

P/13/0547/VC

SARISBURY

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

AGENT: MR PETER BOUSTRED

TO ENABLE A TRIAL OPENING OF THE BUS GATE FOR ONE YEAR FROM DATE OF DECISION SO THE EFFECTS OF THE BUS GATE OPENING TO ALL TRAFFIC CAN BE MONITORED BY HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL AS HIGHWAY AUTHORITY (VARIATION OF CONDITION 2 P/05/1533/FP)

YEW TREE DRIVE FAREHAM

Report By

Kim Hayler - Ext 2367

Site Description

The site is located off Botley Road, Swanwick just south of Ashley Close. A connection was opened in 2008 between Botley Road and Yew Tree Drive (leading to the development of Whiteley) with restricted access for emergency vehicles and buses only.

Description of Proposal

The access connection was permitted under planning permission P/05/1533/FP and was subject to the following condition (No.2):

'No development shall take place until details of the bus gate, including bus control measures have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority in writing. The approved bus control measures shall be constructed before the bus link is first brought into use and shall be retained at all times. The link road shall subsequently be used by buses and emergency vehicles only unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority following the submission of a planning application made for that purpose.'

Permission is sought to vary this condition to allow the bus gate to be opened to all traffic for a temporary period of one year.

Policies

The following policies apply to this application:

Approved Fareham Borough Core Strategy

CS5 - Transport Strategy and Infrastructure

Fareham Borough Local Plan Review

T8 - Improvements to the Distributor Road Network

T9 - Access to Whiteley

Relevant Planning History

The following planning history is relevant:

P/05/1533/FP

Construction of Roundabout & Yew Tree Drive Link Road (Bus Only Access)

PERMISSION 23/12/2005

Representations

Two hundred and seventy eight letters have been received in support of the application and with the following comments:

- The opening of the bus gate cuts travel time
- It improves traffic flow (Whiteley is one big cul-de-sac)
- Better in terms of highway safety
- Less CO2 emissions, better for environment
- Consideration should be given to a new bus stop near the gate
- Better access for emergency vehicles
- Traffic calming / 20mph limit should be considered
- HGVs should be restricted
- A zebra crossing should be created near the school

Thirteen letters of objection have been received raising the following concerns:

- The bus lane was opened for monitoring the traffic months ago and is due to end in September
- The traffic is horrendous to the point there are queues outside 151 Botley Road twice daily
- People are using Yew Tree Drive to avoid the motorway
- Since the trial opening the traffic is constant
- The road should go back to emergency and buses only
- Congestion on the motorway due to the roadworks is not worse than would be seen normally during the winter period in which the extended trial is proposed
- Other than flashing 30 signs there has been no traffic calming on local roads
- The trial has already gone on long enough.
- Noise from increase in traffic
- Harmful to pedestrian safety
- Parking congestion on Yew Tree Drive hazardous
- HGVs will use the route

One further letter of comment has been received:

- This breaks the promises made - Whiteley Way is fundamental to ensuring good traffic flow and opening Rookery would mean traffic can use a variety of routes - why does this no longer hold true?
- Local residents should be informed of the criteria on which the trial period is going to be judged and results published
- How are HGV's going to be enforced - this is not being enforced currently.

Consultations

Director of Planning and Environment (Highways) -

This proposal is to test what implications on traffic movements would result from the permanent use of the bus gate on Yew Tree Drive by all traffic. A study was carried out during July 2012 when the bus gate was previously open and a comparison made with a period when the link was closed to all but buses and authorised vehicles. In the study report, it was acknowledged that the effects of a longer term trial period could differ from a short term period for numerous reasons, particularly lack of awareness that the link was available. To counter this it is recommended that signs should be erected at the exits from all culs-de- sac leading off Yew Tree Drive, Rookery Avenue, Whiteley Way and Whiteley Lane indicating that the bus gate is open to all traffic. Following the trial period similar signs

advising of the closure should similarly be posted.

