

ALDERMASTON RELIEF ROAD WORKING GROUP REPORT

OCTOBER 2009

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Executive Summary

A. Background

There is overwhelming agreement amongst residents of Aldermaston that concerns over the level of traffic, in particular HGVs, through the Parish need to be addressed.

In the Parish Plan, 74% prioritised traffic noise as a problem and nearly 70% responded yes to a Village Relief Road, although the majority would be willing to accept none or limited consequence (e.g. small levels of housing infill)

At a public meeting to discuss transport, flooding and gravel, support for addressing the traffic problems was agreed, but with agreement that further investigation should be carried out on other shorter term options, alternative options to the relief road, advantages and disadvantages of different options and an evaluation of the criteria for political support. A Working Group was established to progress this investigation, and this is the Report of that Working Group.

B. Objectives

- a) To identify and quantify the existing traffic problems;
- b) Identify the options for addressing the existing problems and the implications (including pros and cons) of those options including the Relief Road;
- c) To survey parishioners once these implications had been fully explored, considered and defined. This survey should seek confirmation of parishioners once the full implications had been clearly explained to them;
- d) To investigate the criteria for political support and inclusion in the local transport plan - and the extent to which the Relief Road qualifies and is eligible.

Objective c) has not yet been undertaken, but the working group recommends that this should proceed.

C. Conclusion

Traffic, in particular HGVs, is a major concern of parishioners, in particular the number and size of HGVs and lorries, traffic noise, impact of historic buildings and the safety of pedestrians and car users. HGV use is particularly high through the Parish.

Other initiatives outside of the Parish influence the traffic through Aldermaston (e.g. Crookham Hill Weight Restriction, proposed Integrated Waste Facility at Padworth Sidings, AWE expansion, and gravel haul routes). Long-term infrastructure proposals, as identified in the Local Transport Plan, will also influence traffic through the Aldermaston.

The potential for a Relief Road has high support but results in emotional debate when any impacts are considered. A Relief Road proposal may take many years to progress, without any guarantee of meeting current and potential changing government priorities. At the same time, without any more specific design proposals and detailed plans, there is no hope of moving this forward.

The government criteria are challenging for such a project, in particular demonstrating the impact on the economy, accessibility and integration. Clear benefits can be demonstrated on safety matters.

D: Recommendations

Mobilising Support from within and outside of the Parish

D.1. Work with neighbouring Councils (broader integration of transport) to influence the achievement of our objectives and understand the impact of decisions being taken elsewhere as well as any decisions we take.

D.2. Mobilising support will be a key factor in the success of both short term and long term measures. In particular, learning from other areas that have achieved short term and longer term aims through lobbying and support

Short-term measures

D.3. Short term exploration of width and weight restrictions is desirable to reduce the impact of traffic in the short term.

D.4. Continue to work with Richard Benyon MP and other parties to divert traffic away from Aldermaston Parish.

D.5. Encourage HGV traffic to use alternative routes such as M4 and A33/A34, through signage and working with freight bodies. (Other Parishes do use this approach)

Long-term measures

D.7. Relief Road/Bypass: Review the costings and options for a relief road or bypass and develop a plan to deliver the Finances and meet the challenges of the Government Criteria. This needs necessarily to be viewed as a long-term option because of the challenges and further research is required to confirm parishioner and government support.

D.8. Review options for the route of a Relief Road/Bypass to consider the parishioner views and concerns and to best address government criteria.

1. Background and Objectives of the working group

1.1. Background

- a) In April 2004 Aldermaston Parish Council (APC) produced a questionnaire that was distributed to all parishioners. This resulted in a high response rate (81%) and the results of this consultation process were then analysed and summarised in the Parish Plan 2005, and this in turn supported the implementation of specific Parish Plan working groups.
- b) Among the many questions, several are particularly relevant to this working group:
 - question 19: traffic noise was prioritised by 74% of respondents as a problem;
 - question 21: 68.2% responded “yes” to an Aldermaston Village relief road;
 - question 22: However, when asked about infill housing off Wasing Lane, the response was:
 - 20.1% would accept up to 25 houses;
 - 7.4% would accept up to 50 houses;
 - 4.2% would accept up to 100 houses;
 - but 33.6% would accept no consequences.
- c) Research and discussions by APC highlighted barriers to the development of a relief road, including the need for political support and the long time span to obtain funding and support. The South East England Regional Authority (SEERA) highlighted that a scheme would be unlikely to receive prioritisation or funding at the next possible application stage (2016 – 2018) for a number of reasons, including lack of specific design progress and that Aldermaston is not an area of regeneration, large regionally significant bottleneck, or an area of high housing or employment growth.
- d) At a public meeting of APC on 17th January 2008, the chairman reported that no real progress had been made on obtaining a relief road. It then emerged from the floor that there was some concern about the implications and possible impact of a relief road, especially those resulting from infill housing. It was confirmed that neither the MP, the District Councillor or APC had any real influence over the volume and quantity of such infill. The chairman then asked whether those present would prefer further investigation for pursuing the relief road project. It was agreed that further investigation was desirable and so the working group was formed.

