



Decision Session - Executive Member for City Strategy

1 September 2009

Report of the Director of City Development

Westminster Road Petitions

Summary

1. This report presents the results of initial survey information and options in response to the two petitions received regarding the change in traffic conditions due to works carried out on Water End earlier in the year.

Recommendations

2. The Executive Member for City Strategy is recommended to:
 - i. Approve the course of action detailed in Options A and B, that will allow:
 - a. Further surveys to be undertaken once the road humps on Westminster Road have been replaced and the results reported to a future Decision Session meeting
 - b. Progress the introduction of a 20 mph limit and undertake a review of the School Travel Plan
 - ii. Options G and H be given further consideration as part of the reporting of the above.

Reason: The recommended options to take forward for further works to alleviate traffic problems encountered by residents in the Westminster Road and The Avenue are considered to be the most appropriate options to progress at this time.

Background

3. Two separate petitions (see Annex A) have been submitted from residents covering the Westminster Road, The Avenue and Greencliffe Drive areas. The first of these received on 10th June contained 95 signatures from 62 properties mainly from Westminster Road and called for the Council to instigate the closure of Westminster Road. The second petition received on 11th June 2009 came from residents of The Avenue; it contained 20 signatures covering 12 properties and also requested the closure of

Westminster Road. There are approximately 158 properties along the three roads in this area. Both these petitions were also recently submitted to Full Council on 9th July 2009.

4. There has been a long history of complaints of through traffic using Westminster Road and The Avenue to avoid the traffic signals at Clifton Green. The Ward Committee had previously funded the introduction of traffic calming in the form of speed cushions along this route. More recently there have been heightened concern over through traffic for the following reasons:
 - Firstly the introduction on the Water End Cycle scheme made significant alterations to the Clifton Green Signals (see location plan Annex B and letter of support for scheme at Annex F) by reducing the two lane entry to one with the introduction of an on carriageway cycle lane. This resulted in increased queue lengths on the Water End approach to Clifton Green Signals and to avoid this traffic began to use Westminster Road and The Avenue. Once traffic patterns had stabilised alterations were made to the signal timings to help reduce the queues along Water End. Work is currently taking place to update the traffic signal plans used at the Water End / Clifton Green junction. This should lead to further improved signal operation and reduced queue lengths.
 - Secondly during the construction of the cycle scheme emergency repairs were required to a burst water main that resulted in the complete closure of Water End near to the Clifton Green Signals. The emergency closure occurred during the middle of the day and although the signed diversion route was at the Salisbury Road junction in to the Leeman Road area (part of the classified road network) many drivers chose to continue along Water End and ended up using Westminster Road and The Avenue. The traffic heading out of the city on the A19 was diverted out to the ring road rather than along The Avenue and Westminster Road. The flooding created additional construction problems for the cycle scheme that resulted in the road being closed to through traffic for 3 full days between 9.30am and 4pm. The flooding also resulted in a number of collapses to existing ducting associated with the traffic signals that created intermittent faults and reliability issues. A programme of works to repair this was quickly undertaken along with works to upgrade the traffic signal controller, which had been planned for later in the year.
 - In addition construction works associated with the school playing fields required the temporary removal of 6 speed cushions along Westminster Road that were removed at the beginning of May. The removal of these cushions was part of a previously approved planning permission and the Council are working closely with the School to get the cushions reinstalled as soon as possible. This is however dependent upon the progress of the associated works, it is hoped that this will have been done by the end of August in time for the start of the new school term.