For safety reasons the Yew Tree Drive/Rookery Avenue junction should be assessed in order to safely accommodate the likely additional traffic at this junction layout.

Given that the bus gate will have remained open for over a year by the end of the trial period, Up to date monitoring of the closed situation should then be undertaken.

Subject to the above points being considered, no highway objection is raised to the application.

Director of Regulatory and Democratic Services (Environmental Health) -

No adverse comments in respect of this application.

Director of Planning & Environment (Strategic Planning) -

Core Strategy Policy CS5: Transport Strategy and Infrastructure provides the overarching approach to transport in Fareham. It seeks to "promote, permit, develop and/or safeguard a high quality and sustainable integrated transport system for the Borough".

The Council's approach to the bus gate on Yew Tree Drive is set out in Policy T9: Access to Whiteley in the Fareham Borough Local Plan Review (2000). It states that "Road connections from Whiteley to Botley Road for general traffic will not be permitted until Whiteley Way is complete between Junction 9 of the M27 and the A3051 north of Curbridge" and that "Bus only access from Botley Road to Yew Tree Drive and/or Rookery Avenue will be permitted provided that it can be demonstrated to be safe and that satisfactory arrangements can be made to exclude other vehicular traffic".

This policy approach was taken forward and incorporated as Policy T4: Access to Whiteley into the Draft Local Plan Part 2: Development Sites and Policies (October 2012). Public consultation on this Plan took place between 16 October and 26 November, 2012. Paragraph 7.16 of the supporting text states that, "Yew Tree Drive is currently operated as a bus only access route pending the completion of the link road to Whiteley Way. This position will be reviewed when the timing of completion of the link road is known and further transport assessment carried out in relation to the development of North Whiteley within Winchester District."

Since the publication of the Draft Plan the situation has moved on and officer discussions with the Highway Authority, Hampshire County Council, have taken place following the release of monitoring data relating to the 3 week period of opening during July 2012 and the outcome of the public consultation in February 2013, both of which are referred to in the Supporting Statement. It has thus become apparent that Yew Tree Drive's status as a bus only access route is currently under consideration and opening the bus gate for a trial period before the completion of Whiteley Way between Junction 9 of the M27 and the A3051 north of Curbridge evidently follows from this consideration.

The Development Sites and Policies Plan is currently being amended to take account of the County Council's position and consideration is being given to whether or not Policy T4 should be amended to enable road connections from Whiteley to Botley Road for general traffic via Yew Drive if it can be demonstrated that the trial opening and further transport assessment, including the impact of the expansion of North Whiteley, would not have

significant adverse impacts.

The policy position set out in Policy T9: Access to Whiteley, and reiterated in the emerging Draft Development Sites and Policies Plan, is clear and states that opening the bus gate for general traffic will not be permitted until Whiteley Way has been completed. The rationale for this policy approach was to ensure that the traffic impact of the development of Whiteley on BurrIDGE and Swanwick was minimised until the completion of this link road and to help support the development of a high-quality and reliable bus service providing Whiteley's residents with a choice of transport modes.

The proposal seeks opening of the bus gate for one year from the date of decision. It is noted however that, according to the supporting statement, the trial period will be for 3 months following the completion of repair works to the M27 near to junction 9 (and therefore programmed to start in January 2014) and the monitoring will take place over a shorter period. Since the opening is only for a trial period, it would not fundamentally undermine the originally envisaged role of the bus gate and Fareham Borough Council would continue to restrict access through this bus gate in perpetuity in line with the condition set out in planning application reference P/05/1533/FP, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that its opening does not have an unacceptable impact on the local highway network.

The trial period will provide an opportunity for Hampshire County Council to monitor the effects of opening the bus gate on BurrIDGE and Swanwick and assess the ability of bus services to continue to run reliably throughout the existing road network. It is noted that the intended Monitoring Strategy includes the use of automatic traffic counters, manual turning counts and queue length surveys, HGV monitoring, accident data analysis, air quality and noise monitoring. The monitoring should also include the patronage and efficiency of bus services. The outcome can then be considered in the light of the full traffic impact assessment and transport strategy that will be submitted with the planning application for the development of North Whiteley (within Winchester district), which is anticipated in October 2013.