1.2 Objectives of the working group

The brief of the working group was defined as:

- a) To identify and quantify the existing traffic problems;
- b) Identify the options for addressing the existing problems and the implications (including pros and cons) of those options, including the relief road;
- c) To survey parishioners once these implications had been fully explored, considered and defined. This survey should seek confirmation of parishioners once the full implications had been clearly explained to them;
- d) To investigate the criteria for political support and inclusion in the local transport plan, and the extent to which the relief road qualifies and is eligible.

2. Traffic problems

Appendix 1 illustrates the root cause of problems. There are both current problems and future developments that will have a further impact.

2.1. Current problems

- The volume of traffic travelling through Aldermaston, particularly HGVs, and arising from through traffic. In the Parish Plan survey, 85% of respondents complained about lorry/HGV traffic.
- Number and size of HGVs/lorries.
- Expansion of AWE and local industry and the consequent impact on traffic.
- The A340 is a road formerly upgraded to an A road, but without investment or improving the road.

2.2. Future – Medium Term 3 – 5 years

2.2.1. Crookham Hill

Weight restriction and the potential impact of traffic diverting through Aldermaston.

2.2.2. Padworth Sidings

Padworth Sidings site has been identified in the Berkshire Waste Local Plan as a 'Preferred Area' for the location of facilities designed to deal with the district's waste. As part of this development, independent consultants carried out detailed environmental and traffic assessments and the proposals incorporate measures intended to address potential impacts. These impacts however are not fully known or understood and any growth in traffic through to this site will have an impact on vehicle movements through Aldermaston Parish and surrounding areas.

2.2.3. Gravel extraction

A major cause of traffic congestion relates to the extensive gravel extraction activity within the parish that generates a large number of local daily movements by tipper lorries. The Parish Council believes that the percentage of HGVs using the A340 through the Parish is higher than on any other road in WBC, averaging almost 30% throughout the working day.

2.2.4. Expansion of AWE

AWE has a 10-year expansion programme, resulting in increased staff and contractors and increased traffic through to their sites. Any growth in AWE has a knock-on impact on transport through the parish and surrounding areas. AWE has a transport plan to encourage the use of public transport and to minimise the impact of such growth.

2.3. Future – Long Term 10 years +

Long-term traffic infrastructure proposals in Aldermaston and surrounding areas could have an impact on traffic volumes. The implementation of a relief road is likely to take in excess of 10 years and would need to consider other developments that could take place in the intervening time.

3. Options

A number of options were considered to address the problems. These are not mutually exclusive but a package of short and long term measures may be desirable.

A number of influences were considered including: Strategies /Plans of West Berkshire Council (WBC), Transport Strategy, Local Transport Plans, Planning Strategy, Strategic Flood assessment, Minerals and Waste Strategy and EU directives /strategy

3.1. Relief Road

Relief road is the term being used to describe options for an additional road in order to remove traffic, mainly HGVs, from the village of Aldermaston and in particular the main thoroughfare, 'The Street'.

Currently a number of options exist for a relief road

- a. Current option circulated with the parish plan - to build a new stretch of road to the west of the parish;
- b. Option via Colthrop;
- c. Option via Woolhampton / Midgham through Wasing Estate land.

Each will now be discussed in more detail.

3.1.1 Current option circulated with the parish plan

This option provides a short link running to the west of Aldermaston Village, joining the existing A340 from Malthouse Cottages / Old Mill to the top of Paices hill near Youngs Industrial estate.

Advantages:

1. Removal of all through traffic from The Street;
2. Historic houses will be preserved;
3. Additional / improved access roads;
4. Government policy relating to flood plains may postpone development in some areas;
5. Relatively short route and lower cost.

Disadvantages:

1. Village business may not survive, eg local shop;
2. Potential housing infill:
 - a. WBC is under high pressure for additional housing;
 - b. WBC cannot make any guarantee relating to infill of any description;
3. Mineral extraction:
 - a. We may no longer be able to defeat applications for mineral extraction;
 - b. Mineral extraction areas are likely to be Wasing Estate land to the west of the village, extending clockwise to include land up to the river Kennet near Aldermaston Wharf and both sides of A340 between Aldermaston Village and Aldermaston Wharf;
4. Land excavated may be used as infill (note the increased presence of Grundon and Veolia for waste recycling in area);
5. Transfers the problem from Aldermaston Village to the rest of the parish and surrounding parishes, and does not address concerns about traffic through Aldermaston Wharf;
6. Improved access = increased development;
7. Interferes with the natural flood plain, the consequences of which will be difficult to predict;
8. Increases traffic level for the remainder of the parish and all towns and villages on the A340 to Basingstoke;
9. Possible loss of the Wasing air strip.

3.1.2 Option via Colthrop

Advantages:

1. Links Industrial area to A339 / A34 / A4;

2. Reduces number of HGV movement through Aldermaston Village and parish. ;
3. Potentially benefits the parishes of:
 - a. Woolhampton;
 - b. Beenham;
 - c. Aldermaston;
 - d. Brimpton;
4. Allows further development of Colthrop, hence increased vehicular movements;
5. Increased employment;
6. Commercial growth;
7. Good existing transport links.

Disadvantages:

1. Increased traffic levels on A4;
2. Natural flood plains interfered with, consequences unknown;
3. Affects, depending on routes and destinations:
 - a. Thatcham / Newbury A4;
 - b. Thatcham / Woolhampton / Beenham / Theale;
4. Crookham Hill continues to be adversely affected and will get worse depending on future development;
5. Increased movements onto A339 to A34 and Basingstoke.

