

REPORT OF A MEETING TO DISCUSS HGV TRAFFIC PROBLEMS ON THE B4058 (WOTTON ROAD)

RANGEWORTHY VILLAGE HALL, 11th February 2011

PRESENT Alyson Marsden, Simon Woolnough, Co-chairs
Steve Webb, MP
Geoff Dawe, Chairman, Rangeworthy Parish Council
Howard Gawler, SGC Councillor, Ladden Brook
Sandra O'Neill, SGC Councillor, Charfield
Pat Hockey, SGC Councillor, Frampton Cotterell
Dave Hockey, SGC Councillor, Frampton Cotterell
Claire Young, SGC Councillor, Westerleigh

Plus 89 local residents from Bagstone, Cromhall, Rangeworthy & Iron Acton

Councillor Brian Allinson, SGC Executive Officer for Planning, Transportation and Strategic Environment, and Dave Buckland, SGC Transportation Services, had been invited, but were unable to attend.

1 AIMS OF THE MEETING

To inform residents about the current situation with regard to the Section 52 agreement on the Latteridge Road, and to investigate ways of mitigating the HGV problem on the Wotton Road in the future.

2 STATEMENTS

Geoff Dawe

Rangeworthy Parish Council had always supported South Gloucestershire Council, and had lobbied them for many years about the HGV problems. Now SGC had let them down by removing the long-standing Section 52 agreement without any warning. Rangeworthy had a school, a children's playground, a pub and a village Hall on, or just off, the main road. Latteridge had none of these things. Yet Rangeworthy was now being asked to carry even more HGVs. The main concern of the Parish Council, with respect to the HGVs, was the safety of children going to and from school. He suggested a possible solution to the HGV problem would be to have a weight restriction one way at the ends of both the Latteridge and Wotton Roads, so that HGVs would not be passing each other in opposite directions.

Alyson Marsden

She provided some background to the HGV situation which had been getting bad as far back as the 1980s, and the roads have not changed at all since then. To make matters worse, in 1983 Northavon District Council (against all advice) permitted the building of a large warehouse and distribution centre in Yate, away from adequate motorway links. Northavon DC realised that the already overloaded B4058 would have to bear most of the extra traffic

from here, and they placed a Section 52 agreement on Sainsburys (then owners of the distribution centre). This prohibited the distribution centre lorries from using the B4058. The distribution centre is now owned by DHL, and leased to Morrisons. HGV difficulties were exacerbated in 1987 by the Wickwar gas explosion (caused by HGVs fracturing the gas main) which resulted in a weight restriction through Wickwar – much of the Wickwar HGV traffic ended up on the B4058.

The first that Rangeworthy knew of the removal of the Section 52 agreement came on 1st February in the *Focus* Lib Dem newsletter, and in a report by Howard Gawler to the Rangeworthy Parish Council that evening. We were presented with a *fait accompli*. The decision had already been made, without any consultation or warning to the residents or Parish Councils of Rangeworthy, Cromhall or Tortworth. The SGC councillors were maintaining that we would only have about 13 extra Morrisons lorries per day through Rangeworthy and Cromhall, based on an analysis of lorry movements before and during the recent Latteridge Road closure. She disputed this, because there was an unusual increase in Morrisons lorries on the B4058 just before the survey figures (reported in Rangeworthy Parish Council minutes of 6 October 2009). Because of this, she suggested that there might be an extra 25 Morrisons lorries per day, after the Section 52 removal.

Currently the Wotton Road was carrying 790 HGVs per day, compared with 574 for the Latteridge Road. As far as the really big trucks (the 44 tonners) were concerned, the Wotton Road was carrying twice as many as the Latteridge Road – 188 per day, compared with 99. She felt that it was a sad day when a small, but vociferous, hamlet like Latteridge could dictate HGV traffic routing to SGC.

Howard Gawler

He said that, according to the figures, the Morrisons lorries at present represented about 2.8% of the HGV traffic on Wotton Road. After the Section 52 agreement was removed, this would rise “insignificantly” (*to 4.4% actually*). The Councillors did not make the decision to remove the Section 52 agreement. It was made by Councillor Brian Allinson (SCG Executive Officer) and an officer from SCG Transportation Services. The speed limit on part of the B4058 through Rangeworthy would be reduced to 30 mph within about a month, at which time the Section 52 removal would take effect. There would be a 30 mph speed limit in 2 places on the Latteridge Road within a year. He said that a weight limit had been promised for the Wotton Road and the Latteridge Road but, when pressed, could not say whether the promise was in writing or just verbal.

Pat Hockey

The Section 52 removal decision had been taken after discussions at a Safer Stronger Community Group (SSCG). The SSCGs had originally been set up so that members of the public could voice safety concerns to the police and councillors. The Latteridge residents had lobbied their SSCG for removal of the Section 52 agreement, and had been very well-organised and extremely vocal. They had persuaded Councillor Allinson, who had made the decision about the Section 52 removal. It was not correct to say that the councillors had voted for it. “We don’t vote any more” she said, (voice from the back of the hall “We do”). There would only be an extra 13 Morrisons lorries going through Rangeworthy if the Section 52 agreement was removed, so it was decided to try this first and see what happened in Rangeworthy. Things would be closely monitored, and more speed limits and crossing points could be provided if required. She regretted that Rangeworthy and Cromhall residents had not been aware that this was happening, but said that there was nothing to stop them from lobbying their own SSCG (the Ladden Brook one).