5. The combined effect of these issues has increased the attractiveness of Westminster Road and The Avenue as an alternative route for traffic and raised awareness of its existence to some drivers.
6. At the request of Clifton Ward Committee a special Ward Committee Meeting was held on the 10th July that officers attended. The Committee were advised that it was intended to undertake an origin and destination survey once the speed cushions on Westminster Road were reinstated and traffic patterns settled down. This detailed survey information was considered essential to enable the extent of any through traffic issues to be quantified and an assessment made of the likely impact of any significant alterations such as a road closure. Without this information it would not be possible to adequately consider the implications of the range of options under consideration or to judge what level of intervention would be appropriate.
7. It was evident at the meeting that this was considered unacceptable by a large number of attendees due to the time scale involved. The earliest this was likely to be undertaken would have been after the summer holidays once the schools returned. The reinstatement of the cushions are in the control of the School (and their contractor) who were unable to guarantee a specific date when this would occur. Whilst the planning conditions specified they must be reinstated no later than one month after the construction works were completed, the Council have requested that this be done at the earliest opportunity.
8. In direct response to the petitions, Ward Committee comments and other correspondence expressing concerns an Origin and Destination survey has recently been undertaken before the summer break. Unfortunately this is also whilst the cushions on Westminster Road are not in place which may be resulting in higher levels of through traffic and the level of school traffic may be reduced as it was nearing the end of term. It will however enable the level of through traffic to be determined and quantified against other traffic.
9. In addition to this, a speed survey was undertaken on The Avenue before the alterations to Clifton Green signals, this also gave some traffic flow information. A further speed survey was undertaken more recently (June 2009) along Westminster Road since the removal of the speed cushions and completion of the Water End cycle scheme (which altered the traffic signal operation at Clifton Green).
10. Several suggestions and comments have been made for addressing the issues of through traffic as well as raising other concerns. Whilst the vast majority of those views expressed in the petitions seem to be in favour of a closure there have also been views expressed against such action. A list of the main points and concerns so far expressed are provided in Annex C.

Survey Information

11. The results of the traffic speed surveys carried out along The Avenue and Westminster Road have been tabulated in Annex D. The surveys were undertaken the week commencing 19th January 2009 along The Avenue and

along Westminster Road the week commencing 15th July 2009. Whilst primarily aimed at gathering traffic speed data the surveys do also give a good indication of the traffic volumes. An origin and destination survey has also been undertaken at the beginning of July 2009, which quantifies the level of through traffic at that time.

Traffic Speeds

12. The before speed surveys were carried out on The Avenue (which has not had any speed cushions removed) and the after speed surveys were on Westminster Road (after the removal of the cushions). This gives a direct comparison of the speed differential of locations with and without road humps.
13. The speed surveys demonstrated a consistency in respect to the direction of travel with no noticeable differences. The before surveys gave an average speed of 17 mph with an 85th percentile speed of 20 mph. The after speed surveys taken with no cushions in place gave average speed readings of 25 mph and an 85th percentile of 30/31 mph. Once the road humps are put back in place on Westminster Road it is anticipated that the average and 85th percentile speeds will return to around 17 and 20mph respectively.

Traffic Flows

14. It should be stressed that because the first survey was carried out on The Avenue and the second survey was on Westminster Road the surveys are not directly comparable due to some vehicles using the area arriving and leaving along the same street. The surveys do however give a reliable indication of the likely increase in usage. Once the speed cushions are back in position on Westminster Road a repeat of both surveys on The Avenue and Westminster Road would be beneficial to gain a better comparison of the changes in traffic flows in the area.
15. From these it can be seen that overall traffic levels appear to have increased by around 97% from an average weekday flow of 900 vehicles to 1,774. The AM peak flow has seen an increase of 92% (134 - 257 vehicles) compared to the PM flow of 49% (200 - 297 vehicles). This equates to approximately an extra 123 in the AM and 97 vehicles in the PM peak hours.
16. The increased flows appear to be more predominant in the direction heading from Water End to A19 Clifton with 539 vehicles compared to 335 in the opposite direction in the weekday average figures. It should be noted that these figures do not differentiate between through traffic, access traffic and residents traffic.
17. In order to put some perspective on the general level of traffic in the surrounding road network the 12-hour (7am - 7pm) two-way flows are provided below. These show that some 17,833 vehicles were recorded along Water End (to the West of Westminster Road) and some 10,363 vehicles used the A19 Clifton (to the south of The Avenue).