3.1.3 Option via Woolhampton / Midgham through Wasing land

Advantages:

As per option 3.1.1:

1. Removal of all traffic from The Street;
2. Historic houses will be preserved;
3. Additional / improved access roads;
4. Government policy relating to flood plains may postpone development in some areas.

Disadvantages:

1. Route through sensitive area;
2. As per Disadvantages in 3.1.1 and 3.1.2.

All options involve significant costs and will need to be supported by the evaluation of the criteria to meet the requirements. Also, funding will need to be secured. There is a potential for funding through the Community Infrastructure Levy, with the requirement to benefit local communities.

3.2. Weight/Width restrictions

The purposes of road weight and width restrictions are:

“Restriction prevents large vehicles from using inappropriate roads, routes and areas in order to:

1. Reduce danger to pedestrians and other road users;
2. Prevent damage to buildings, roads and bridges;
3. Preserve the character, amenity and environment of an area;
4. Reduce and manage congestion on the roads.¹

“Weight restrictions can be imposed for structural or for environmental reasons. It is legal control on a specified vehicle weight or width, mainly on lorries, on certain roads and routes”¹.

The Aldermaston case could argue on grounds 1,2 and 3 above, with particular emphasis on safety to other road users, especially given the emphasis towards modal transport schemes.

¹ Information supplied by Torbay council see annex A

The definitions above can be applied to many roads in our area, and it is not uncommon throughout the country to see these restrictions used to maintain the quality of rural areas and to increase safety for local road users. A local example is the B4000 to the west of Newbury.

An example for traffic routing, particularly HGVs, can be seen at the A34/A339 junction at Chieveley Services where Basingstoke is signposted via the A34 rather than the A339.

In the majority of case studies this is seldom used unless there is an acceptable diversion route identified and the diversion does not hinder local business or shops in the area. In the case of Aldermaston alternative routes already exist and are being improved, eg M4 junction 12 for through traffic and M4 junction 13. The exception should be for local business. However, further development of Tadley may increase HGV use, although there are other routes that could arguably be used.

3.2.1. Enforcement

Weight limits can be applied to roads where HGVs are causing environmental problems. Residents or Councillors may request the introduction of a weight limit, as in the case of Crookham Hill, Thatcham. On most roads, however, access by HGVs are always required for local deliveries, refuse vehicles and to service local business.

With any type of restriction this is only as effective as the enforcement measures in place. The following is published by the New Forest Council.

"Weight restrictions are also difficult to enforce and the installation of signs are no deterrent. This will rely on local people collecting photographic evidence until offenders realise this is high-risk route. Restrictions will not be used if there is no suitable alternative for displaced traffic.

"This is a matter for the Police. However, the Police have limited resources to enforce this type of restriction (especially environmental restrictions). Restrictions with "except for access" exemption clauses covering a large area can be difficult to enforce. However these exemptions are needed to permit HGV access to local shops, businesses, and residential properties for deliveries/removals etc. For this reason, physical measures should also be considered but this is often not possible. Restrictions will not be used if there is no suitable alternative route for the displaced traffic"²

3.2.2. Safety

During the last decade a number of government and EU policies and white papers have been published. The emphasis is on modal transport and safety. The diverse age range of the parish population may help the safety argument, the key issues being:

- Two local schools;
- Use of the recreational ground;
- Pickup points for catchment schools, necessitating young children crossing busy roads and buses stopping;
- Crossing dangers for the mature population;
- The existence of a footpath would also help this argument.

These give rise to questions about the suitability of the road for the type of traffic now using it. A good safety argument developed in that context could provide pressure towards the potential for road reclassification of the A340 to a B road, with restrictions being imposed, since alternative routes have already been discussed, one of the key issues being the safety of school children and other pedestrians.

² New forest council web site

3.3. Reclassification of the road (back to B road)

Reclassification could reduce the level of traffic, if the road was not a primary road or route. To clarify this issue the following explanation of highway classifications and use was sought from the Minister for Transport. The full response is contained in Appendix 3.

In summary the A340 is part of:

- **The Classified Principal Road Network.** A second-tier road system of importance, acting as regional and district distributor routes and complementing the trunk road network. The network is almost entirely made up of 37,300 kilometres of "A" class roads, which are coloured red on road atlases unless they are part of the Primary Route Network where they are coloured green. It also includes about 45 kilometres of local authority motorway ("M" roads) that give access to conurbations. Local highway authorities are responsible for the maintenance of the Principal Road Network.

Reclassification of the A340 to B road is not likely due to the A340 being the direct access route to a number of major industry sites indicated on WBC's Freight Route Plan.

3.4. SatNav negotiations

Amending Satellite Navigation systems to take people on alternative routes could divert traffic away from Aldermaston. This is being actively looked at by Richard Benyon MP and some of his colleagues. This is possible, but is not a simple matter, as this quote from Mr Benyon illustrates:

"I have been working with my neighbouring MP for North West Hampshire, Sir George Young, in attempting to get a number of local roads removed from satellite navigation routing. We have found that it is, in theory, possible - but in effect, more difficult.

However, the good news is that this issue has now become much higher up the agenda with communities that have become 'rat runs' campaigning effectively across the country for changes to satnav data. I can promise you that this will continue to be an issue that I will persist with and hope to provide you with some solid good news in the future.

