was further noted that WC is believed to have stopped up the road outside the Lacock Abbey entrance (planters either side of the 5-bar gate in consultation with NT and LPC); will WC be taking enforcement action against themselves? It was confirmed that Wilts Highways owns the planters, but NT manages them. Not known whether NT applied for S142 or similar, or whether Highways' involvement obviated need for S142.

Question: has request for removal of all A-boards been made? Sign of the Angel, Bakery, Quintessentially?

NT shop has, to date, not received any Highways correspondence.

Entry and exit from business and residential properties has now also become a concern, particularly when those properties are not fronted by a pavement, and which are now no longer protected from vehicles (passing traffic or parked vehicles). Access to those properties can now be obstructed by parked vehicles, with an increased pollution hazard (car fumes through open windows), and obstruction of daylight.

Question: why is the Carpenter's Arms hoarding in place if no work is being conducted? WC to be approached with a view to its removal until such time as the work actually commences. (Parish chair has requested an update on this – pending).

S142 and S96 options were explained. The latter is a village-wide approach which could be organized and administered by LPC. We need to understand enthusiasm for this approach from parishioners before further investigation by LPC. If we apply for S96, and if it were to be granted, there must be consistency of planters throughout the village and it was noted that NT has requested curatorial input if this were to go ahead to maintain the heritage of the village. NT has also intimated that funds to assist might be forthcoming.

There is a feeling that we had 'nice planters before' and now we have nothing for safety or aesthetics.

Following on from enforcement, a number of potential options have been suggested (via Highways and/or LHFIG) to improve pedestrian safety:

- Placement of Zig Zag lines (either White or Yellow) to stop vehicles parking in areas that need to be kept clear. The key concern with this proposal was its enforceability.
- Establishment of virtual pavements. (Application to next LHFIFG meeting has been made for mid-Oct 2024 agenda).
- Creation of actual pavements, or “raised tables”, especially noted for school-to-shop ‘corridor’ across High St.
- Zebra crossing between School and Village Shop, this would also generate no parking zones either side of the crossing via enforceable zigzags.
- Double yellow lines in short stretches, strategically placed might protect frontages of key premises from parked vehicles.
- Specific property S142 Applications for “planters” adjacent to their properties.
- LPC S96 Application for an LPC administered scheme / system of “planters” adjacent to the properties covered by the scheme.
- Application for further traffic restrictions to reduce traffic volume in the centre of the Village.
- Application for further traffic restrictions to reduce the size of vehicles in the centre of the Village (7.5T limit)

All of the above options would bring their own challenges, generating additional problems; they require funding and will take time to implement. It was noted that LHFIFG has no funding available until April 25.

It was felt that none of the 2-D lining options provides adequate pedestrian protection, but they might be explored for speed of implementation, cost and viability through LHFIFG. Virtual footpaths is already requested to be on the next LHFIFG agenda, mid Oct 2024 (to avoid waiting until next quarterly meeting in Jan 2025).

Zigzag crossing lines – in white or yellow were discussed and the example of St Patrick’s school in Corsham was given where implementation has not necessarily deterred people (often parents) from parking on them.

It was considered that any option which relies on virtual rather than physical infrastructure would be insufficient to ensure safety, and that options which only allow for physical infrastructure adjacent to properties (e.g. S142) would be of only marginal benefit.

The unanimous view was that re-establishment of the traditional, well-established, characterful and attractive street-side items was the quickest and most efficient way to restore pedestrian safety, and that we should all be actively campaigning to that end!

Suggestions for action:

Derek Walters, Unitary Councillor, to escalate to cabinet member Nick Holder at Wilts Council and Samantha Howell, Director of Transport, as well as member for Planning department.

Escalation to Sarah Gibson, MP only if no traction from Wilts Cabinet.

Escalation to national press remains a possibility.

It was noted that we have increasing numbers of tourists (NT currently provides data of 250,000p.a. through their pay-barrier).

The amount of through traffic is an issue – through Cantax Hill, West St and Hither Way as well as traffic along High St to access village facilities.

Suggestion to pedestrianise the High Street was mooted although this would come with other problems.

Pavements built throughout the village to provide safe pedestrian footways was raised.

A raised table crossing from school to the shop was suggested. This might be with or without a zebra crossing, but raised similar to the speed bumps on the other approaches to the new roundabout, and might be installed with similar bollards to protect pedestrians while waiting to cross.

All present expressed a willingness to continue to explore the options discussed.

It was noted that the matter of responsibility has been raised verbally and in writing with WC officers for any accidents that may involve pedestrians in the interim while the village waits for suitable safety measures to be implemented to replace the planters we had. This question will be reiterated to WC by Derek W.

Question: if an incident occurs, does HSE have jurisdiction over investigations?

It was noted that three months ago, the unofficial pedestrian protections in place were sufficient and workable for the village. Highways has failed to use discretion in its enforcement of removal of stopping up and has not viewed Lacock in context: it is a unique village, with unique circumstances and is a small parish with a huge number of visitors and tourists.

Parishioners wishing to apply individually for S142 should contact:
westernhighways@wiltshire.gov.uk