

Compton Bishop Parish Council

Transport Priorities for the Parish

2010 to 2015

Prepared for:

S. Walford Esq.
Somerset County Council
Strategic Planning
Environment Directorate
County Hall
Taunton Somerset TA1 4DY

Prepared by:

Highways Advisory Group
Parish Council
Compton Bishop

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Report 09.12.09 Transport vision for CB & C

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1 Introduction

1.1

This response is produced following a request from Somerset County Council for information about how the parish sees future requirements for roads, transport and users of the area. The Parish Council has asked its Highway Advisory Group to prepare this document. It should be read in conjunction with those reports previously submitted and identified as appendices. In addition there is the Village Design Statement and the Local Development Framework is an important consideration giving detail of the broader development plans by the District Council.

1.2

Local Development Framework calls for a 20-year vision with consideration of spatial strategy, housing, employment and other policy areas. It leaves aside development at Hinkley Point and also the Severn barrage proposals that are the responsibility of others. Bridgwater will take 75% of the 10,200 new dwelling demands much of which will be on the old cellophane factory site. 6,000 new jobs are required to be created.

1.3

The nominated local areas are Cheddar, Burnham and Highbridge with key rural settlements of: Axbridge, Cheddar village and Wedmore; other areas are not planned to see any development other than minor numbers of affordable housing for local people.

1.4

Tourism is to be encouraged. Public transport is important and countryside is to be protected with sustainable development adopted, incorporating climate change, building designs, affordable housing, transport and the environment. Property extensions are to be permitted and there will be affordable housing for the local elderly.

1.5

SCC advises that there will shortly be available a paper on minerals, which is expected to be available to parishes. The Batcombe quarry is expected to contribute 14,000 metric tonnes per year from an England total requirement of 216,000 m/t/year. This affects the Parish through the transportation of the product through it.

1.6

We are aware that in addition to those already mentioned the following major projects in the locality will have implications for our highways:

Bristol International Airport Development and expansion	Increase in new dwellings in the locality
The Axbridge Reservoir construction	Tourism development
The construction of Power distribution Pylons	Freight route to the East
Southern ring road around Cheddar	Commuter traffic increase
The impact of North Somerset's core strategy	Shopping and commercial vehicles increase
Construction of Hinkley C	Promotion of CROW and ANOB

1.7

From the National and Local issues outlined it is evident that unless careful attention is paid to planning the local infrastructure in a positive, but organised fashion our Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty with the Mendip Hills could be blighted and residents seriously affected.

2 The Locality

This rural Parish extends along the southern slopes of the Mendip Hills to the East of the M5 gap. It has one longitudinal East / West lane with offshoots and at its eastern end a north / south Principal road the A38, which is a major artery for the southwest providing access to the M5 motorway and traffic between Bristol and Bridgwater/Taunton the County town. It also acts as a relief road when and if the M5 motorway is restricted in anyway. A map of the parish is provided at **Appendix No. 1**.

3 Parish objectives

3.1

To have Somerset County Council recognise the requirements for future infrastructure and incorporate these developments within their plan for action in a phased manner.

3.2

To ensure that sufficient financial funds are allocated by Somerset County Council to their budget to enable the works identified to be carried out at the appropriate time.

3.3

To ensure residents safe passage in their travels and the maintenance of the rural aspects of the Parish, as far as this is practical.

4 Summary

The key requirement is for SCC to recognise the strategic worth of the Principal A38 route in meeting the traffic demands upon it and to prepare this artery for the levels of safe traffic flows that it and the Axbridge bypass will be required to carry in the future. Recognise that transport users of each mode need to be able to pursue their activity in a safe environment. To make financial provision for all necessary works and offer a coherent plan for their execution. Currently the Parish considers itself under attack from growing volumes of traffic and the lack of safe provision for the traversing of the A38. Schemes developed need to be practical and acceptable to residents with consultation playing an important role.

5 Political aspects

5.1

It is evident that the current policy the County is pursuing with roads, is that unless some fatalities have been incurred at a particular location, little remedial action will be taken other than maintenance issues of the existing infrastructure. Even then the action will be limited to minimal expenditure. It seems that money is the driving force as opposed to safety of the public.