Aldermaston can join such a campaign but I fear regular drivers will ignore such information should they know the route already".

3.5. Speed Limits and Traffic Calming Measures

The potential to reduce the speed limit through the parish, eg to 20 mph, would slow the traffic going through the village. Work to explore the potential for speed limit restrictions or traffic calming measures has been undertaken, but this is not conclusive. Whilst slowing traffic could act as a deterrent and help with safety, this will not help with wider objectives of improving access and flow. Advice suggests that scheme effectiveness in terms of vehicle speeds and accident reduction may need to be weighed against unwanted effects such as visual intrusion. Where traffic calming is proposed for villages, residents should be involved in the development of the scheme. They should be informed that for measures to be effective, a high visual impact is likely to be needed. Research by the Department of Transport indicates that the lack of alternative routes for the trunk road villages meant that there was no change in the overall traffic flow levels, or in the proportion of heavy vehicles, after traffic calming scheme installation.

3.6. Freight Route

There are two aspects to freight routes: Freight Link and Freight Route Network.

Freight Link: This term refers to the railway freight network.

There are several privately funded freight rail links being reinstated throughout the country. Potentially it removes the large size HGVs and replaces them with smaller more agile goods transport to destinations in urban areas. A local example of this is the Foster Yeoman freight aggregate trains from Westbury to Wigmore Lane distribution depot in Theale.

Freight Route: the A340 is not designated as a freight route.

West Berkshire undertook a Freight Route Network Consultation in 2007, to which APC provided input and concerns, including that HGVs using the A340 through the parish is higher than any other road in WBC, averaging almost 30% throughout the working day. This has confirmed the strategic routes for long-distance HGV traffic being M3/A303/A34/A33/M4. Comments made by APC have been incorporated on HGV movements related to local gravel routes. This demonstrates the importance of providing input to such consultations.

The size of lorries makes a considerable difference. Estimates are that the 11.5 tonne axle weight of 40-tonne lorries causes about 45% more road wear than the 10.5 tonne drive axle weight of 38-tonne vehicles, assuming in both cases that the axles are fully laden.

3.6. Discussions with AWE and local industry

Discussions with AWE on encouraging alternative transport options could reduce transport levels.

At AWE's peak there were an estimated 9,000 employees. This is now much reduced to around 4500 staff and over 2000 contractors, but the move has been away from mass transport to individual transport.

AWE has a Transport Strategy, with the support of a Manager, working to recommend public transport and to improve traffic flows locally.

3.7 SUMMARY OF OPTIONS

Options	Advantages	Disadvantages
Relief Road (Parish Plan Option)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Removal of all through traffic from the street. 2. Preservation of historic houses. 3. Additional / improved access roads. 4. Government policy relating to flood planes may postpone development in some areas. 5. Relatively short route and lower cost. 6. Improved safety of pedestrians and potential reduction in accidents. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Village business may not survive eg local shop. 2. Improved access = increased development, with the potential for housing infill: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) WBC is under high pressure for additional housing. b) WBC cannot make any guarantee relating to infill of any description. 3. Mineral extraction: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) We may no longer be able to defeat applications for mineral extraction. b) Mineral extraction areas are likely to be Wasing land to the west of the village extending clockwise to include land up to the river Kennet near the wharf and both sides of A340 between Aldermaston village and the Wharf. 4. Increases traffic level for remainder of parish and all towns and villages on A340 to Basingstoke and does not address concerns about traffic through Aldermaston Wharf. 5. Interferes with natural flood plane. The consequences of which will be difficult to predict. 6. Possible loss of air strip.
Relief Road (wider scheme via Colthrop or Woolhampton)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Links Industrial area to Trunk Road Network via A339 / A34 / A4. 2. Reduces number of HGV movement through Aldermaston village and parish. 3. Potentially benefits the parishes of Woolhampton, Beenham, Aldermaston and Brimpton. 4. Allows further development of Colthrop hence increased vehicular movements. 5. Increased employment. 6. Commercial growth. 7. Good existing transport links to Trunk network. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased cost. 2. Increased traffic levels on A4. 3. Natural Flood planes interfered with, consequences unknown. 4. Affects depending on routes and destinations: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Thatcham / Newbury A4; b) Thatcham / Woolhampton / Beenham / Theale. 5. Crookham Hill continues to be adversely affected and will get worse depending on future development. 6. New Greenham Park, Newbury generates increased movements onto the A4 towards M4 J12. 7. Increased movements onto A339 to A34 and Basingstoke. Note however the A339 is a designated Trunk road. 8. Resistance to any broader scheme from others impacted.

