

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE & SPORT

TO:	TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT ADVISORY PANEL		
DATE:	24 MARCH 2009	AGENDA ITEM:	5
TITLE:	GRAVEL HILL - EXPERIMENTAL CLOSURE		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR T PAGE	PORTFOLIO:	PLANNING AND TRANSPORT
SERVICE:	TRANSPORT	WARDS:	THAMES
LEAD OFFICER:	DAVID MOORE	TEL:	0118 939 0676 (2676)
JOB TITLE:	ASSISTANT NETWORK MANAGER	E-MAIL:	David.moore2@reading.gov.uk

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 To seek approval to advertise an experimental closure of Gravel Hill.

1.2 Gravel Hill is a narrow, steep, semi-rural road linking Kidmore Road and St. Barnabas Rd. It is subject to a 3 tonne weight limit, a national rural speed limit and there is no street lighting. It is bounded by farmland and open space for the majority of its length and lined with hedgerows which fall within a Wildlife Heritage Area. It is too narrow for two-way traffic to pass and the hedgerows and banks are being eroded by vehicle over run and the informal passing places damaged by large vehicles. Due to surface water run off from the steep surrounding land the road also floods regularly necessitating costly pumping away of surface water, splash damage to properties and hedgerows and a significant ongoing maintenance cost for the Council's highway maintenance budget. Safety concerns over speeding vehicles and increasing vehicle numbers have been raised with the Council since the early 1990's, which, when considered with the maintenance costs have led to the recommendation that Gravel Hill is closed to vehicular traffic on an experimental basis. The proposed closure point will be at the western end of Gravel Hill at its junction with Kidmore Road (as shown on Drawing NM/DM/GH/01/09).

RECOMMENDED ACTION

2.1 That the Panel note the report.

2.2 That the following recommendations be made to Cabinet:

2.2.1 That in consultation with the Chair of the Advisory Panel, Lead Councillor for Planning and Transport and Ward Councillors the Head of Legal Services be authorised to make the appropriate experimental Traffic Regulation Order in

accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations.

2.2.2 If objections are received to the experimental Traffic Regulation Order, those objections be reported to the Advisory Panel at the appropriate time.

2.2.3 That the Head of Planning and Transport be authorised to modify or suspend provisions in the experimental order and that the experimental Traffic Regulation Order include a provision for this.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

The proposals are in line with current Transport and Planning Policy.

4. THE PROPOSAL

4.1 Gravel Hill is a narrow, semi rural road linking Kidmore Road to St. Barnabas Road. It is subject to a 3 tonne weight limit and a national rural speed limit and has no street lighting. It is bounded by farmland and open space for the majority of its length and lined with hedgerows, which fall within a Wildlife Heritage Area and are classified as 'important' as per the 1997 Hedgerow Regulations. It is too narrow for 2 - way traffic to pass and the hedgerows and banks are being eroded by vehicle over run and the informal passing places damaged by large vehicles. Due to surface water run off from the steep surrounding land the road also floods regularly necessitating costly pumping away of surface water, splash damage to properties and hedgerows and a significant ongoing maintenance cost for the Council's highway maintenance budget. Some limited kerbing work has been done, but the repairs required to bring the passing places and verges back to an acceptable standard will cost in the region of £100,000.

Summary of Works:

1. Additional drainage works to provide new gullies and piping. Any gullies will require additional emptying and pipe maintenance to ensure they are free flowing.
2. Construction of new passing places with associated drainage, kerbing and signing.
3. Repairs to areas of verge and banks that have been damaged by vehicles.
4. Additional kerbing works adjacent to properties to prevent further water splash damage.

4.2 Concerns have been raised by local residents about the speed of traffic in Gravel Hill, especially at the eastern end where the road is narrowest and lined by residential properties on both sides. Requests have also been made for a salt bin to be provided for residents to salt the road during icy conditions. There have been no injury accidents reported on Gravel Hill in the past 3 years, but requests to close Gravel Hill have been made for a number of years, and were considered by Traffic Management Sub Committee in September 1995 in view of the increase in traffic caused by the new developments at Shipnells Farm. It was decided at the time not to pursue a closure.

4.3 Traffic surveys were carried out in 1995 and 2000 to assess the increase in traffic resulting from the development and showed an increase of 64% in through traffic. Traffic surveys was carried out on 26th February 2009 and showed that a total of 248 vehicles travelled from west to east and 463 from east to west in a 12-hour period between 7am and 7pm.

4.4 In view of the ongoing flooding problem and damage to the hedgerows and verges in Gravel Hill and the lack of the necessary funding to carry out the required repairs, it is recommended that it is closed on an experimental basis, for a minimum of 6 months and a maximum of 18 months at its junction with Kidmore Road, as shown on Drawing NM/GH/EX/01/09. This will allow the effect of the closure on the surrounding road network to be assessed and the condition of the road monitored. Under the regulations, objections to the order can be accepted for a period of 6 months, after which the order can be modified, withdrawn or made permanent.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 To develop Reading as a Green City with a sustainable environment and economy at the heart of the Thames Valley.

To promote equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all.

5.2 Sustainable Community Strategy, Transport and Accessible Places section.

- To improve bus punctuality and reliability to improve non - car access to all areas.
- Promote cycling and walking for shorter local journeys to improve non - car access to district centres.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

6.1 Statutory consultation will be carried out in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996. Additional local consultation will be carried out as required.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The proposals for the movement and waiting restriction orders will be advertised under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and the Traffic Management Act 2004.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 This proposal will be funded from within existing Transport budgets.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 Minutes of the Traffic Management Sub Committee 21st September 1995