

Meeting date: 19th December 2022

Report to: Cabinet Member for Environment and Infrastructure

Report title: Stanway Road Gap Closure - Review of Representations

Report from: Paul Tovey – Head of Highway Management

Report author/lead contact officer: Rob Wyatt – Project Manager

Wards affected:

All Wards | Bickenhill | Blythe | Castle Bromwich | Chelmsley Wood |
 Dorridge/Hockley Heath | Elmdon | Kingshurst/Fordbridge | Knowle |
 Lyndon | Meriden | Olton | Shirley East | Shirley South |
 Shirley West | Silhill | Smith's Wood | St Alphege

Public/private report: Public

Exempt by virtue of paragraph: NA

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 In July 2021, the gap in the central reservation on the A34 Stratford Road, at its junction with Stanway Road, was closed under the powers of an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order.
- 1.2 The temporary closure was justified on the grounds of the Road Traffic Collision history and concerns from the local community about the speed and volume of “rat-running” traffic travelling through the Stanway Road residential estate.
- 1.3 This report considers the impact of the closure, the feedback received from the Emergency Services, Ward Members, and the local community. The report also considers whether there are any other options available to the Highway Authority, at this stage.
- 1.4 The experimental order expires in January 2023, and therefore, it is necessary to decide whether to close the central reservation permanently or re-open the junction to all traffic movements.

2. **Decision(s) Recommended**

2.1 The Cabinet Member is asked to:

- (a) Note the contents of the report and representations received from the Emergency Services, Ward Councillors, and the local community as summarised in Appendix A.
- (b) Approve, notwithstanding the representations received, making the Metropolitan Borough of Solihull (A34 Stratford Road, Shirley) (Gap Closure in Central Reservation) Experimental Traffic Regulation Order 2021 permanent, including the additional provision to prohibit U turns on the A34 Stratford Road at Richard Lewis Way, as shown in Appendix B.

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3. Matters for Consideration

- 3.1 In the interest of reducing the number of people who were being injured in road traffic collisions at the A34 Stratford Road / Stanway Road junction, Cabinet Member agreed that the gap in the central reservation should be closed thereby removing the high-risk right hand turn movements which had a proven road safety problem.
- 3.2 The associated Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) supporting the closure was introduced in March 2021 and expires on the 19th January 2023. The key matters to consider are whether to make the gap closure permanent or to revoke the restrictions and permit all movement through this junction again.
- 3.3 As part of the initial options appraisal for this project, other solutions were considered and dismissed. These included:
- **Introducing traffic signals** which was not considered viable because they would create additional congestion on the A34 Stratford Road, and probably encourage more traffic to use Stanway Road.
 - **A roundabout solution** was not considered practical due to the need to purchase additional land and require costly underground utility diversion costs.
 - **Restricting only certain turning movements;** difficult to achieve physically due to the size of the gap needed to accommodate service and emergency vehicle access. This option would require regular police presence to ensure the level of compliance which given present level of resources is not practical and therefore, would not resolve the road safety concerns.
- 3.4 During the initial month of the new restriction, motorists were observed to be carrying out U turn movements on the Stratford Road at the adjacent junction with Richard Lewis Way. An amendment to the Experimental order prohibiting this manoeuvre was subsequently introduced. Complaints have continued about this as compliance with the temporary signage is poor at times.

4. What options have been considered and what is the evidence telling us about them?

- 4.1 The road safety evidence suggests the gap closure has successfully resolved the road safety risks. No collisions have been recorded at this junction and there is no evidence of an increased risk at any of the other junctions on the alternative routes.
- 4.2 The scheme's monitoring and evaluation data is summarised in Appendix A. There are 782 properties within the Stanway Road residential estate which generated 146 responses (18% response rate).
- 4.3 Most of these responses (80 - 55%), supported re-opening the junction due to the impact the gap closure is having on their daily vehicular based journeys, resulting in travelling greater distances, taking longer time and at greater cost. These are all very

valid and understandable reasons.

- 4.4 As part of the consultation process, the views of the Emergency Services were obtained. The Police confirmed their support for the gap in the central reservation to remain closed due to the safety improvements. They also advised there was no impact on their response times to incidents. As Chair of the Solihull Road Safety Partnership, West Midlands Fire Service welcomed the casualty reduction and confirmed response times were unlikely to be significantly affected as most crews are based in Solihull town centre and the access route has not been affected.
- 4.5 Ward Members from both Shirley East and West Wards have been consulted and their responses reflect both sides of this issue with some supporting the gap to remain closed and others being in favour of re-opening the junction to all traffic movements.
- 4.6 With over 80% of the local community not engaging in the consultation process it could be reasonable to assume the impact of the proposals has not been unreasonable and they are prepared to accept the changes and the benefits associated with reduced traffic volumes and speeds through the area, as summarised in the evaluation report.
- 4.7 West Midlands Combined Authority, through their delivery arm at Transport for West Midlands, who also share concurrent traffic management powers over the West Midlands Key Route Network, of which the A34 Stratford Road forms part, welcome the closure being made permanent. They are particularly supportive of the improved network performance resulting from the fewer road traffic collisions and delays caused by traffic waiting to turn right into the two side roads. One of their priorities is to improve Bus Journey Time reliability which this scheme has contributed to.