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Weight/Width Restrictions	<p>“Weight restrictions can be imposed for structural or for environmental reasons. It is legal control on a specified vehicle weight or width, mainly on lorries, on certain roads and routes”:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reduce danger to pedestrians and other road users. 2. Prevent damage to buildings, roads and bridges. 3. Preserve the character, amenity and environment of an area. 4. Reduce and manage congestion on the roads. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. May deter through traffic but retains the problems of local HGVs. 2. Challenge of such restrictions on an A road. 3. Political will.
Speed Limits and Traffic Calming	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Slow the traffic going through the Parish (but research suggests not a significant impact). 2. Improve safety. 3. Varied cost dependent on the scheme. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does not improve traffic flow levels according to research (in particular if no alternative routes). 2. Unwanted affects of traffic calming including visual intrusion. Schemes are only successful with such high visual intrusion. 3. Difficult to enforce.
SatNav	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Political support. 2. Simple once implemented. 3. Increased use and reliance on SatNav would take through traffic on alternative routes. 4. Low cost. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does not impact local traffic. 2. Can be ignored by HGVs and other vehicles used to the Aldermaston route. 3. Not simple to implement.
Freight Routes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reduction of HGVs, which is a major impact on the local area. 2. Has been successful in other areas. 3. Cost. 4. Impact on environment and safety of reduced HGVs. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Political will and support from other Parishes. 2. HGVs following the route (enforcement).

4. Criteria for political support

An initial assessment has been conducted of the following criteria to be considered in any proposals:

- Environment – including protecting the built and natural environment, improving local air quality, reducing greenhouse gases, heritage, and water;
- Safety – including reducing accidents, improving security;
- Economy – including sustainable economy, VFM, reliability;
- Accessibility – including access to facilities for those without a car;
- Integration – including improve transport interchange, land-use, government policies.

The relief road may not be able to proceed unless the criteria are satisfied, and these criteria would be difficult to satisfy unless the route dealt with wider transport integrated issues.

The assessment indicates that meeting the criteria for political support is challenging. Some aspects of the criteria may be addressed depending on the route, including safety. Alternative routes for the relief road could have different impacts, for example the initial proposed route would not help with integration of the transport interchange but could help flow through Aldermaston Village, but to the detriment of other parts of Aldermaston and Wasing parishes.

The schedule below should be read in conjunction with the evaluation of policies at Appendix 4.

Report Of Aldermaston Relief Road Working Group

Analysis of Criteria for Political Support

Options	Relief Road (a)	Relief Road (b)	Relief Road (c)	Width/weight restrictions
Criteria				
Environment	2 Will improve the heritage of Aldermaston Village, however will not necessarily protect the natural environment. Current design will still impact Aldermaston Wharf and other parts of the parish.	2 Will improve the heritage of Aldermaston Village and Aldermaston Wharf. However, will still have environmental impact and need to consider impact on flood plains.	2 Will improve the heritage of Aldermaston Village and Aldermaston Wharf. However, will still have environmental impact and need to consider impact on flood plains. Also, impact on sensitive environment.	1/2 May potentially reduce traffic through the parish, which will help the local environment, without impacting on the wider environment. However, depends on this being both feasible and enforced.
Safety	1 High level of accidents along the A340 but not clear that a relief road would address this (dependent on the route)	1/2 Depends on the link and measures to reduce safety. May help in relation to removing a safety black spot if traffic is diverted away.	2 Depends on the link and measures to reduce safety. May help in relation to removing a safety black spot if traffic is diverted away. However, may have potential impact in other areas.	1 Could reduce level of accidents on the A340 by diverting HGV traffic.
Economy	2 Potential for industry growth but limited	1 Potential for industry growth in relation to Colthrop.	2	3 No impact on local economy.
Accessibility	2/3 Will not increase access for those without a car without the necessary improvements in public transport links. Dependent on links to Theale and Aldermaston stations and other investment.	2 Potential to increase access for those without a car through the link to Colthrop.	2/3 May improve accessibility through to major road network but no evidence that this could increase access for those without a car.	3 No impact.
Integration	2/3 Will provide improved speed through the village but will retain problems of transport through the rest of the parish.	1/2 Potential for a more fully integrated and flow of transport.	1/2 Potential for a more fully integrated and flow of transport.	3 No impact.

Index to evaluation of criteria

1. Meets requirements
2. Questionable
3. Does not meet requirements

5. Recommendations and Next Steps

The following are the key recommendation of the Working Group.

5.1. Working with neighbouring Councils

Through the research undertaken, it became clear that working with a wider group of local councils is necessary to influence the achievement of our objectives and understand the impact of decisions being taken elsewhere as well as any decisions we take.

5.2. Width and weight restrictions

A short-term exploration of width and weight restrictions is desirable. Whilst a relief road may be a suitable long-term solution, interim measures need to take place to reduce the impact of increasing transport in the intervening time.

5.3. SatNav

Continue to work with Richard Benyon MP and other parties to divert traffic away from Aldermaston Parish.

5.4. Relief Road/Bypass

Review the costings and options for a relief road or bypass and develop a plan to deliver the finances and meet the challenges of the Government criteria (see also Appendix 4 on Policies). This needs necessarily to be viewed as a long-term option because of the challenges, and further research is required to confirm parishioner and government support.

Review funding options, in particular the Community Infrastructure Levy, through demonstration of the criteria of benefit to the communities, in particular working with the cross-border working group.