5.2

It is recognised that Somerset is a large County with many demands, but then so are others. The reasons behind this policy are not fully understood and they maybe due to the transfer of finance from a provincial county to other areas where national funds have been allocated. Currently there is perceived to be neither the political will nor motivation to embark upon sensible preparatory development for future circumstances. The cry heard is that there is not the budget available to complete such preventive major expenditures. The transfer of responsibility for roads other than Motorways from the Department for Transport to County responsibility is seen as having had a curbing effect on vital strategic development due to a starvation of finance.

5.3

With a new government sufficient finance allocations are a necessary feature. The Southern Bristol ring road and the development of the A38 as a dual carriageway is long overdue. In fact both North Somerset and Somerset itself are the only counties where this A38 artery is single carriageway from Burton in the North to Exeter in the South.

6 Users

Although a small parish with just 512 dwellings the range of users is wide.

- Pedestrians: Residents walking dogs
Children walking to school or catch a bus
Walking to catch a bus, Visitors hiking
- Cyclists: Visiting Axbridge the closest local town
Leisure, Racing on A38
- Cars, taxis & Motorcycles: Commuting
Visiting shopping centres, Leisure
- Vans and Pickups Servicing properties
Transporting goods
- Trucks: Distribution servicing
Tippers Moving Quarry product
HGV Local produce transport
- Buses Servicing local community
Coaches transporting to Webbington Hotel
- Farm tractors: Servicing local farms
Land and Harvesting contractors
Livestock movements, Hedgecutting
- Horses: Leisure pursuits, Servicing Livery stables
- Rat runs Commuters, Wells, Cheddar, Axbridge to Weston

7 Sustainability

With an ANOB running from East to West along the northern side of the parish, sustainability is recognised as an important consideration. The Mendip Hills provide not only a major leisure area for locals and residents from North Somerset, but also for the City of Bristol and tourists. Its management is in the hands of the National Trust and every support possible should be given to this organisation in maintaining this pristine environment for posterity. The threat of intrusive "Pylons" is evident and urgent consideration should be given to ensuring that underground cabling is used for the sections passing through the parish so to preserve the uniqueness of the environment for generations to come. Once despoiled it cannot be replaced.

8 Aspirations

The theme behind this parish's aspirations is that of "Safety". The Parish needs have been present for successive parish council terms and this council wishes to see action to satisfy them as a preventive measure if for no other reason. They are:

- Improve the junction of Old Coach Road/A38/Cross Lane in line with the proposals previously submitted and repeated here in **Appendix No. 4** and including the establishment of a pedestrian refuge to the South of the A38 junction.
- Develop the verge along Cross Lane up to the field footpath entrance, again in line with the proposal outlined in **Appendix No. 5**.
- Maintain the rural aspect of the Webbington Road
- Ensure the A38 is resurfaced with sound deadening materials
- Find measures to ease the car parking congestion at the East end of Old Coach Road particularly at weekends
- Adopt a chicane type priority traffic flow direction to kerb excessive speed at the East end of Old Coach Road where hazards are greatest.
- Maintain cut verges and hedgerows during the growing season.
- Install a barrier to Old Coach Road at the base of the Scaurs Bridleway and footpath, which does not provide an obstruction to horses
- Improve the road surface of Kennel Lane where it is worn due to vehicles using the location as a turning point.
- The maintenance of road surfaces in good condition, gully emptying and periodic sweeping

The Parish Council would welcome direction by County and District authorities and knowledge of potential sources of funds both internal and external to implement these aspirations.

9 Problems/challenges identified

- Negative approach to achieving the aspirations
- Budgetary constraints in the short term
- A lack of action
- Political timescales due to a changes of Council

10 Broad issues with differing modes

This paragraph makes general comment on the broad issues that exist for each mode:

10.1 Pedestrians and cyclists

These are activities to be encouraged for a healthy life style and for reducing the carbon footprint created by the parish. Tourists are to be encouraged and with the Mendip Hills asset available, safe means of circulation is required. Easier access from Cross towards Axbridge, the nearest rural settlement and vice versa is to be encouraged and will come about naturally once suitable and adequate infrastructure is in place. A recent local questionnaire from residents showed a majority giving support to the requirement to develop a proper safe footway. **Appendix No. 5** provides detail of the scheme. Such a path would conveniently link Weare to the Strawberry Line cycleway.