At the end of the trial period, the current development plan would continue to restrict the permanent opening of the bus gate before the completion of Whiteley Way between Junction 9 of the M27 and the A3051 north of Curbridge. Evidently, if the analysis of the trial demonstrates that the opening of the bus gate for general traffic does not have an unacceptable effect on traffic levels in the local area highway network either in terms of traffic congestion or highway safety, nor the ability of bus services to run reliably and effectively, further consideration may be given as to whether or not the bus gate continues to be required as a traffic control measure and whether it should be opened permanently.

Planning Considerations - Key Issues

i) Planning policy context

The comments from the Director of Planning & Environment (Strategic Planning) above set out the emerging planning policy context concerning the issue of access to Whiteley via Botley Road.

The policy stance as set out in the development plan at present through Saved Policy T9 (Access to Whiteley) and reiterated in the emerging Draft Development Sites and Policies Plan is clear that opening the bus gate for general traffic will not be permitted until Whiteley Way has been completed. However the Development Sites and Policies Plan is currently

being amended to take account of the County Council's position following the release of monitoring data collected during the three week opening of the bus gate during July 2012 and the outcome of public consultation in February of this year. In addition, this application seeks the opening of the bus gate on a temporary/ trial basis. These matters need to be considered as material planning considerations alongside the currently adopted planning policy position.

ii) Demand for trial opening of bus gate to all traffic

Hampshire County Council have advised that since the bus gate has been in operation following its creation in 2008, local people have asked whether traffic congestion in Whiteley could be reduced if the link was open to all vehicles.

The link has been open to all vehicles on a number of occasions for contingency reasons. For example the link was open for three weeks in July 2012 to allow National Grid maintenance works. Traffic was monitored during this period. The openings have been of necessity and the public who might have used the link during these periods were not all necessarily aware of its availability and usage will have been influenced in many cases by highway work being undertaken elsewhere. The results of this limited monitoring showed:

- Botley Road: flows generally increased by about 20% in both directions;
- Yew Tree Drive: increase of about 5% over the whole day with 10-15% at peak hours suggesting that local residents used the bus gate instead of travelling via Whiteley Way and the M27, reducing vehicle kms;
- Whiteley Way: north of M27 Junction 9 reduced flow of about 11% over the whole day and 13% peak;
- Bus Gate: average daily use 2,800 increasing to 3,500 on last two days of opening.

The County Council carried out a public consultation in February 2013 in order to investigate the value of a further longer trial period, properly monitored so that the actual implications for road network usage could be assessed. The results showed that 83% of respondents wished to see a planned trial opening of the bus gate.

iii) Proposed trial period

The submitted statement accompanying this application explains that the bus gate is currently open to all traffic as a result of essential repair works taking place to the M27 in the vicinity of Junction 9. The works are anticipated to be completed in December 2013 and it is proposed that a formal trial period of three months would begin in January 2014. In order to understand the impacts of opening the link to all vehicles it is vital to make assessments based upon controlled conditions.

The monitoring strategy to be followed during the trial comprises a combination of measures:

- a) Automatic Traffic Counters (ATCs) at seven locations in the local area previously surveyed during the three week opening of the bus gate in July 2012 and a further site to the north in Burrige for a period of two weeks.

b) Manual Turning Counts & Queue Length Surveys carried out both before and after the trial opening to establish how traffic movements at key junctions are affected. The junctions to be covered are Yew Tree Drive/Botley Road, Swanwick Lane/Botley Road, Swanwick Lane/A27 and Botley Road/A334 (Mill Hill/Station Hill).

c) HGV Monitoring during Autumn 2013 and repeated during the formal trial.

d) Data on all recorded Personal Injury Accidents can be analysed over any given time period to determine any trends in accidents.

e) Air quality monitoring is proposed although details are yet to be agreed with Fareham Borough Council on the methodology to be used and precise locations the monitoring will be carried out in.

f) Road traffic noise will be screened and used to establish whether more detailed assessments are required during the trial. If preliminary screening indicates further assessment is required, the precise methodology and locations for further monitoring of traffic noise will be agreed with Fareham Borough Council.

