

Sonning Parish Council

Highways Group

PROPOSALS and CONSULTATION

for

traffic improvements in Sonning

BACKGROUND

Traffic facts (from SPC and WBC traffic survey data)

Approx. 14,000 to 15,000 vehicles cross Sonning Bridge every day.

i.e. about 7,500 each way.

estimate 95% of this is through traffic.

Approx 1,800 vehicles access the bridge via the High Street.

***There is no guarantee of a third Thames crossing
to relieve Sonning's problems.***

Sonning Parish Council decided to act -

Highways Group asked to study the issues and to propose possible solutions.

Previous presentation by Sonning & Sonning Eye Society provided valuable input.

Parish Council Highways Group co-opts two members of S&SES and two residents (already Group members) to work on study.

Highways Group

Chairman	Ken Peters	(Councillor)
Members	John Argent	(Co-opted, S&SES)
	Andy Bell	(Co-opted, Resident)
	Lesley Bates	(Clerk to Parish Council)
	Steve Chapman	(as Chair of Parish Council)
	Nick Christo	(WBC Officer as facilitator)
	Mark Green	(Councillor)
	Bob Hulley	(Co-opted, Resident)
	Colin McCulloch	(Councillor)
	Gary Robinson	(Co-opted, S&SES)
	Sharon Robinson	(Councillor)
Ian Runnalls	(Councillor)	

Group Objectives

To try to return Sonning and Sonning Eye to residents, by :-

1. Identifying and prioritising the issues that have negative impacts on the environment of Sonning and Sonning Eye.
2. Identifying measures to mitigate or eliminate these.
3. Agreeing an action plan, including time scales for the measures to be taken.

To encourage as wide and free a discussion as possible, the Group started with a completely blank sheet of paper. No initial assumptions were made, and no ideas ruled out. (Practical realities introduced only after all ideas had been discussed.)

Typical Issues Arising From “Brainstorm”

Group initially split into two teams, working independently.

Volume of traffic

Historic built environment not suitable for modern traffic

Inadequate parking for residents and visitors

Road safety - in particular Sonning Lane / A4 junction

Safety of cyclists and pedestrians

Optimise traffic lights

Pavements too narrow in many places

Roads and pavements in poor condition

Congestion - problems for public transport and services

Satnav systems do not show HGV restrictions

HGVs damage roads and buildings

Vehicle crime

Traffic flows at Thames St / Charvil Lane / Pound Lane

Damage to listed buildings (vibration and impact)

Excessive signage and “street furniture”

Noise and atmospheric pollution

Toll on Sonning Bridge

Lack of public transport / alternatives to cars

Litter from queuing traffic

Parking an issue for local interests / businesses

Traffic queues in rush hour, speeding at other times

Schools - access and parking

Traffic due to sports clubs - particularly weekends

Two types of user - residents and through traffic

Housing development and infrastructure

Damage to / loss of trees

Priority Issues Identified

Most of these issues clearly originate with the volume of traffic using Sonning Bridge and the approaches to it.

The Group's priorities have to reflect the need to seek improvements in traffic management.

The high priority issues were identified as :-

- 1** Volume of traffic using Sonning Lane to transit the High Street to get to the bridge, and known safety issues at Sonning Lane / A4 junction.
- 2** Volume of traffic using the High Street, and conflict at the junction with Thames Street. Bad sight lines also make this a dangerous junction, particularly for anyone wishing to turn right.
- 3** Poor traffic flows at Thames Street / Charvil Lane, and Pound Lane / Pearson Road junctions.
- 4** Use of Pearson Road as a bypass to queues on Thames Street, disrupting buses and other public services.
- 5** A serious lack of parking for both residents and users of local businesses / facilities.

Options and Constraints

Proposals require the consent and approval of Wokingham BC for action because of :-

- * Legal constraints - only WBC can make Traffic Regulation Orders.
- * Financial constraints - Sonning PC relies on WBC for funding.

We CAN :-

Propose measures to protect or improve the environment,
Propose changes to road layout and signage,
Propose changes to junction priorities,
Propose directing traffic to alternative routes.