10.2 Public transport

There exists an hourly service by “First bus” from Cross Lane to Wells or Weston Super Mare on weekdays and two hourly at weekends. A limited service by “Coombs” runs on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays to Weston Super Mare. For the latter a longer time for users to spend in WSM would be beneficial. At present if the stay required is longer than 2 hours there is no means of return by the same route. WSM is the nearest retail centre for this area. The fare stage structure by both companies bears examination with a view to achieving lower overall fares even if this means limiting the free bus pass for the “Over 60” group. The development of other and better publicised community transport facilities to provide easier access to local towns for residents would assist a reduction in local car use where due to the rural location it is currently an essential feature.

10.3 Commercial traffic

For the benefit of the region commercial traffic is necessary. The infrastructure must be capable of handling these requirements to ensure national economic efficiency. The A 371 is perceived as an inadequate route for such traffic being little better than a rural road for much of its run. Longer term requires an adequate East/West routing. The main local artery the A38 needs to be improved to provide the quality feeder that is necessary to give access to either the motorway network, airport or the City of Bristol.

10.4 Cars and Parking

10.4.1

Being a rural parish the use of the car by residents is almost an essential requirement for business and obtaining the necessities to support a household. Youngsters seek to become mobile at the earliest opportunity and with a population that is ageing the motorcar is an essential resource. The increases in car volumes are of concern. These have been highlighted in the report already submitted to Somerset Highways and repeated here in **Appendix No. 3**. There is the noise from traffic on the A38 that impinges upon much of Cross and Motorway road noise affects the Western end of the Parish. The use of “Noise deadening road surfaces” on the relevant roads would reduce this unpleasant effect. Both Old Coach Road and Webbington Road are used as a “Rat-run” by commuters from habitations such as Cheddar and this is likely to increase with the construction of additional dwellings.

10.4.2

The A38 cross roads are a major concern for safety and a proposal outlined in **Appendix No. 4** has been put to SCC Highways. The junction as it is, gives drivers a complex hazard and under certain circumstances "Lines of sight" are severely restricted. There is general consensus that the junction needs to be improved and the accident record is not good.

10.4.3

Car parking on the road at the East end of Old Coach Road has so far proved an intractable problem. This is particularly bad at weekends when local residents are home and when the public houses, the New Inn and White Hart enjoy extra custom. Ideally space for off street parking is required, but by the nature of the properties very limited space is readily available. Residents with off street parking facilities should be encouraged to use them. A priority flow scheme linked to additional pavements would offer safer conditions for pedestrians, limit the amount of on street parking and provide emergency services with easier access should the requirement arise.

10.4.4

There are active farms in the area such as Southcroft, Bramble, Crawford Estate and their contractors and Webbington Farm to name but a few. Their requirement involves the movement of wide equipment, which can be destructive of verges that in turn widens the roads and leads to an increase of traffic speeds. Then there are livestock, animal feeds, and dairy product movements and most particularly at certain periods during the year contractors with large machinery and Fast-trac tractors and trailers.

10.4.5

Car parking facilities along the Webbington Road beneath Crook Peak are insufficient when the weather is good and the model aeroplane fliers combine with hikers and horseboxes to concentrate in this locality. Longer term as the site becomes more popular additional facilities will need to be put in place although the National Trust uses the car park accommodation size to limit the numbers at a site at any one time.

10.4.6

Most tourists arrive in the Parish by car so parking provision has to be a consideration.

11 Road conditions

11.1

In July 2008 a road condition report was submitted to Somerset Highways by the Parish providing the latter's non-expert view on the condition of our roads. Following submission, remedial work has been progressively undertaken such that at a cursory glance the parish's roads are currently in a fair state. However, the opportunity has been taken to produce a further report on the condition of our roads and infrastructure and the results are itemised in **Appendix No. 6**. From this it will be observed that there are examples where the road surface is in urgent need of patching and these should form part of a short-term routine maintenance plan.

11.2

Most concerning is that the island marker lights on the traffic island to the north of Wavering Down Rise on the A38 were reported as not functioning a week or so before 13th November, 2009 and the advice repeated on the 13th. As of this report's date the defect has not been rectified.

