

VES report on responses to consultation Feb- March 2019

Long Ashton Parish Council VES working group

During the week from 18th February 2019, 2000 leaflets were delivered to households across Long Ashton explaining the VES proposals with a plan and artwork describing the details. The leaflet explained that consultations by the Parish Council over a number of years had shown that residents would like:

- An attractive and vibrant village centre,
- Slower traffic along the main road,
- Safer routes for pedestrians.

For some time, the Parish Council has been working on drawing up practical and affordable proposals, in collaboration with North Somerset Council Highways Department. The leaflet set out the first stage of the proposed improvements and invited comments.

175 replies have been received including emails to the clerk or councillors. There are 40 comments on the PC Facebook page (although some posters also have emailed the PC direct) and there was an extensive discussion on the Next Door blog.

6 Councillors attended a VES stand at the village market on Saturday, 2nd March with banners displaying the “20 is plenty” message. Nearly all residents spoken to were aware of the scheme and were happy to engage in discussion. Councillors also attended at Birdwell School one afternoon to engage with parents.

The twenty businesses in the village centre were invited to a meeting with the PC. 4 attended and were positive about the proposals.

An article appeared in the Bristol Post and the North Somerset Times. The PC issued FAQs (click [here](#) to see the FAQs) on 5th March which were posted on the PC website, Twitter and Facebook.

As this was a consultation welcoming open feedback, many varied and detailed comments have been received and most are set out [here](#). Thank you to residents for taking the time to make useful and informed points. The suggestions are being examined with North Somerset Highways department as far as practicable to see if the proposals can be developed further. This report concentrates on the comments made and not on the reasons for the proposals. Please see the FAQs for the PC’s response to the common points made.

The overwhelming majority of responses was in support of the proposals and ticked the box “I support the village enhancement scheme”; see these [here](#). Of the written response slips, only six did not tick that box. However all of these made comments that clearly supported the need for traffic calming; two of them indicated their concern was more with the uneven pavements than the state of the roads; two requested a zebra crossing at the Brocks Lane junction; one was concerned about parking outside the chemist and one

wanted more encouragement for cyclists' safety. There was also an objection emailed to the PC to the effect that the problem was poor driving.

In addition, two substantial emails were received which are set out in their entirety [here](#). These critique the scheme as a sticking plaster when a fundamental re-think is needed so that the village centre can be more in the spirit of the 2014 Hamilton Baillie report that inspired this initiative. It is gratifying that residents are approaching this vital step in the development of the village in such a constructive and visionary way, but as always, the public sector is limited by the funding available: the PC has been guided by the urgent need to take some simple steps than can achieve some progress and believe these proposals are a good start to what is hoped will be wider improvements over the next few years.

What was clear from most of those who commented was that more traffic calming is wanted, not less, and that road safety is a high priority for residents because of the speed and volume of traffic through the village. The Parish Council should be guided by this strong statement when considering future phases of the VES. From national guidance, it is hoped that average traffic speed would be reduced by about 2 mph as a result of the proposed traffic calming, but the success of the VES cannot be judged on this alone.

The issue that was raised most (by at least 35 residents plus many of the Facebook comments) was that the 20 mph limit should be extended further than the VES proposal. Particular places of concern were the crossing at the junction with Fenswood and Perry Road (9); east of the junction with Providence Lane (10); and along the length of Providence Lane (5).

Many residents agreed with the need to give high priority to the crossing at the bottom of Brocks Lane with some expressing disappointment that a zebra crossing or a proper school crossing could not be installed. One resident was concerned that children would have a false sense of security, given that the coloured surface is only to alert motorists, and called for a safety audit to be carried out. Tactile paving and "Look both ways" markings make priority clear; as much as practicable is being done to make the road safer for pedestrians. Is it better to do nothing at this junction or at least try to warn drivers to slow down? But children should not regard this as a zebra crossing and families will need to stay alert to pedestrians *not* having priority.

Another often mentioned issue of concern was that the children attending Northleaze School were not being given the same priority as those at Birdwell School. Requests were made for more warning markings to be made on the main road on both sides of the approach to the zebra crossing at the top of Theynes Croft or a proper school crossing. The PC response in the FAQs has pointed out that Birdwell School families have been asking for some improvement to the Brocks Lane junction for many years, possibly 30 years or more. It is sincerely hoped that the Northleaze families do not have to wait so long.

Many residents raised concerns about the area outside Piccolos, the vets and the Co-op. The conflicting requirements make this area almost impossible to resolve such that it is unlikely the particular layout suggested in the leaflet will proceed. NS Highways are being helpful in considering alternatives so progress is awaited.

Detailed points were also raised on the junction with Birdwell Road, in particular the concern that traffic may back up on the main road. However, others welcomed narrowing the bellmouth to make crossing the road safer. The double yellow lines should provide enough visibility for traffic turning into Birdwell Road.

One of the principal aims of the VES is to make the village easier and safer for pedestrians. The dangerous state of the uneven pavements is an important concern, especially for the elderly or the partially sighted. The hazards of narrow pavements and therefore the perception of traffic speed were also highlighted.

A small number of comments were received suggesting more double yellow lines at certain points, which would unfortunately increase the speed of traffic: this is contrary to the aims of the VES. However these residents were trying to address the difficulty of parking and the dangers for pedestrians trying to negotiate the parked cars. Traffic measures can have unintended consequences, so yellow lines need to be considered carefully. The shops and other businesses are understandably concerned to retain as much parking as practicable.

Many residents are keen that the central area is made more pleasant e.g. with planting and/ or seats: thanks to those businesses who are enthusiastic about taking these ideas forward. Their involvement and support is vital if the shopping area is to become more vibrant. The first initiative with PC backing is to install some more planters so that there can be a clearer sense of identity to the village centre.

An additional crossing of Weston Road or other safety measures were requested by at least five residents in the area of Lovelinch Gardens; they referred to the school children getting off the bus near Alexander May and crossing to the Birdwell estate as well as the children walking to Birdwell School.

A small number of residents complained about cyclists speeding through the village or failing to stop at the crossings, in particular, groups of cyclists.

The clear message is that residents support the traffic calming and improvements set out in the VES, in order to make the village a safer place. The overriding limit to the extent of the scheme is the cost and therefore the funding that the PC will put into these road safety measures. It is hoped that a continuing programme can be taken forward so that long lasting improvements can be seen in years to come.

In the light of the positive feedback from the consultation, the Parish Council resolved to:
- confirm approval of the proposals as set out in the VES leaflet

- authorise the working group to continue discussions with the vets and Piccolos to agree a modified design if necessary and report back to Highways committee,
- authorise the working group to proceed with finalising detailed contract specifications with NSC, with the intention that the works are carried out in the financial year 2019/20, if necessary omitting the Piccolos/vets area.

Discussions are continuing with NS Highways and we remain hopeful that the works can be done within the year. Further development of the scheme will be updated on the PC website.

31.5.19

Thanks to David Caird for assistance with the display.