5.5. Mobilising support

This will be a key factor in the success of both short-term and long-term measures. In particular, the working group would be interested in how other areas have achieved short term and longer term aims through lobbying and support

5.6 Survey to confirm parishioners' views

- a) The survey should firstly explain the implications of each option as clearly as possible;
- b) In structuring the questions, the likely implications should be linked to each question, far more directly than the original questionnaire;
- c) Apart from the implications of Infill, others should be included in the questionnaire including both the view across the Kennet Valley from Wasing Park, and the view of the village from Wasing Lane, which were rated as "important" (question 17 of the first questionnaire).
- d) To ensure credibility, it is assumed that the new survey should address all parishioners as before.
- e) Although the new survey will focus on specific issues, it should be performed in the same way as the original one. Surveys should be delivered by volunteers and they should make every effort to talk to each householder in order to ensure that its importance is understood and therefore to maximise the response rate and the quality of the feedback obtained.
- f) The original questionnaire demonstrated no significant regional differences in response to the question "Do you think that Aldermaston needs a Relief Road that would divert the A340 around the village?" (Parish 68% responded Yes, Village 75% responded yes, Wharf 79% responded yes). There is more variation when looking at the consequences that those responding are willing to consider. The results of the new survey should support analysis and understanding of differences in views.
- g) A budget for this survey needs to be calculated and funding agreed.

Notes on Conservation Areas

Definition: Conservation Areas are “areas in which the historical origins and relationships between the various elements create a sense of place that is worth maintaining.” New development must not adversely affect the significance of the conservation area and its distinctive character.

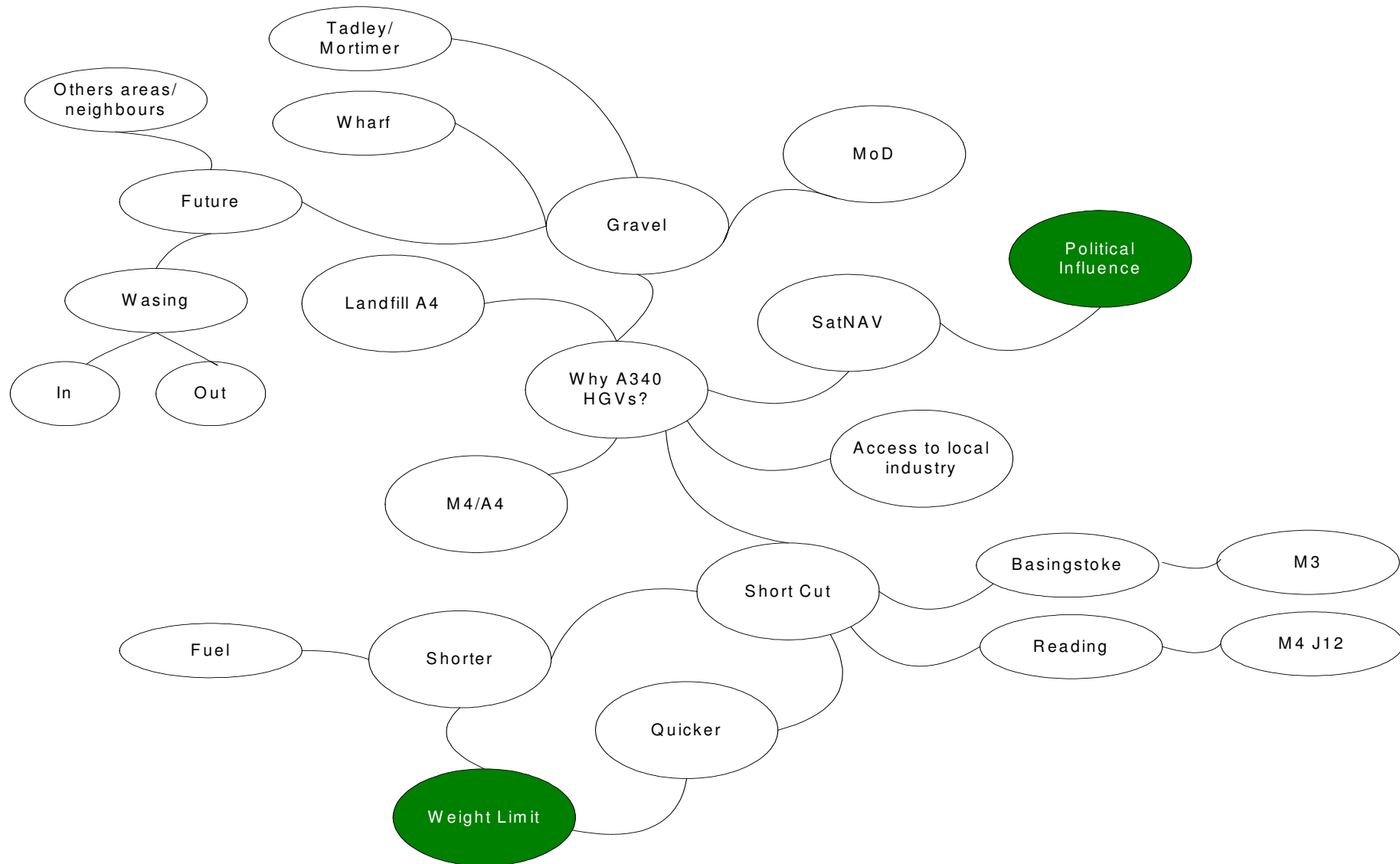
We need to clarify:

1. Whether the Conservation Area is tightly bounded or can include some surrounding views and countryside. The initial feedback is that it is tightly bound, so infill just outside this boundary would not be affected by the Conservation Area status of the village.
2. In the Parish Plan questionnaire (question 17), respondents rated the various features of the parish which should be protected. Both the view across the Kennet Valley from Wasing Park, and the view of the village from Wasing Lane, were rated as “important”.