11.3

We see it as important that the road surfaces are kept up to standard. Where trenching occurs by other utilities the reinstatement needs to be effective allowing for the inevitable subsidence. There are numerous examples of subsidence across the parish. In a freeze this leads to frozen surfaces.

11.4

The emptying and cleaning of gullies to ensure the free flow of flash flood water is required. This is particularly so on the A38 western side towards the top of Shute Shelve where leaves completely block the gratings. A further critical spot is at the junction of Vernon Lane with Webbington Road. Here on the west side there is inadequate fall to the grating so that water instead of entering the gully bypasses it and floods the junction. Corrective work is required to deal with runoff from the field.

11.5

Verge grass cutting is also considered to be necessary on a basis of cutting more than the once per year that they currently receive. Our view is that a minimum of 2 cuts is necessary to maintain an acceptable standard and ensure safe bend sight lines.

11.6

To be absolutely clear the top two priorities for this parish are:

- The improvement of the A38 junction with Old Coach Road to make it safer
- To improve the pedestrian and cycle access to our nearest rural settlement namely Axbridge with a safe path to the public footpath entrance off Cross Lane.

We repeat again here for clarity that the "No entry" proposal to Old Coach Road for the junction is not an acceptable solution locally. For whatever proposal is put local public consultation is an important requirement.

11.7

Speed of traffic along the East/ West section of Old Coach Road and the Webbington Road is a concern to residents. The Parish subscribes to the SID (Special indicator device), which measures speed and numbers of vehicles passing, but regrettably no meaningful statistics have been forthcoming due to it being sited in the wrong location and to having been vandalised on one occasion. Plans need to be made to site it in the East/West section of Old Coach Road and the Webbington Road.

12 Projects Timetable

Discussion on the two key projects has been in progress for some time. These are identified as the A38/Cross Lane junction and the footpath to Axbridge. It is accepted that such projects take a while to reach the implementation stage. To that end we identify in **Appendix No. 7 Page No 1** what to us is a practical approach indicating that the projects should be capable of being completed effectively by the end of 2011. Such a programme is expected to find acceptability within this Parish and hopefully within the County Council structure. We also show in **Page No 2** a timeline chart indicating the impacts of a range of threatened projects all of which will impinge upon our roads.

13 Conclusion

This review is intended to provide the County's traffic strategic planners with the basis of local thinking concerning the developments that are required for local roads. The parish is relatively small, but with the A38 artery running through it improvements with Old Coach Road are seen as urgent, having been long overdue for attention. Red Route considerations have yet to materialise for this junction and the cost of effective change is probably greater than the Red Route budget can accommodate. It therefore falls to strategic planning to ensure that sufficient funds to implement agreed changes are made available.

There is a wide range of users for the roads and they all need to be provided with safe effective facilities for circulation.

We have highlighted our perceptions of matters that effect users and trust that the comments will be beneficial in taking their needs into account. Inevitably with roads they cannot be viewed in parish isolation because what happens in surrounding areas can have a serious impact our situation. We have highlighted where we see a range of threats arising and we expect planning to take these matters on board noting the timescale over which different schemes come to fruition.

We are prepared to assist in any way that we can to ensure the successful implementation of an improved road network for the Parish.

14 Authors:

Compton Bishop Parish Council Highways Advisory Group
Councillors Farley, Parker and Rolfe

15 Resource implications

Resulting from this report directly: None

16 Recommendation

It is recommended that:

- The report be noted and approved.
- The report if approved is forwarded to the Strategic Planning office of Somerset County Council for their consideration and further discussion as necessary.

Date: 8th January, 2010

We are under attack !

The building plans in this area over the next few years are :

Pylons 2012 - 2017 - Construction

Hinkley C Operational by 2017

Bristol International Airport - increase in flights/passengers (173% increase in next 20 years)

Axbridge Reservoir 2017 -2027 but could be complete by 2020 depending on studies.

Cheddar 200 new homes (has 2209 homes now so this is around 10% increase (based on 2004 figures)

Key Rural Settlements Including Axbridge 550 homes - 6% increase

Timetable of all events