The proposed monitoring measures as set out in the supporting statement cover the main issues of traffic congestion, highway safety, air quality and road traffic noise. This will ensure that relevant data is recorded during the formal trial period. There is however no proposed monitoring of the effect of the bus gate opening on the use and efficiency of bus services themselves. It is suggested that additional measures be put in place to do so and this be required by way of a planning condition. The County Council propose to work with Officers from Fareham Borough Council on determining the correct course of action for recording data on air quality and road traffic noise effects and this should also be secured by planning conditions.

iv) Proposed mitigation measures

The application is supported by a mitigation strategy which sets out various measures designed to mitigate the effects of a trial opening to general traffic of the bus gate. The measures have been identified as feasible taking account of the constraints of the highway boundary and budget available.

The mitigation measures proposed are:

a) Yew Tree Drive - physical speed reductions, pedestrian crossing improvements, bus stop access improvements and restrictions to prevent HGV use as a through route.

b) Enforcement of parking restrictions on Yew Tree Drive

c) Swanwick Lane and Botley Road - speed reduction measures including alterations of existing road signing and lining, pedestrian crossing improvements.

d) Installation of three vehicle activated Speed Limit Reminder Signs (SLR)

The submission briefly outlines the each of the above proposed mitigation measures and so it is recommended that full details should be submitted to and approved by Fareham Borough Council in writing. The details should include the exact nature and quantity of the works and their location. The agreed measures would need to be implemented before the

start of the formal trial period scheduled for January 2014.

v) Public consultation response

A large number of representations have been received with the main issues raised summarised in the Representations section of this report.

The letters of objection received raised various concerns including the effect on traffic congestion, highway safety and noise. The majority of responses to the consultation however were broadly in support of the proposed year long opening of the bus gate to all traffic. Many of the those in support raised similar issues to those in objection but instead suggested measures that would in their view make the bus gate opening acceptable and less likely to lead to traffic congestion or highway safety hazards. Some of the measures suggested by supporters and points of concern raised by objectors have already been addressed by Hampshire County Council in their proposed mitigation strategy. Should planning permission be granted, there would be the opportunity for Hampshire County Council to fully take into account those comments from residents when drawing up the finer details of the measures to be carried out.

Summary

The opening of the bus gate to general traffic would allow the impact of doing so on a permanent basis to be properly and objectively assessed. The response from local people to this opening, which is to include a three month trial period, is positive with most being in support of the proposal subject to mitigation measures being implemented. The temporary nature of the proposal would not fundamentally undermine the originally envisaged role of the bus gate and the Council would retain control over the ability to restrict access through the condition imposed on application reference P/05/1533/FP unless it can be clearly demonstrated that its opening does not have an unacceptable impact on the local highway network.

Officers are cognisant of Policy T9 of the adopted Fareham Borough Local Plan Review. However the temporary nature of the proposal, the considerable local support for a 'trial period' and the position of Hampshire County Council represent material considerations which in the view of Officers should be given considerable weight. Having carefully balanced the planning policy position and the other material planning considerations identified, Officers believe it would be appropriate to grant temporary relief from the condition, thereby allowing use by general traffic for a monitored trial period.

