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Chiswick Area (Monitoring) Committee – 2 June 2009

Stile Hall Gardens - Concerns over speed and volume of traffic

Report by: Director of Environment

Summary

The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee on the investigations into concerns over the speed and volume of traffic passing through Stile Hall Gardens.

1.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Area Committee: -

- i) notes the background to the concerns;
- ii) acknowledges that Stile Hall Gardens is just one of the roads, amongst others, within the quadrangle formed by Wellesley Road to the north, the railway tracks to the east and south and the A205 Chiswick High Road to the west;
- iii) concurs that there is no piecemeal solution to the problem identified by residents.
- iv) agrees that the lead representative of the 'Friends of Stile Hall Gardens' be informed of the Committee's decision to examine the issues raised on a holistic basis rather than dealing with them on a piecemeal basis.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 At the Chiswick Area (Monitoring) Committee on 21st January 2009 a local resident and member of the 'Friends of Stile Hall Gardens' spoke during the public forum alerting the Committee of the concerns amongst local residents over the speed and volume of traffic passing through Stile Hall Gardens.

2.2 A numbers of factors were cited which exacerbate the problems and heighten residents concerns. In summary they are:

- Stile Hall Gardens is a well-known cut-through to avoid Chiswick roundabout and, for westbound traffic, the signals at the Wellesley Road / Chiswick High Road junction;

- Stile Hall Gardens is a straight road with cars parked on either side, consequently there are concerns over the risks to children and the elderly when getting in / out of parked cars;
- At peak times there is the added nuisance and pollution from the tailback of vehicles waiting to turn left onto the High Road;
- A large number of delivery and work vans accelerating down the road posing similar risks to residents;
- Residents experiencing road rage from impatient drivers annoyed at having to wait while the residents park their cars.

2.3 Friends of Stile Hall Gardens had canvassed the opinions of residents on Stile Hall Gardens by circulating a letter to every household. Out of a total of 71 households on Stile Hall Gardens 33 households responded supporting the request for the Council to consider the matter.

The suggestions put forward by residents and Friends of Stile Hall Gardens are:

- Making Stile Hall Gardens one-way (eastbound) between its junctions with Regent Street and Brooks Road and introduce a 20mph limit for the eastbound traffic;
- Divert the westbound traffic via Regent Street, as there are no front doors opening onto Regent Street and as it is mainly used for parking purposes.

3.0 DISCUSSION

3.1 Stiles Hall Gardens provides an east-west link between the A205 Chiswick High Road and Brooks Road and runs parallel with Wellesley Road.

3.2 The carriageway width is on average 7.2m with kerbside parking on either side, in marked bays that are 1.8m wide. This leaves a running lane width of 3.6m which is not wide enough to facilitate two-way traffic.

3.3 Around two-thirds of the length of the road is straight in alignment. The good forward visibility could thus prompt some motorists to drive through at inappropriate speeds thus compounding residents' anxieties.

3.4 A search of the personal injury accident records over the past five years has shown that, thankfully, there have been no personal injury accidents involving pedestrians or people getting into / out of parked cars. There have been three accidents involving vehicles; one in 2004, one in 2006 and one in 2007 though these were along the section of Stile Hall Gardens to the west of the junction with Regent Street.

3.5 There is no historical traffic volume or speed survey data available for Stile Hall Gardens as it is a minor road within the overall road hierarchy and routine traffic surveys are not carried out for this category of roads.

3.6 The Met. Police's Safer Neighbourhood Team has also raised concerns over speeding traffic with the Traffic Branch of the Met. Police. In light of the lack of objective data, the Traffic Branch of the Met. Police, in consultation with the Council's Traffic Team, has agreed to carry out a speed survey on Stile Hall Gardens.

- 3.7 Given the layout of the roads in the locality it is feasible to make Stile Hall Gardens one-way (eastbound), between its junctions with Regent Street and Brooks Road and to route the westbound traffic down Brooks Road and right into Regent Street to emerge on Stile Hall Gardens half way along its length.

However, there are a number of consequential effects to consider:

- i) a one-way flow would naturally lead to increased speeds because drivers know that they would not be meeting opposing traffic;
- ii) routing the westbound traffic down Brooks Road and right into Regent Street would increase the risk of pedestrian / vehicular conflicts as many parents and children walk down Brooks Road and across Regent Street to use the footbridge over the railway line to get to the Strand-on-the-Green school on Brooks Lane;
- iii) the inconvenience factor to residents, not only on Stile Hall Gardens but on the surrounding roads as well. This would necessitate consulting local residents of the neighbouring roads in the vicinity.

