

Individual Decision

Title of Report:	Proposed Bus Gate – Urquhart Road and Braemore Close, Thatcham		
Report to be considered by:	Councillor Sally Hannon	on:	17th March 2005
Forward Plan Ref:	ID0936		

Purpose of Report:

To inform the Portfolio Member for Highways and Transportation of the objections received during the statutory consultation on a proposed Bus Gate on Urquhart Road, Thatcham.

Recommended Action:

That the Portfolio Member resolves to approve the recommendations as set out in Section 5 of this report.

Reason for decision to be taken:

To prevent all motor vehicles, except buses, from using Urquhart Road and Braemore Close as a through route.

List of other options considered:

N/A

Key background documentation:

- Responses received during the statutory consultation
- Plan ref L13_1298/1

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Supporting Information

1. Background

- 1.1 As part of the planning consent for the redevelopment of the former Ministry of Defence site in Thatcham, it was agreed that a new road, Urquhart Road, would link Station Road and Ilkley Way, via Braemore Close. It was also agreed that a local bus service would use this new road to serve local residents. As part of the planning process, members of the public were given the opportunity to make representations regarding these proposals in 2000.
- 1.2 An increase in through traffic as a result of the opening of this road would not be acceptable to residents of Braemore Close and Ilkley Way. It was therefore proposed to legally prevent all traffic, except buses, cycles and emergency vehicles from using Urquhart Road and Braemore Close as a through route by the introduction of a 'Bus Gate' and supporting Traffic Regulation Order. Smaller vehicles would be physically prevented from travelling through the bus gate, whereas buses would be able to drive through. Other bus gates, of similar design, have been successfully used elsewhere in the district.
- 1.3 The physical features of the bus gate have been constructed as part of the development. Given that the new road is almost complete and some of the residential properties are occupied it was considered appropriate to undertake the statutory consultation and advertisement for the traffic order to make the bus gate legally enforceable.

2. Response to statutory consultation

- 2.1 At the close of the statutory consultation period on 26th August 2004 two responses had been received.
- 2.2 One response was from the West Berkshire Taxi & Private Hire Association who enquired whether taxis would be exempt from the proposed Order. Officers contacted the Association to inform them that taxis are not exempt from the proposed order and requested if they wanted their comments to be recorded as an objection to the proposed order. No further response has been received from the Association but it is considered necessary to report their comments.
- 2.3 The other response was from a resident of Braemore Close. Their objection was to Braemore Close being used as a through route for buses as it could de-value their property because the Close would no longer be a cul de sac and as a result the family homes would be difficult to sell.

3. Officer Comments

- 3.1 The Bus Gate has been designed to be self-enforcing and incorporates physical measures to prevent the passage of standard sized cars while allowing buses through. Allowing taxis to use the Bus Gate would mean that these physical measures could not be introduced and there would be potential for the Order to be abused. Whilst it would be advantageous for taxis to be able to use the Bus Gate, it is considered that the potential benefits are outweighed by the negative effects of through traffic abusing the Order.
- 3.2 There is no evidence to suggest that allowing buses to use Braemore Close would de-value properties or make them more difficult to sell. The decision to permit buses to use Braemore Close

has already been taken as part of the planning process. The proposed traffic order restricts all traffic except buses and cycles. If it is not implemented all traffic would be able to use Braemore Close rather than just buses and cycles.

4. Conclusion

4.1 It is considered that the introduction of a bus gate would benefit local residents as they would have better access to public transport and it would restrict through traffic from the adjacent housing development. Permitting Taxis to use the bus gate would require the physical measures to be removed which is likely to lead to the bus gate being abused and through traffic using Braemore Close.

5. Recommendations.

5.1 It is recommended that the proposed bus gate be introduced as advertised.

5.2 That the respondents are informed accordingly.

Appendices

N/A

Implications

Financial:	The Bus Gate works and the traffic order is funded as part of the introduction of development on the former Ministry of Defence site.
Legal:	The traffic regulation order will require sealing by Legal and Electoral Services.
Environmental:	The proposed bus gate will provide environmental benefits by restricting through traffic whilst allowing buses to serve the local community.

Consultation Responses

Members:	
Leader of Council:	Councillor Royce Longton supports the proposal provided that it has the support of the portfolio Holder and Ward Members.
Select Committee Chairmen:	Councillor Brian Bedwell supports the proposal on the basis that the Ward Members are happy with it.
P&L Committee Chairman (where appropriate):	N/A
Ward Members:	Councillor's Owen Jeffery, Terry Port and Paul Pritchard and Alexander Payton support the recommendation.
Opposition Spokesperson:	Councillor Brian Bedwell supports the recommendation on the basis that the Ward Members are happy with them.

Advisory Members: N/A
Local Stakeholders: Have been consulted as part of the statutory consultation process
Officers Consulted: Mark Cole and Mark Edwards
Trade Union: N/A