Recommendation

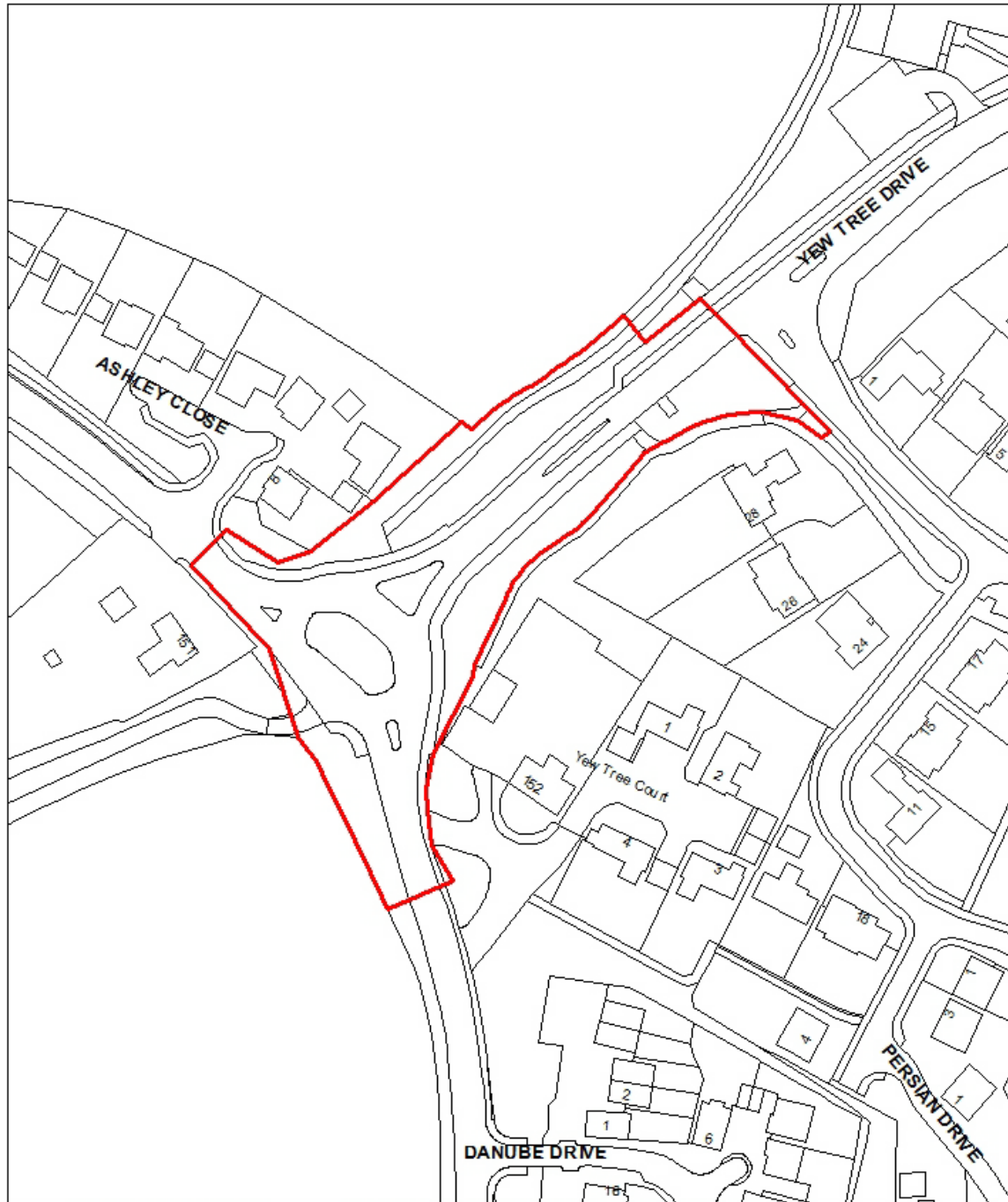
TEMPORARY PERMISSION: Limited period of one year; details of signage to be displayed to notify drivers of bus gate opening; monitoring measures carried out in accordance with approved strategy; details of air quality monitoring methodology and locations; road traffic noise screening within two months; details of further road traffic noise assessments if required; details of bus service impact monitoring measures; details of mitigation measures; mitigation measures carried out in full before start of formal trial period and in accordance with approved details.

Background Papers

P/13/0547/VC; P/05/1533/FP

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL



YEW TREE DRIVE
SCALE: 1:1250

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