



Committee report

Committee	CABINET
Date	14 JANUARY 2021
Title	PETITION FOR TRAFFIC LIGHTS AT FOREST ROAD / WHITEHOUSE ROAD
Report of	CABINET MEMBER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Following a fatal traffic collision in April 2019 at the junction of Forest Road (A3054) and Whitehouse Road, Newport, a petition was received by the council to 'prevent further accidents on Forest Road'. The petition, which generated 6,946 signatures, requested the installation of a traffic lights at the junction.
2. This report reviews the petition request and informs the general circumstances of the collision and the potential improvement options to the junction following a full technical assessment.

BACKGROUND

3. On 14 April 2019 a three-vehicle collision sadly resulted in the death of a passenger and three others sustained serious injuries.
4. Vehicle 1 (car) a mini, failed to give way at the junction on Whitehouse Road and collided with the near-side of Vehicle 2 (bus) on Forest Road, the bus swerved to avoid the impact, however the two vehicles still collided, and the bus crossed into the opposing carriageway where a head on collision with Vehicle 3 (Fiat) occurred.
5. It should be noted that the subsequent police investigation did not apportion any blame to the junction layout, the driver of Vehicle 1 was prosecuted after admitting to causing the collision and was subsequently convicted.
6. The junction under consideration is the A3054 Forest Road and Whitehouse Road, Newport. The junction is a standard rural crossroads with the main road running approximately east/west and the side roads north/south. All the roads in question are subject to the national speed limit. A map of the junction can be found at Appendix 1. A detailed technical investigation has been carried out by Island Roads and a report is provided in Appendix 2.
7. The A3054 is the main strategic route from Newport to the West Wight and carries in the region of 10,000 vehicles per day. It is on a regular local bus route and carries

most of the large goods vehicles that travel between Newport and the West Wight. Advance direction signs are provided on approach to the junction on the main road.

8. The two side roads are minor rural local access roads. Whitehouse Road provides a link towards Porchfield, Gurnard and Cowes and carries approximately 2,000 vehicles per day. A timber frame manufacturing facility on Colemans Lane means that a reasonable number of large vehicles use this junction. Betty Haunt Lane, a local access road, is subject to a 6ft 6ins width restriction and is the junction arm with the lowest volume of traffic, with approximately 1,000 vehicles per day using the road.
9. Including this incident, there have been seven recorded injury collisions at this junction in the last five years, one fatal, three serious and three slights. The ten-year average for collisions at this junction is 1.28 collisions per year. Over the most recent five years the rate is slightly higher at 1.4 per year.
10. Six of the seven collisions involved vehicles exiting Whitehouse Road on to Forest Road. One involved a vehicle turning right across the path of a vehicle travelling east on Forest Road. Six of the seven of collisions occurred on dry roads in fine weather conditions and in daylight. Two of the collisions were recorded as a failure to give way and two collisions were recorded as starting/moving off.
11. The time of day and time of year when most of the collisions have occurred indicate that the position of the sun may have influenced the driver's interpretation of the junction. Between 11am and 3pm in March, April and May, the sun will be almost directly opposite drivers exiting Whitehouse Road. The sun's altitude increases from 16 degrees from the horizon in January to 60 degrees at the end of May.
12. All approaches to the junction are subject to the national speed limit and historic data indicates average vehicle speeds on approach are below the posted speed. During the time this report was written, it was not possible to undertake meaningful surveys as the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in traffic flows that are not representative of the normal situation. The average speeds recorded approaching the junction on Whitehouse Road and Betty Haunt Lane are below 40 mph.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

13. Any improvement to road safety will positively impact on the corporate objective of protecting our community by ensuring an effective, resilient and safe public highway.

SERVICE/DECISION SPECIFIC PARAGRAPH

14. The Highways Contract with Island Roads Services Limited requires the delivery of highway services to maintain all the assets. Any additions or amendments to the highway network require additional payments from the Isle of Wight Council for design and implementation and funding to cover future maintenance of the additions/amendments.
15. The service provider uses a qualified highway engineer to assess and prioritise each potential amendment. Each recommendation is prioritised in terms of safety and recorded on the Highways Safety and Improvement Register.
16. The junction of Forest Road (A3054) and Whitehouse Road, Newport, is currently prioritised in the top ten potential safety schemes on the Highways Safety and Improvement Register.

CONSULTATION

17. No consultation was required for this report. Consultation will be considered once the approved option has been designed and will also take place for any potential speed limit changes.

FINANCIAL / BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

18. Safety improvements to the highway are not funded through the Highways PFI contract and therefore any works associated the junction improvement will need to be funded from the Isle of Wight highways capital budget or through grant funding.
19. The 2021 capital bid submission provides funding for the realignment of the hedge as recommended in this report.