Dave Hockey

The way that this situation had developed from lobbying at just one SSCG had highlighted a weakness in the system.

Steve Webb, MP

He felt that the decision on Section 52 removal should not have been taken, and that the process of using an SSCG was not satisfactory. He would talk to Morrisons. He pointed out that there was nothing to stop the Section 52 agreement being changed again, if councillors could be persuaded.

3 QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

The councillors had said that the effects of the Section 52 removal would be “insignificant”. If insignificant, why bother to do it? No reply.

Why was there no consultation? No satisfactory reply.

Why was the notification to Morrisons (only sent out on 9th February) not postponed until after this meeting, so that some discussion could take place by Rangeworthy/Cromhall residents? Answer – it was nothing to do with the councillors, the decision was made by the Executive Officer.

A gas main had been fractured by HGVs in Wickwar. Has there been any consideration about the gas main running through Cromhall? No reply

Since the Section 52 agreement will not be lifted until Rangeworthy has its 30 mph speed limit, could the introduction of the 30 mph limit be delayed? Answer – No

Was there any linkage between the 30 mph speed limit and the Section 52 removal? No reply.

How would the 30 mph speed limit be enforced? Answer – the Police would be asked to carry out speed checks in the early stages.

More clarity was needed about the traffic survey data. Was it for one day, or averaged over several days? No reply

The councillors had said that the situation on Wotton Road would be “closely monitored” after the Section 52 removal. What did that mean? Answer – SCG would be looking to see if there was an increase in complaints from residents.

The Latteridge Road is pushing for a 7.5 tonne weight limit. If a weight limit was permitted for the Latteridge Road, would the Wotton Road also get one? Answer – yes, definitely.

There are already 22 Morrisons lorries/day which should not be using the Wotton Road. Why are they allowed? Answer – policing the S52 agreement is almost impossible.

The Council’s action means that they must be assuming that the B4058 is a safer road than the Latteridge Road. Is this correct? Answer – no, not at all

4 COMMENTS FROM THE FLOOR

Everyone agrees, and the figures show, that the Section 52 removal was a bad decision and the lack of consultation was lamentable. The Council should reverse the decision straight away.

The council seems to be looking on this as an experiment (“waiting to see what happens in Rangeworthy”). If so, it is an experiment playing with children’s lives.

If it is an experiment, we deserve to see the results.

A 30 mph speed limit is all very well, but what we really want is no extra HGV’s. They are so big that being hit by an HGV at 30 mph is going to be just as bad as at 40 mph.

A weight limit at M5 Junction 14 (except for A38 and local egress and access) would solve many problems.

The new Tesco superstore being built at Yate is going to mean even more lorries on our road.

In addition to the Morrisons-liveried lorries, there are lorries involved from other suppliers to Morrisons.

There is an EU proposal for a new breed of 60 tonne “superlorries”.

Hardly any HGV’s take notice of the 20 mph speed limit near Rangeworthy School in the mornings and afternoons. So they are not likely to take any notice of a 30 mph speed limit either.

The sewers are collapsing under the weight and vibration of the HGVs.

A frequent comment concerned the future, after Morrisons have left the Yate distribution centre. This is due to happen in late 2011/early 2012, when they will be moving to a new centre near Bridgewater, close to the motorway. Morrisons, with a specific need for most trips to Cribbs Causeway, naturally use the Latteridge Road more than the Wotton Road. This would almost certainly not be the case for the next transport company to lease the Yate distribution centre. With the Section 52 agreement gone, we will have no protection against this extra traffic.

We should not get too bogged down with just Morrisons traffic. The only way to reduce the huge volume of HGV traffic is with a weight limit. We should lobby hard for one.

5 WAY FORWARD

Anyone with views about the Section 52 removal, or the way that it was implemented without consultation, is asked to contact Brian Allinson, SGC Executive Officer. His address is brian.allinson@southglos.gov.uk

A B4058 Action Group, with residents from Rangeworthy and Cromhall would be set up. First tasks would be to seek better communication from our councillors, to find out more about the quality of data from the traffic surveys, to try to get the Section 52 agreement reinstated when Morrisons leave, and to press for a weight limit.

Councillor Brian Allinson has invited us to see him, so a meeting would be set up soon.

The Action Group would inform everyone of the date of the next Ladden Brook SSCG meeting.

A petition, calling for re-instatement of the Section 52 agreement and for a weight limit, was signed by 85 attendees. More signatures will be obtained and the petition presented to SGC at the next full Council meeting on 23rd February at 7 pm at Nibley Court, Westerleigh Business Park. Everyone is invited to come.

M.H.Marsden,
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13th February 2011