5. Reasons for recommending preferred option

- 5.1 The 1988 Road Traffic Act, Section 39, puts a "statutory duty" on the local authority to undertake studies into road traffic collisions, and to take steps both to reduce and prevent them.
- 5.2 In this case, it is recommended that the Road Safety benefits to society, as a whole, outweighs the environmental and financial impact experienced by the residents of the Stanway Road estate and that these dis-benefits are both reasonable and proportionate when compared to the high risk of further life changing road traffic collisions occurring in the future.

6. Implications and Considerations

- 6.1 State how the proposals in this report contribute to the priorities in the [Council Plan](#):

Priority:	Contribution:
People and Communities: 1. Improving outcomes for children and young people in Solihull.	People and our local communities are at the heart of our road safety priorities. Solihull has one of the safest local road networks in the country and this means that People

Priority:	Contribution:
<p>2. Good quality, responsive, and dignified care and support for Adults in Solihull when they need it.</p> <p>3. Take action to improve life chances and health outcomes in our most disadvantaged communities.</p> <p>4. Enable communities to thrive.</p>	<p>have a greater chance to take the opportunities that are available to them in a safe and sustainable way.</p>
<p>Economy:</p> <p>5. Develop and promote the borough's economy, with a focus on revitalising our town and local centres.</p> <p>6. Maximising the opportunities of UK Central and HS2.</p> <p>7. Increase the supply of affordable and social housing that is environmentally sustainable.</p>	<p>There are strong links to the local economy and the effective performance and operation of the highway network. Conflicting turning movements at this junction, increases the risk of a serious road traffic collision occurring as well as discouraging use by vulnerable road users. As such improving compliance and reducing vehicle delay and accidents have the potential to contribute towards maintaining a health borough economy.</p>
<p>Environment:</p> <p>8. Enhance our natural environment, improve air quality and reduce net carbon emissions.</p>	<p>The type of environments through which a highway passes can play a huge part in helping aid compliance of road safety. Therefore, establishing the correct environment around our highway assets has the potential to reduce vehicle delays which can contribute towards air quality and carbon emission targets.</p>
<p>9. Promote employee wellbeing</p>	<p>No impact.</p>

6.2 Consultation and Scrutiny:

- 6.2.1 In July 2021, an experimental Traffic Regulation Order consultation exercise took place for an initial six-month period.
- 6.2.2 This process provided an opportunity for all stakeholders, residents, and road users to feed into and comment on the proposed gap closure via an online portal or alternatively in writing or email.
- 6.2.3 Representations were received from a range of stakeholders including members of the public, business owners and ward members.

6.3 Financial implications:

- 6.3.1 The experimental gap closure was primarily funded by a grant received from Transport for West Midlands (TfWM).

6.3.2 The cost to implement the closure permanently is estimated to be in the region of £20,000 and could be funded from the Local Network Improvement Plan element of the City Region Sustainable Travel Settlement.

6.4 Legal implications:

6.4.1 None based on the recommendations of this report.

6.4.2 The necessary Traffic Regulation Order to facilitate the proposed changes was advertised in accordance with The Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996. The proposal orders being advertised on the 8th July 2021.

6.5 Risk implications, including Risk Appetite:

6.5.1 The recommendation to close this gap reduces the risk of road traffic collisions occurring in the future and the risk of the Council being accused of failing to discharge its Road Safety duty.

6.6 Equality implications:

6.6.1 None at this stage in the process.

6.7 Linkages to our work with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), Local Enterprise Partnership or the Birmingham & Solihull Integrated Care System (ICS):

6.7.1 The recommendations resulting from this paper have the potential to positively contribute to regional road safety targets as set out in the WMCA Regional Road Safety Partnership. The risk to increase delay, congestion and casualty figures was recognised by the West Midlands Combined Authority when it allocated the initial funding for this experimental traffic order pertaining to part of the West Midlands Key Route Network.

7. List of appendices referred to

7.1 Appendix A.- Summary of representations received to proposed gap closure

7.2 Appendix B – Experimental Order Location Plan

8. Background papers used to compile this report

8.1 Environment and Infrastructure Cabinet Report