- 3.8 The introduction of a 20mph speed limit for the eastbound traffic has been suggested.

There are two ways of introducing a 20mph speed limit:

- i) through a 20mph zone - this comprises an area within which the roads must have sufficient number of traffic calming features to make the 20mph limit self-enforcing.
- ii) through a 20mph speed limit - this is achieved through the installation of signs only and there is no requirement to have traffic calming features in the road. However, the Dept. for Transport's guidance states that a 20mph limit (*through signs alone*) could only be introduced in villages where the narrowness and the windy alignment of the roads naturally restricts speeds to no more than 20mph {24mph or less being used as the best guide}.

- 3.9 In light of the concerns over the speed of traffic the qualifying criteria for the introduction of a 20mph speed limit through signs alone are unlikely be met. A zonal approach would thus be necessitated, unless the results of the speed survey suggest otherwise.

- 3.10 When considering a zonal approach an area needs to be identified that is bounded by barriers such as rivers or railway tracks, which prevents cross migration of extraneous traffic, or is surrounded on the periphery by main road network which those motorists who have no reason to enter the catchment area, other than for rat-running purposes, could use.

In the locality in question there is a self contained area bounded by Wellesley Road to the north, the north/south railway line (*Gunnorsbury to Kew Gardens*) to the east, the east/west railway line (*Chiswick to Kew Bridge*) to the south and the A205 Chiswick High Road to the west. There are only two access points into the catchment area, off Wellesley Road via Brooks Road and off the A205 Chiswick High Road via Stile Hall Gardens. The catchment area is shown on the plan in the Appendix to this report.

If a 20mph zone is to be introduced in this catchment area it would necessitate the introduction of entry treatments at the Wellesley Road/Brooks Road and Chiswick High

Road/Stile Hall Gardens junctions and traffic calming features (e.g. *speed humps* or *speed cushions*) at regular spacing (60 to 80m) in all roads within the catchment area. The location of traffic calming features to make the 20mph speed limit within the zone self-enforcing is shown on the plan in the Appendix.

3.11 If a piecemeal approach is adopted to put the suggestions of the Friends of Stile Hall Gardens on the ground, the measures necessary would comprise:

- a raised junction Table at the Stile Hall Gardens/Regents Street junction with the associated drainage works;
- two speed humps along the section of Stile Hall Gardens between Regent Street and Brooks Road;
- 20mph signs on Stile Hall Gardens (for eastbound traffic) at its junction with Regent Street;
- One-way signs on Stile Hall Gardens (for eastbound traffic) at its junction with Regent Street;
- No-Entry signs on Stile Hall Gardens (for westbound traffic) at its junction with Brooks Road.
- Advance warning signs of road humps ahead on Stile Hall Gardens for the eastbound traffic and on Regent Street.

The measures are shown on the plan in the Appendix.

Such an approach would undoubtedly raise the expectations of residents of the neighbouring roads for traffic calming measures on their roads as well!

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The estimate cost of providing a 20mph zone scheme within the catchment area defined in section 3.10 above is £100,000 whereas the estimated cost of the piecemeal approach as defined in section 3.11 is £45,000.

4.2 There is no identified source of funds at present to facilitate the works.

4.3 The Director of Finance comments that, should the Committee decide on any proposal, work will not be able to proceed until such time as the necessary funding source is identified. This would have to be considered as part of the report seeking approval for the work.

5.0 EQUALITIES/DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The perception of '*accidents waiting to happen*' can have an adverse effect on other road users particularly those who do not have access to the use of a private car and who have to place more reliance on walking and cycling.

5.2 The introduction of any type of traffic calming measures, where justified, would afford some degree of protection to the vulnerable group of road users such as children and the elderly.

6.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Preventing extraneous traffic from using residential roads purely for rat-running purposes can bring about significant benefits in terms of creating a safer environment for the local residents and minimising other disbenefits in terms of traffic noise and pollution.
- 6.2 Any form of treatment will naturally add the physical measures to the street scene as well as having the additional impact of the associated warning signs and road markings. The benefits to be accrued in its contribution towards improving conditions, particularly for the vulnerable road users, and in reducing the number of accidents, where appropriate, would however negate the disbenefits.

7.0 NETWORK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Traffic Manager can only comment on the network implications once a set of measures has been agreed.

Background Papers:
Minutes of the Chiswick Area (Monitoring) Committee – 21 st January 2009.
This report has been or is due to be considered by:
Chiswick Area (Monitoring) Committee – 2 nd June 2009.
This report is relevant to the following wards/areas:
Chiswick Riverside.