

CLOSE INTERSECTION TO CUT BY-PASS HAZARD, INQUIRY TOLD

C.T. May 10, 1968

CHRISTCHURCH Borough Council were asking for the closure of the central reservation intersection of the Burton Road junction with Christchurch by-pass "reluctantly," Mr. John Macfadyen, the town clerk, appearing for the council, told a Ministry of Transport public inquiry.

The inquiry, held at the town hall last week, was into the council's request to the Minister of Transport to confirm their Order to close the intersection in the interest of safety.

Mr. Macfadyen said that the council had, in the past, asked the Ministry of Transport either to create a 40 m.p.h. speed limit or to put traffic lights at that junction. However, the Minister had not agreed to either of these proposals, and, in a sense, the council had been forced into the position of asking for the closure.

They were asking for the closure because they feared there would be a serious accident at the spot in the future, and the council were not prepared to accept the responsibility for such an accident.

PLANS

Mr. F. R. C. Hart, the deputy borough surveyor to the council, produced plans of the by-pass and the Burton Road junction, as well as details of a footbridge for pedestrians and cyclists to be erected at the junction at a cost of £10,530; £4,174 of this was to be paid for by the council.

He said accident statistics to December, 1966, showed that since the by-pass opened in 1959 there had been 84 accidents at the Burton Road crossing. Eight of these were fatalities and 17 involved serious injuries. If the Order was confirmed traffic from Burton would go to the Stony Lane roundabout or would turn left on the by-pass to Somerford roundabout.

Traffic from Purewell Cross northwards would turn left on the by-pass to the Stony Lane roundabout.

INCREASING

Mr. Arthur Crowther, assistant county surveyor to Hampshire County Council, said that an increasing number of road accidents began to occur at the junctions of Stony Lane and Burton Road with Christchurch By-pass.

As a result of these accidents and a pressure of requests from Christchurch Borough Council and also petitions from residents in the adjoining areas, it was agreed with the Ministry of Transport to provide a roundabout at Stony Lane and to close the gaps in the central reservation at Burton Road.

It was envisaged that the roundabout would slow down traffic to allow pedestrians to cross at Stony Lane. At Burton Road it was agreed between Hampshire County Council and Christchurch Borough Council to jointly finance the construction of a footbridge which would commence in June, 1968.

These improvements arose from the need to improve safety at these intersections where emerging or right-turning traffic movements conflicted with the heavy fast traffic movements along the by-pass.

In order to achieve maximum road safety and to remove the hazard of 3,245 vehicles per day attempting to find gaps in the almost continuous by-pass traffic it was considered a matter of essential traffic management to close up the gaps in the central reservation opposite Burton Road and divert the essential traffic movements to the adjacent roundabouts.

Mr. Stanley Bartlett, the assistant manager of the Hants and Dorset and Wilts and Dorset bus companies, said that if the intersection was closed it would mean a great deal of extra mileage for the buses, and this in turn would mean an increase in fares.

An example of this was that an eightpenny fare from Burton Green to Purewell would be increased to 1s. 1d. Passengers would have to pay to go an extra distance that neither they, nor the bus company wanted to do. The bus company provided a service to the public in this area but at present the service in the area was only just breaking even financially. The increased fares which would result from the closure of the intersection might mean fewer passengers, which might, in turn mean the discontinuation of the service altogether.

Mr. Bartlett said that in his opinion traffic lights at the junction would be the right thing. The bus company staff were used to negotiating these and traffic on the by-pass would only be caused a reduction of speed which was "infinitesimal".

He said that alternative routes suggested for the buses were not suitable because of the condition of the roads to be used. Mr. Philip Evans, who represented the bus company, said that convenience to the public was at stake, as well as public safety. He said in the view of the company, money spent on a roundabout or traffic lights would be money well spent.

"I would suggest that in making your report you point out the illogicalities of the case being put forward reluctantly by the Christchurch Borough Council." he told the Minister's inspector, Mr. J. R. Willis.

Miss E. M. Crossley, the headmistress of Burton School, said that if the intersection were closed it would cause difficulty for children who came to school by bus.

It would also drastically affect the school's swimming sessions at Somerford School. At present some 70 to 80 pupils were sent to the swimming sessions, and were taken there by a coach which ran a shuttle service. The children had 20 minutes in the water and a few minutes before and afterwards to change. Additional time in travelling to and from the pool would make things almost impossible to organise.

NOT CONVINCED

Mr. A. C. Hale, the clerk to the Ringwood Rural District Council, said that the Order was being made in the interest of safety, but neither the R.D.C. nor the local parish council were convinced that the Order would add to safety in the area.

He said he hoped the inspector, after visiting the site, would consider the inconvenience which would be caused to such a large number of people if the intersection were closed.

Mr. E. H. Harrison, the chairman of the Burton and Winkton Residents' Association, said that it was essential that bus services to Burton and the surrounding area remained but routes along Stony Lane were not at all suitable if they were to be re-routed.