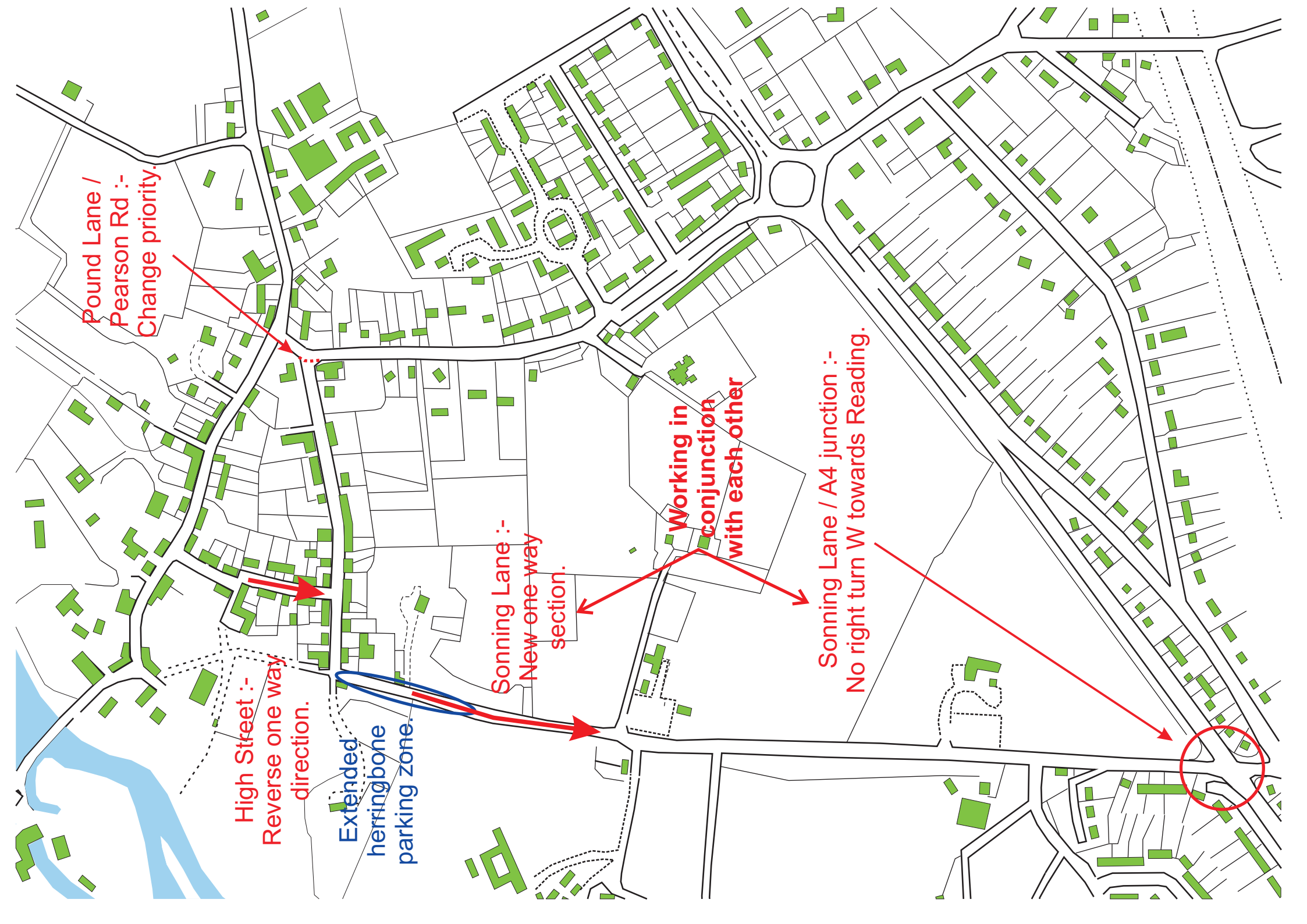
We CANNOT :-

Close public roads (- for example, Sonning Bridge),
Propose any changes which would have an adverse impact on
neighbouring Authorities.