Appendix 1: Evaluation of Problems (Part a)



Appendix 1: Evaluation of Problems (Part b): Analysis of the reasons for the A340 being used for HGVs



Appendix 2 Highways Weight Limits

Weight restrictions can be imposed for structural or for environmental reasons. It is legal control on a specified vehicle weight or width, mainly on lorries, on certain roads and routes.

For more information:

Email: highways@torbay.gov.uk

Telephone: 01803 207740

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The restriction prevents large vehicles from using inappropriate roads, routes and areas in order to:

- Reduce danger to pedestrians and other road users;
- Prevent damage to buildings, roads and bridges;
- Preserve the character, amenity and environment of an area;
- Reduce and manage congestion on the roads;
- Procedures for implementation.

Restrictions are subject to a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) and the associated procedures

Regulatory signs are erected on site to give effect to the TRO and to assist the police in carrying out its enforcement

This is typical of the information to be found on Council web sites across the country, which can be traced back to government policy. It is believed that WBC do not publish such details.

Appendix 3: Feedback on classification of Highways

In 1919 the Ministry of Transport was established and empowered to classify highways. It decided to introduce a classification system of Class I roads (more important roads connecting large centres of population, and of outstanding importance from the point of view of through traffic), and Class II roads (roads forming important links between Class I roads and smaller centres of population). By 1923, following consultation with local authorities and motoring organisations, a definitive list of proposed road numbers had been drawn up and Class I roads were given "A" numbers and Class II roads were given "B" numbers. Class III roads were introduced in 1946 and defined as those which had more than local interest but did not justify inclusion in any other group. No official numbers were allocated to these roads, but some were given "C" numbers by the highway authorities.

The administration of the highway system continues to be based on its function and is organised into the following categories:

- ***The Trunk Road Network***

This was created initially by the Trunk Roads Acts of 1936 and 1946 and the Special Roads Act 1949. This is a system of strategic routes of national importance that cater for the through movement of long distance traffic. Maintenance of the Trunk Road Network lies with the Secretary of State for Transport and is managed by the Highways Agency in England, the National Assembly of Wales in Wales and the Scottish Executive in Scotland. The network in Great Britain now comprises:

- about 3,400 kilometres of motorway in 2003 - "M" roads or those sections of trunk roads developed to motorway standards and where the letter "M" is added to that part of the road e.g. A1(M) - and all are coloured blue on road atlases;
- about 9,300 kilometres of "A" class roads - all trunk "A" roads are coloured green on road atlases.

- ***The Primary Route Network***

The most important roads that are not motorways - ie all (non-motorway) trunk roads and the most important principal roads. These roads provide, in the opinion of the Secretary of State, the most satisfactory route for through traffic between places of traffic importance. This definition is in the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2002 (Regulation 4). These roads are coloured red (with yellow numbering) on road atlases.

- ***The Classified Principal Road Network***

A second-tier road system of importance, acting as regional and district distributor routes and complementing the trunk road network. The network is almost entirely made up of 37,300 kilometres of "A" class roads, which are coloured red on road atlases unless they are part of the Primary Route Network where they are green. It also includes about 45 kilometres of local authority motorway ("M" roads) that give access to conurbations. Local highway authorities are responsible for the maintenance of the Principal Road Network.

- ***The Classified Non-Principal Road Network***

A subsidiary system of roads of local importance giving access to industrial, commercial and residential sectors (usually "B" or "C" roads but sometimes they have no number).

- ***The Unclassified Road Network***

A system of feeder roads comprising minor rural roads and minor urban roads.

You ask what criteria Trunk roads, A, B and C roads must meet and whether there are minimum standards that should apply. The main emphasis on deciding a road's classification is the function of the road rather than the volume of traffic it carries, or its standard of condition. The road network has been developed and expanded over many years, and while new roads can be built to modern design standards based on expected traffic flows, there are environmental and other constraints on what can be done to improve existing roads. The Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) does specify design standards for national trunk road schemes, however some departures from these standards are allowed. The DMRB standards do not extend to the local highway authority roads, but many authorities do make use of them as guidance. However, they are under no legal obligation to do so.

You have also asked what criteria HGV routes must meet and how they are defined. There is actually no formal classification of "HGV route", however highway authorities can and often do sign advisory routes for goods vehicles using special white on black signs prescribed in the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2002 (diagrams 2805, 2806 and 2806.1). On motorways, diagrams 2929 and 2929.1 are used. Black panels may also be used on white or green advance direction signs. Guidance on designating advisory lorry routes can be found in section 3.4 in Local Transport Note 1/94, published by the Stationery Office (ISBN 0 11 551610 7).

Heavy goods vehicles are actually permitted to use any road - subject to any height, width or weight restrictions that the highway authority might have imposed on a road. The Primary Route Network (PRN) does however specifically exist to aid navigation of long distance traffic and as such often acts as the preferred conduit for Heavy Goods Vehicles. The PRN has been selected by the Secretary of State for Transport, after consultation with the Local Highway Authority, as it provides the most satisfactory route for through traffic between places of traffic importance. In order to ensure its status as a conduit for HGV traffic, the PRN must remain open to all classes of traffic without restriction.