Dr. Alistair McLeish said that his practice would be very adversely affected by the closure of the intersection. It would also cause a longer journey for his patients who had to come to his surgery and if he were called out in an emergency this would take a much longer time too.

RE-OPEN

Mr. A. J. Hembling showed the inspector a report of a similar case brought before the Court of Appeal. The council in question had been told that they had no right to make motorists make an extra journey and were ordered to re-open the intersection.

Mr. C. H. Fisher said he was a resident of Burton and if the intersection was closed there was a danger of the area being cut off completely, especially cutting off people from their work-place.

Mr. F. D. Lane said the whole by-pass had been a patchy affair and he did not agree with the closure of the intersection.

Mr. Geoffrey Staynings, a member of Christchurch East Parish Council, said his objections to the closure were that it would turn what is already a fast by-pass, into a very fast motorway.

It would cause considerable inconvenience to the majority of the residents of Burton, who would be deprived of their most direct access to Christchurch and Bournemouth.

It would result in extra cross traffic through Burton, as residents of Bransgore, Burley, would now enter Burton by Summers Lane or Preston Lane, and leave by either Martins Hill Lane, Footners Lane or Whitehayes Road. All these roads were minimum width carriageways, had no speed limits, no lighting and were used regularly by the majority of Burton school children who had to cross them in the course of going to and from school.

Stony Lane would become the main road from the north, but it was already overcrowded. This created a danger for women with prams, as well as Burton children who had to go to Christchurch to school walking in roads without pavements and without a speed limit, only two cars width with a dangerous narrow bridge to go under (double-decker buses using this bridge had to use the centre of the road).

A few years ago when Stony Lane was closed for sewer pipe laying there was traffic chaos in Burton; traffic on the Salisbury Road built up as far as The Oak Inn. It was feared that this would happen at the Stony Lane roundabout.

TRAFFIC LIGHTS

Capt. J. E. N. Coope, Rural District Councillor for Burton Ward said that from time to time the Rural District Council had taken up the question of traffic lights at the junction, but had been told that the Minister had made it quite clear that he would not contemplate either traffic lights or a speed limit on the by-pass. The Rural District Council only agreed to the proposals for the roundabout at the Stony Lane junction because they had been told that traffic lights at the Burton Road junction were out of the question. Many local residents had felt that the installation of traffic lights at the A.338 junction with the by-pass would largely prevent motor accidents and make it safer for pedestrians to cross. Even if traffic lights resulted in a slowing down of traffic on the by-pass this would be welcomed by local people, both motorists and pedestrians and would help to stagger the arrival of traffic at the Fountain roundabout in Christchurch, and avoid the build-up on the by-pass, which often reached back to the Stony Lane roundabout.

"Although we are told traffic lights cannot be provided on major dual carriageway roads, they continue to function perfectly adequately on the Winchester By-pass," he said.

On either side of the Burton Road junction on the by-pass there were at present three signs:— accident black spot; cross roads; school crossing patrol.

It was assumed that the cross road sign would be moved if and when the intersection was closed, and that there would be no school crossing patrol once a footbridge was provided, and presumably the accident black spot sign would also be removed.

Hence, users of the by-pass would have virtually no warning of traffic filtering in from either side. This would cause traffic to go faster, and was one reason why the Rural District Council strongly favoured that no action should be taken to close the intersection.

Mrs. M. McLeish, a member of the Christchurch East Parish Council, told the inquiry that her objections included: the inconvenience—involving extra distance, petrol and time—to many people who used the Bockhampton-Hawthorn Roads route, and the intersection, when travelling from Bransgore.

Bransgore traffic deflected from the natural southern outlet of the Bockhampton - Hawthorn roads route would have to travel via Stony Lane, approaching it by one of these routes:

Via Winkton where there was a very dangerous "T" junction, especially dangerous for traffic turning towards Bransgore from the Christchurch direction.

Via Derritt Lane and Sopley Park area. This involves negotiating a very dangerous narrow winding stretch of the A.338 road between Winkton and Sopley.

Via Preston Lane----Footners Lane.

Via Summers Lane — Martins Hill Lane.

Both or the last two routes involved dangerous crossings of the A.338 and all these lanes were unsuited to a large volume of through traffic, which would increase risks to Burton school children in particular.

The closure of the intersection interfered with the coast-bound traffic. It would cut off the direct route from Salisbury via Ringwood to Mudeford.

Some Bransgore traffic may choose to travel by way of the Cat & Fiddle and the A.35 rather than Stony Lane. The Cat and Fiddle junction was already an accident black spot, and this route was also longer. The closure would interfere with the Salisbury bus route through Burton.

Mr. Macfadyen asked that in the event of the Minister not confirming the Order, but going ahead with building a roundabout, that while it was being built the intersection should be closed meantime.