

Brierley Hill Area Committee – 2nd July, 2009

Report of the Director of the Urban Environment

Highways Link between Dawley Brook Road and Wartell Bank, Kingswinford

Purpose

1. To update the Area Committee on issues related to the Highway Link between Dawley Brook Road and Wartell Bank, Kingswinford.

Background

2. At the meeting of the Brierley Hill Area Committee on 4th December 2008 a petition was submitted from some residents requesting the section of highway linking Wartell Bank and Dawley Brook Road be closed (see attached plan) due to what the petitioners felt were unacceptable volumes of “general traffic and lorries”.
3. In order to seek a balanced view of the proposed closure the Area Committee agreed that a meeting be held between Council Officers and representatives of the Dawley Brook and Wartell Bank Trading Estates. This meeting was held on the 26th February 2009 and included local Ward Councillors.
4. Arising from the meeting it was clear that business representatives from the Dawley Brook and Wartell Bank Trading Estates were opposed to any proposed closure of this link and cited a detrimental impact to their business as their main concern. The business representatives submitted a counter petition to the Brierley Hill Area Committee on the 2nd April 2009 **to maintain the highway link**. This petition contained a number of signatures from other local residents in the area, who also felt that they would be adversely affected by a road closure.
5. Given the clear difference in views and the two counter petitions Officers undertook some detailed analysis for Members’ consideration summarised as follows:

Traffic Surveys

Traffic surveys were undertaken on 11th March 2008 and 6th March 2009 in Wartell Bank; the results were compared with traffic surveys undertaken prior to the Dawley Brook Road improvement scheme in 1996.

The findings of these surveys suggest that there has been little change in traffic flows over the period covered with between 900 and 1000 traffic volumes per day. The flows were at the 1000/day peak in 1998 reducing to 900/day in 2009.

Transport Impact

In the event of a bridge closure, it is anticipated that the displaced vehicles (currently leaving High Street, Kingswinford and using Water Street/Wartell Bank) would most probably access and egress Dawley Brook Road via alternative routes which in turn could see other roads used as short cuts and transferring issues elsewhere.

Accidents

Accidents were analysed over the previous ten years within the industrial road, the residential roads and their junctions with the strategic highway.

Since 1999 there have been a total of 15 personal injury accidents, all of which were designated as slight.

There are no recorded accidents within Wartell Bank during this period, 4 accidents along the Water Street link and 11 accidents elsewhere within the residential areas that would potentially see an increase in traffic flows from the displaced traffic that would arise if the bridge closure was introduced.

Environmental Impact

The petition received on the 4th December 2008 cited high levels of noise pollution as a factor impacting negatively on the lives of residents. In order to investigate these claims both a noise and air quality survey was commissioned.

Noise

In April 2009 "Road Traffic Noise" was monitored and measured in Wartell Bank using methods set out by the Department for Transport; the findings were then interpreted in accordance with British Standards derived from the World Health Organisation (WHO) document "Guidelines for Community Noise".

The measurements were taken adjacent to the speed humps present in Wartell Bank in order to reflect the highest noise levels within the road.

The report concluded that, based on the data collected:

- According to relevant British Standards and WHO guidance: “noise levels from traffic using Wartell Bank are within guidelines for external noise levels in amenity space and acceptable internal levels within habitable rooms”.
- The results indicate that noise levels fall within the good/reasonable noise levels”.

It should be noticed, however, that these recommended levels are for continuous traffic movement and, at present, there is no guidance on acceptable levels for intermittent noise as created by the presence of speed humps.

Air

At the time of writing this report, the findings from this survey were not available and Officers will, therefore, need to report verbally on the latest position.

Flooding

During a meeting with business representatives from the industrial estate, it was claimed that Dawley Brook Road has flooded at its junction with Moss Grove (A491) on numerous occasions within previous years.

The Local Authority’s “Highway Drainage” and “Maintenance” teams have confirmed that Dawley Brook Road has flooded on 3 occasions since 2004 and most recently in 2007.

In these instances the link from Dawley Brook Road within the Strategic highway (A491) was rendered impassable, with the only point of access and egress being from the western side of the road via Wartell Bank.

Potentially, therefore, a permanent closure of the Wartell Bank link to Dawley Brook Road could trap vehicles within the industrial road during periods of severe flooding.

Dawley Brook which runs parallel to the road comes under the control of the Environment Agency, who have been contacted regarding this issue but, as yet, a response is still awaited.

Emergency Access

At this stage, it is unclear how a closure would affect the response times of the emergency services, particularly in the event of flooding as set out above.

In April 2009 each of the emergency services were formally requested for feedback on this issue but, to date, no information has been received.

European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and Adoption

The grant from the ERDF contained a 20 year clause dated from 4th June 1996; in which it states that part or, all of the grant, is to be repaid if the project is used for purposes other than those specified in the application.

If the closure of the highway link was deemed to breach the conditions of the grant then a sum of approximately £70,000 could be subject to “claw back”.

It should be noted that the Dawley Brook business community contributed almost £190,000 to the scheme in addition to providing land for the project to go ahead.

6. To summarise there are two diverse sets of local views on any proposed road closure and based on the consultation and analysis undertaken it would seem inappropriate to close the section of highway at the junction of Wartell Bank and Dawley Brook Road.

Finance

7. Whereas the terms and conditions of the ERDF Grant Award do include a clause for possible ‘claw back’ if the project is used for purposes other than those specified in the application, there are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

Law

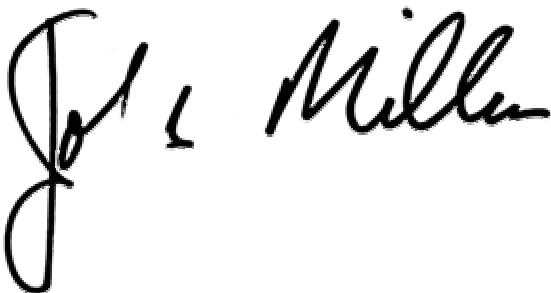
8. Traffic Regulation Orders are made under Section 1 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.'

Equality Impact

9. The recommendations contained within this report comply with the Council's Equality and Diversity policy.

Recommendations

10. That following careful consideration of the opposing views and with due regard to the petitions received the recommendation to the Cabinet Member for Transportation is that the highway should remain open.
11. A further recommendation to the Cabinet Member for Transportation is that Officers should contact the businesses on the Trading Estate and seek their co-operation in minimising, as far as it practically possible, the disturbance to local residents.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Millar', with a stylized, cursive script.

John Millar
Director of the Urban Environment

Contact Officer: Peter Van Geersdaele
Telephone: 01384 815437
Email: peter.vangeersdaele@dudley.gov.uk

List of Background Papers

- 1. Petitions received at Brierley Hill Area Committee meetings on 4th. December 2008 and 2nd April 2009.**
- 2. Letter of offer for ERDF funding from the Government Office for the West Midlands European Unit dated 31st May 1996**
- 3. Surveys relating to traffic flows, accident records and the local environment**
- 4. Various correspondence with the emergency services and other organisations.**