Origin & Destination Analysis

18. An Origin and Destination survey was undertaken on 2nd July 2009, the results of which have been tabulated in Annex D. The survey covered a 12-hour period from 7am to 7pm. The most noteworthy points derived from analysis of this survey are detailed below.
19. Three quarters (75%) of the traffic using the Westminster Road/ Water End junction was related to through traffic movements (972 out of 1290). Just under 2/3rds (59%) of the traffic using The Avenue/ A19 Clifton junction was related to through traffic movements (969 out of 1645). Very little traffic was seen to utilise Greencliffe Drive/ Water End junction (107 vehicles of which 20% through movements).
20. As you would expect the main through traffic movements are between the Westminster Road/ Water End junction and The Avenue/ A19 Clifton junction as it is the route that allows the traffic signals at Clifton Green to be bypassed. Over the 12 hours surveyed the through traffic was predominantly in the Water End to A19 Clifton direction with some 739 vehicles whilst there were 221 in the opposite direction (A19 Clifton to Water End). Without a similar "before" O & D survey (which has not been undertaken) it is difficult to identify what proportion of the current level of through traffic has increased from previous levels. The weekday Traffic flow data, detailed earlier, indicated a 97% rise (900 to 1774), which suggests that at least half of the recorded through traffic may be due to the effects of recent changes in this area.
21. During the a.m. peak hour there were 157 through traffic movements from Westminster Road/ Water End to The Avenue/ A19 Clifton (with 14 in the opposite direction). In the evening peak there were 60 movements from Westminster Road/ Water End and 80 movements from The Avenue/ A19 Clifton.
22. It should be worth noting that through traffic problems have historically existed along this route. There are unfortunately many locations across the City that experience through traffic issues, for which the Council have received several complaints for over the years. Without undertaking a comprehensive range of surveys at other similar locations it is not possible to determine how the level of problems along Westminster Road compare elsewhere.

Accident Details

23. An analysis of the existing injury accident record has been carried out for the last three years (Mar 06 to Feb 09) along the length of Westminster Road and The Avenue. There has only been one injury accident in the last three years along this route. This was on Westminster Road and involved a vehicle attempting a "U" turn across the path of a moped that resulted in a slight injury.

24. A further three injury accidents have occurred at The Avenue/ A19 Clifton junction over the same period. All resulted in slight injuries two were to cyclists and one to a pedestrian. The vehicle manoeuvres involved were: a right turn into The Avenue, a left turn out of The Avenue and a right turn out of The Avenue. Only the “right turn out” accident could have possibly been associated with a through traffic manoeuvre bypassing the signals but the time of the accident (9:50 am) would suggest it unlikely. No injury accidents are associated with the Westminster Road / Water End junction.

Options

Option A - Further Survey

25. Continue to monitor the situation and undertake a further Origin and Destination Survey once the speed cushions have been reinstated, after the schools return and there is a period of say 2 months to allow for traffic flows to have settled down. This will give the most accurate picture of the extent of the through traffic issues by allowing the full effects of the traffic calming to be made and a more suitable settling in period to have expired. However it does not have any immediate impact on the current situation and an Origin and Destination survey has already quantified the level of through traffic whilst only half the route is effectively traffic calmed. The results of these surveys would be reported to a future Decision Session meeting at the earliest opportunity. This is a recommended option.

Option B - 20 mph Speed Limit/ School Travel Plan Review

26. The introduction of this restriction will effectively reinforce the speed that already appears to be observed where the traffic calming is in place. It is unlikely to deter significant amounts of through traffic over and above that already deterred by the traffic calming in place. Westminster Road, The Avenue and Greycliffe Drive should be included under this consideration. Part of this work will also include reviewing the existing School Travel Plan for St Peter’s School to explore possible further improvements to school traffic and safety issues. This is a recommended option and would be progressed in line with usual procedures.
27. The next range of options considers utilising the introduction of Traffic Regulation Orders with no physical constraints. It should be noted that as with any traffic order there will be a right of objection from any interested parties and any significant opposition with valid objections is likely to prevent its introduction.

Option C - Access Only Order

28. It is possible to introduce an “access only” traffic regulation order that prohibits any traffic without a legitimate reason for accessing the area. Past experience of these types of orders have proven to be almost entirely ineffectual. They rely solely on enforcement action from the Police Authority, which cannot be guaranteed. This option is not recommended for further consideration.

Option D - Banned Turning Manoeuvres

The main through traffic routes used are:

1. Right Turn into Westminster Road – Right Turn Out of The Avenue and
 2. Left Turn into The Avenue – Left Turn out of Westminster Road
29. Whilst this may be slightly easier to enforce than the Access order proposal it would still rely heavily on an appropriate level of enforcement from the Police Authority that cannot be guaranteed and the level of abuse can be expected to be quite high. This will also have a significant impact (if observed) on the existing traffic movements of residential traffic and other access traffic such as School related. This option is not recommended for further consideration.

Option E - One Way Traffic

30. The introduction of a one-way route would only be effective in preventing through traffic in one direction. It would also require most traffic to enter via one main junction and exit via another (depending on the direction chosen). This will also have a significant impact on the existing traffic movements of residential traffic and other access traffic such as School related. This option is not recommended for further consideration.
31. The following range of options take into consideration the use of physical restrictions that may be used in conjunction with the Traffic Regulation Orders detailed above.