Key Group Proposals

***With our options and priority issues in mind,
the Highways Group proposes the following :-***

- 1** Sonning Lane / A4 Junction. No right turn onto A4 (as already proposed by WBC). The intention is to discourage traffic from using Pearson Road and Sonning Lane to get to Reading, and at the same time to reduce the accident risk at this junction.
- 2** Create a one-way section southbound on Sonning Lane, from Pearson Rd to Bluecoat School, to prevent this road being used as access to the bridge. Also to prevent its use as an alternative exit from the Sonning Lane sports clubs.
- 3** Take advantage of the space freed up at the north end of Sonning Lane to create a much enlarged diagonal (herringbone) parking area for the benefit of residents and local facilities. (From the Pearson Road junction up the hill for some distance.)
- 4** Reverse the one-way system in the High Street, which works in conjunction with 2 above to prevent bridge traffic using Pearson Road. Also reduces disruption caused by left turns at the north end of the High Street.
- 5** Change the priority at the Pound Lane / Pearson Road junction to favour traffic heading for Thames Street. The intention is to ease the flow of traffic through Pound Lane to the bridge.



Pound Lane /
Pearson Rd :-
Change priority.

High Street :-
Reverse one way
direction.

Extended
herringbone
parking zone

Sonning Lane :-
New one way
section.

Working in
conjunction
with each other

Sonning Lane / A4 junction :-
No right turn W towards Reading.



Benefits and Disadvantages

No proposed changes will ever please everyone; the objective is to derive the most benefit for the greatest number of residents for the least disadvantage.

Principal Benefits :-

Eliminate heavy traffic from vulnerable High Street,
Reduced traffic flow from Sonning Lane sports facilities,
Reduced traffic in High Street and Pearson Road improves resident and pedestrian access,
Much enlarged parking space at the north end of Sonning Lane,
Improved traffic flow on bridge approach from Thames Street,
Improved traffic flow from Pound Lane to Thames Street,
Improved safety at Sonning Lane / A4 junction,
Relatively low cost solution.

Recognised Disadvantages :-

Sonning Lane residents inconvenienced by longer access route to village,
Additional northbound traffic will use Pound Lane,
Additional northbound traffic will use Thames Street between Charvil Lane roundabout and the High Street, (but otherwise volume remains unchanged).
Almost all traffic in and out of Sonning re-routed via A4 roundabouts. (Wee Waif, Pound Lane)
Adjustments may be needed to some bus routes; consultation with partners will be required.

Sonning Parish Council and Wokingham BC

These proposals have the full support of Sonning Parish Council.

Members of the Highways Group have presented them to WBC.

Wokingham BC have raised some concerns about the proposals, but discussions continue with a view to finding solutions.

Wokingham BC have already recognised that the Sonning Lane / A4 is dangerous, and had independently concluded that a No Right Turn to the A4 would be the preferred solution. They are currently working on a revised junction layout to achieve this, with a view to implementing the change as soon as funds are available.

Note that if this change is implemented on its own, without a one way section on Sonning Lane being in place, its effect will be to direct MORE traffic into Pearson Road and the High Street.

Sonning Parish Council has serious concerns about this.

Wokingham BC Concerns

- * Sonning Lane becomes a No Through Road from the A4. The initial Police reaction has been concern about access or egress in the event of a major (1 in 25 year) incident on the A4.
- * WBC want a turning point for large vehicles at the south end of the one way section in Sonning Lane, in case large vehicles use the road by mistake. We note that the coaches serving the sports clubs and Bluecoat School seem to manage perfectly well without one.
- * WBC are concerned that reversing the one way flow in the High Street would create a dangerous left turn into Pearson Road, with poor sight lines. We feel that re-profiling the junction could resolve this.

Sonning Parish Council consider that these objections must be overcome if the scheme is to succeed. With your support, negotiations will continue to ensure that all the work which has been done on your behalf is not jeopardized.

Next Steps

The purpose of this presentation has been to share our thinking and our conclusions with you, and to seek your support in the work that remains to be done.

Sonning Parish Council needs the support of Parish residents, if the WBC objections are to be overcome. For this reason, the Parish Council will be consulting with residents to canvass their views on the proposals we have put before you tonight.

The alternative is to do nothing, and to watch the degradation of our environment continue.