CARBON EMISSIONS

20. The recommendation will have no impact on the council's Carbon Management Plan (CMP) since emissions from general traffic are not included in the scope of the CMP. In relation to Island-wide carbon emissions, total distance travelled by vehicles and the associated carbon emissions are not expected to change. It is recognised that any increase in stationary traffic at the junction may have an impact on carbon emissions; however, the volume of stationary traffic has not been modelled and this impact cannot therefore be quantified.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

21. The council is under a duty pursuant to Section 16 of the Traffic Management Act 2004 to manage its road network with a view to achieving, so far as may be reasonably practicable having regard to its other obligations, policies and objectives, the following objectives—
 - a. Securing the expeditious movement of traffic on the authority's road network.
 - b. Facilitating the expeditious movement of traffic on road networks for which another authority is the traffic authority.
22. Section 22 of the Traffic Management Act 2004 requires the local authority to secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of traffic (including pedestrians) and the provision of adequate parking facilities.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

23. The council as a public body is required to meet its statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equal opportunities between people from different groups and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
24. No equality and diversity implications are associated with the recommendations in this report.

PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

25. The property implications will not be known until detailed scheme options have been selected and fully designed.

RISK MANAGEMENT

26. There is a public perception risk of not acting on the intent of the petition due to the risks associated with the requested traffic lights scheme. However, the recommendation of the report is based on the technical advice provided by Island Roads and based on standard methodologies.
27. There is a risk that additional collisions will occur in this location if no action is taken, Short term improvements are recommended together with further junction enhancements through the Highways Safety and Improvement Register process and the constant monitoring of the location

OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND EVALUATED

28. **Option 1 – Make improvements to the junction and undertake a speed review.**

The junction of Forest Road and Whitehouse Road is currently in the top ten of priority highways safety schemes. This location is regularly monitored, and should any further changes occur these will be further reflected in the priority rating within the register.

29. An annual programme of safety improvements is developed which is based on the top safety priorities identified recorded on the register. Each scheme is designed, modelled and costed before implementation to ensure any changes to the highways network are compliant with best practice, financially viable and generate the most effective safety improvements.
30. In the short term, it is recommended that a scheme is fully designed and costed to realign the hedge to improve visibility splays when entering Forest Road from Whitehouse Road, which will be delivered as part of the 2021 capital works programme.
31. Further to this an Island-wide strategic speed review is currently being progressed, and this site will be specifically included to examine the viability of reducing the speed on Forest Road at this location. It should be noted that any reductions in the speed limit at this junction would have an impact on the effectiveness and viability of the other proposed improvement options.
32. Although not directly comparable the Fighting Cocks Cross Junction in Arreton had a higher collision rate than the Forest Road / Whitehouse Road junction. A safety scheme was devised without the installation of traffic lights that brought the collision rate down from 3.2 per year to a ten-year average of 0.2 per year.
33. It is recommended that in addition to the short-term measures, and following the strategic speed review, other potential schemes for this junction are considered in order of prioritisation. These measures could include, but not exclusively: a staggered junction, a protected right turn, Stop Junctions, a review of signing and lining, or a simpler solution of high friction surfacing.

34. **Option 2 – Installation of Traffic signals**

The installation of traffic lights, as requested in the petition, would need to be fully designed in accordance with the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions. Detailed modelling would need to be undertaken to assess the implications of installation and operation.

35. This modelling includes expected queue lengths to ensure that it does not increase the risk of rear end shunts as vehicles exit the bend to the west of the junction.

36. The Highways Safety Inspector has determined that installation of traffic signals may not reduce the risk of conflict at the junction and could increase the number of collisions due to rear end shunts. There is 325 metres between junction and bend and during peak periods with the installation of traffic lights the risk of rear end shunts would increase. The transit of the sun may reduce the drivers view of the traffic signals on clear days during certain times of the year. Failure to recognise the signals at these times may also result in junction overshoots.

37. An installation of signals at this junction is expected to cost in the region of £400,000 to £600,000 not including ongoing maintenance costs. In addition to ensure the junction was safe and efficient, dedicated right hand turn lanes may be required, increasing the cost due to the requirement of purchasing private land to widen a rural road.

38. The request for a signalised junction has been discounted due to the likely increase in the number of collisions, the rural nature of the junction and other factors present in this location. Traffic lights are not recommended as a suitable solution to highway safety at this junction without a full review of all other potential options.

39. **Option 3 – Take no further action**

Taking no further action is not recommended at this junction due to the seriousness of the recent incident and the potential for further collisions occurring at this location.

RECOMMENDATION

40. Cabinet is recommended to approve **Option 1** above:

41. Realign the hedge to improve visibility when entering Forest Road from Whitehouse Road which as part of the 2021 capital works programme.

42. Reevaluate any future works to the junction following the completion of the Island-wide Speed Review, and as part of the network's safety and management programme.

APPENDICES ATTACHED

Appendix 1: A map showing the junction.

Appendix 2: Island Roads technical investigation report

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