Option F - Banned turning manoeuvres with junction alterations.

32. If the banned turns considered in option D were accompanied by physical alterations to the junctions to prevent and discourage the banned movement, they would become more effective and less reliant on Police enforcement. Their effects on residential and access traffic would again be significant on existing movements. Significant costs are likely to be incurred with such an option but have not been explored further at this stage. This option is not recommended for further consideration.

Option G - Point Closure along Westminster Road or The Avenue.

33. This would be the most effective method of preventing through traffic from using this route as it physically blocks it. It would also have the biggest effect on residents and access traffic movements. Depending on where such a point closure is provided will greatly vary its effects on residents. There are four main areas considered to be the most effective location for a closure. All of which would need further detailed consideration and consultation if it were to be pursued further. With each of these four options consideration will also have to be given to introducing a closure on Greencliffe Drive to avoid it becoming a main access/ egress point.
34. They are:
- i) On Westminster Road at the junction with Water End

- ii) On Westminster Road at the junction with The Avenue
 - iii) On the Avenue at the junction with Westminster Road
 - iv) On the Avenue at the Junction with A19 Clifton
 - v) On Greycliffe Drive at the junction with Westminster Road for all options i) to iv)
35. There are several issues that need to be carefully considered if a closure were to be introduced. Whilst they may be effective in eliminating through traffic the consequences of such action would be:
- Major re-routing of residential and access traffic particularly school related.
 - A disproportionate amount of traffic may be forced to use only one junction to access /egress e.g. more right turns out of Westminster Road or a greater demand for school related traffic to use one particular junction.
 - The significant amount of through traffic would increase the demand on the Clifton Green signals, which already operate at capacity during peak periods.
 - Residential and access traffic will also contribute to this as certain movements would have to be via this route. Any subsequent delays would affect all traffic.
 - From a construction point any closure is likely to require suitable turning head facilities to allow traffic to turn around to leave via the route they entered. The feasibility of this would need further investigation and likely to incur significant costs.
36. This option is recommended for further consideration as part of the reporting of the surveys recommended in option A.

Option H - Resident's Consultation

37. Subject to the reporting of the results of the surveys recommended in option A, consideration should also be given at that time for the need to undertake a resident's consultation of the different levels of support of any proposals arising. This should be undertaken before further work is carried out to assess the traffic impacts to avoid abortive works. Not all residents are represented on the petitions that have been submitted requesting a road closure and the implication of such action may not have been fully appreciated at the time of signing. This option is also recommended to be part of the considerations in the future reporting of the survey results recommended in option A.

Analysis

38. The above options A and B are recommended for taking forward with further consideration for options G and H to be given in a future report. These are considered to be the most appropriate options to progress at this time in that they will:

- Accurately identify and quantify the “residual” level of through traffic in relation to other traffic that can be reported to a future meeting.
- Allow progress for the introduction of a 20pmh speed limit to reinforce the traffic-calmed route.
- Enable improvements to be made to the existing School Travel Plan in this area.

Corporate Priorities

39. Considering this matter is part of our focus to meet the needs of our communities.

Implications

40. The proposals put forward have the following implications:
- **Financial** No budget has been established to implement any proposals, however minor alterations, depending on their nature, may be able to be funded from the annual signs, lines and Traffic Regulation Order budgets.
 - **Human Resources (HR)** - None
 - **Equalities** - None
 - **Legal** - None
 - **Crime and Disorder** - None
 - **Information Technology (IT)** - None
 - **Property** - None
 - **Other** - None

Risk Management

41. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy there are no risks associated with the recommendations in this report.

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Report Approved



Date 18 August
2009

Specialist Implications Officer(s)

Implication ie Financial
Name
Tel No.

Wards Affected: Clifton

For further information please contact the author o

Background Papers:

None

Annexes:

Annex A - Front pages of petitions
Annex B - Location Plan
Annex C – List of the main points and concerns so far expressed
Annex D – Westminster Road/The Avenue Traffic Surveys
Annex E – Ward Members and Political Party Views
Annex F - Letter of support for Water End Cycle scheme
Annex G to this report will follow setting out the scrutiny task groups views (and those of the parent Scrutiny Committee members) on those elements of an ongoing CCfA (Councillor Call for Action) which may impact upon this report being considered by the Executive Member.