You have also enquired about weight, width and speed restrictions. Local authorities have been given powers under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 to make traffic regulation orders (TROs) which can, amongst other things, restrict the width, weight or speed of vehicles, either generally or at specified times. These powers can be used to restrict certain actions on the highway either because of the risk of damage to the road, neighbouring buildings, or on environmental or safety grounds. The decision whether or not to make a TRO is entirely a matter for the local highway authority. In exercising its powers, it has a statutory duty to have regard to the need to provide for the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of traffic. As mentioned previously, such a TRO would not be appropriate on the PRN as it has to remain open to all classes of traffic without restriction.

You have asked whether there is a requirement to periodically re-assess highways categorisation and trunk roads. The network is not re-assessed as a matter of routine, however sections of the network might occasionally be re-assessed to take account of the changing nature. For example a local authority will re-assess the classification of wider sections of the road network from time to time in connection with the opening of a new road scheme or the introduction of new traffic management measures (pedestrianisation, one way schemes etc.). Similarly, it is occasionally necessary to reconsider the PRN status of a particular road, usually as a result of the construction of a new road or the upgrade of an alternative route.

The trunk road network was re-assessed as recently as 1998-1999 when it was decided to transfer the less nationally important trunk roads (de-trunking) to local highway authorities. De-trunking allows the Highways Agency to concentrate on the operation of a core network of nationally important routes, whilst enabling local authorities to consider their own priorities for the improvement of non-core routes. The aim has been to transfer some 3,200 km (30%) of the trunk road network (as it was in April 1999) to local authorities in a phased programme, and to date 80% of this programme is now complete.

You have also asked how suitable diversionary routes are chosen in the event of a trunk road closure. I have asked the Highways Agency to comment on this particular query, and will forward any advice to you when I receive it.

Finally you have asked who has responsibility for the assessment and implementation of standards or criteria. The Department for Transport is responsible for all trunk roads (through the Highways Agency), and also has responsibility for approving any changes to the Primary Route Network. The relevant local authority is the highway authority for all classified principal, classified non-principal and unclassified public roads.

Appendix 4: Evaluation of Government Policies

These are derived from Government policy, White Papers, Acts of Parliament and EU legislation.

- 1997 Road Traffic Act placed a duty on principal councils, such as WBC, to specify a **reduction** in levels of road traffic in their area, or a reduction in the rate of growth in the levels of such traffic by 2016;
 - As such there needs to be measures for reduction in the parish of Aldermaston, which stretches beyond The Street. Hence a relief road may not be close to Aldermaston Village but may have the same effect.
- A government white paper was published in 2000 setting detailed targets for a modal shift to rail, bus, cycling and walking;
 - The cycle and walkways now being installed are proof of this policy, however more could be undertaken with an integrated road-rail policy.
- Industry within the area needs to encourage this shift to other forms of transport. Note that AWE is pursuing such policies but others show no signs;
 - One of the biggest obstacles may be safety along the A340, especially for cyclists.
- The Transport Act 2000 pt IV promotes the use of railways; Colthrop is ideally placed to take advantage of this even although the former sidings on the Ministry of Defence site have been removed;
 - However there is no evidence from WBC to suggest that this is a priority, with the exception of a new curve at Southcote Junction in Reading, where the Reading-Newbury and Reading-Basingstoke railway lines diverge, thus giving a possible, but lengthy, rail connection between Newbury and Basingstoke. Freight is ignored, and given the proximity of Colthrop to the railway, its potential for distribution greater use is not addressed.
- The use of rail is again identified in Government publication PPG3 where new developments should not be constructed on the assumption that the car will be the only means of transport;
 - Hence new developments in an area should not be built without alternative means of transport. This is vital for the parish as a whole and could prevent further development at least until this is addressed. However this could be dangerous because the provision of alternative transport means this will reduce the effectiveness in preventing further development. It must be treated as a double-edged sword.
- European Transport Policy for 2010. Time to Decide emphasises a shift to rail and waterways;
 - The Colthrop location has the potential to take advantage of such means of transportation for goods transportation which could potentially reduce incoming deliveries to the distribution centres. However, this is unlikely to be a viable option in view of the width restrictions of locks and the disproportional scale of infrastructure and development required.
 - The EU white paper contains key aspects one of which being to 'improve road safety' and prevent congestion. Improved safety is echoed in a CM6234.
 - The A4 and A340 are dangerous roads, where safety is not good for users with alternative transport ie cyclists, pedestrians. The A340 is used by:
 - Schools to reach recreation grounds;
 - Parents and children in order to get to school;
 - Children have to cross the A340 to board school busses;
 - School busses which have to stop.
- Government / EU policy
 - Especially in relation to Safety and the Environment.
 - Should these policies deliver then road traffic should be reduced by 2016.

Appendix 5: Working Group Members

The working group was made up of the following volunteers from within the parish:

- Jane Boyes
- Rosie Braithwaite (initial meeting and input)
- Ian Davis - member of Parish Plan Working Group relating to environment
- Karen Dignan - member of Parish Plan Working Group relating to transport
- Neil Dignan
- Carla Kayser-Booth - Aldermaston Parish Councillor
- Peter Oldridge – member of Parish Plan Working Group relating to Planning and Environment
- Mat Powell (initial input only)
- Brian Taylor
- Angela Shirt

Two members of the working group could not continue after the early stages for personal reasons but their valuable input in the early stages still contributed to the report.