

SIR GEORGE SAYS NO TO THE 'HAM-BONE' PLAN

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A PROPOSAL to reduce accidents at one of the most dangerous junctions on the A35 trunk road to Christchurch and Bournemouth was outlined at a Ministry of Transport inquiry at Christchurch on Wednesday.

Hampshire County Council plans what it calls "a ham-bone junction" for the road crossing near the historic 12th century Cat and Fiddle Inn at Hinton Admiral.

The hearing was into objections to the Council's proposed Compulsory Purchase order for the acquisition of the necessary land.

The objectors were Lt.-Col. Sir George Meyrick who owns the land, Mrs. M. E. J. James, tenant of the Post Office adjoining the junction. Brickwoods Ltd., lessees of the Cat and Fiddle Inn, and the Bransgore Residents Association.

Mr. A. J. Greenwell, assistant solicitor of Hampshire County Council, said the three areas of land required under compulsory purchase amounted to 0.756 acres.

Some years ago the Council decided to carry out an improvement scheme on the A35 through the New Forest. One aim was to improve the road to a "speed value" of 50 mph, which was lower than would otherwise have been designed because of the danger from grazing animals.

Other aims were to widen the road to a 24ft. carriageway and to improve dangerous crossroads and junctions.

The work had been carried out with two exceptions, one of which was the Cat and Fiddle junction.

QUITE POOR

The present carriageway was 20ft. wide, and the visibility for traffic approaching the A35 from the minor road, the C49 Ringwood-road, was "quite poor."

Vehicles travelling from Christchurch and wishing to turn right into Ringwood-road had to stop in the main traffic stream. There was no room for traffic behind to pass on the inside.

Traffic travelling towards Christchurch was frequently heavy in the summer, and waking cars caused a queue. This led to impatience and frustration.

A traffic census in August 1956 showed that about 7,000 passenger cars a day used the road, and 38 per cent turned across the junction.

In August 1961 a census at Holmsley showed that the number of cars was 11,131, a 54 per cent increase.

The effect of the road conditions had been to produce a number of accidents—47 between February 1, 1959 and November 25, 1962. The council considered that the conditions were a major cause of 36 accidents.

"If a suitable improvement had been carried out most of the accidents would have been avoided," said Mr. Greenwell.

The Council's scheme would increase visibility. It would enable crossing or turning traffic to wait in safety in the centre of the road until it was safe to cross the traffic on the A35.

Vehicles coming from Christchurch wishing to turn right would be able to turn alongside a ham-bone shaped central reservation and wait in safety. Vehicles behind them could pass on the inside, and through traffic would proceed freely.

The minor road would be realigned, and there would be a short length of dual carriageway with a ham-bone-shaped central island.

The original point of entry of the Ringwood-road would be stopped up.

Two ham - bone junctions had already been installed on a trunk road in the county—the A30—at Blackwater and at the Dorchester Arms, Hook.

At Blackwater there had in 19 months been one accident a month before the improvement. In the 10 months following the improvement the number of accidents was four, a reduction of roughly half.

At Hook, which had a "half ham-bone," 21 accidents were recorded in 24 months before the improvement. In the 20 months after the improvement there were 11 accidents, a reduction of almost half.

EXTENSIVE

Mr. Greenwell said the scheme could not be carried out without the acquisition of land. There had been lengthy negotiations with Sir George Meyrick by the Council, and only after a very long time did the Council decide reluctantly to take compulsory powers.

Sir George had already sold the Council .079 acres of land. His objections were that the proposed works were more extensive than required and were detrimental to the area in general and to the occupiers of the Post Office in particular.

Further objections were reviewed from the people running the Post Office and the occupiers of adjoining cottages.

Mr. H. N. Jenner, County Surveyor, told Mr. F. A. Stockdale, representing Sir George Meyrick, that while the national increase in traffic was about five per cent annually, on the A35 and A31 road, through the forest it was about 10 per cent.

Although the rate of growth would increase on the A31 with the proposed improvements there, Mr. Jenner did not think it would fall below the national increase on the A35.

Questioned about the effect of the "ham-bone junction" on the visual amenities, Mr. Jenner said there were remarkably few trees on the Cat and Fiddle corner, but on the Post Office corner there would be a "great loss" to the rural scene.

Sir George Meyrick told the inquiry that he had agreed with the county surveyor on the question of the land to be taken for a widening and improvement scheme brought out in 1959.

He had signed the contract for the sale when the county authority approached him again in December 1961. They said the Ministry of Transport would not accept the scheme and proposed a ham-bone junction instead

He realised the ham-bone junction could not be fitted in without seriously upsetting his tenants at the Post Office and the adjoining cottages

Even by taking more land and trees on the Cat and Fiddle side, the carriageway would be unacceptably close. The noise and vibration of heavy vehicles already disturbed the tenants. The carriageway would be brought within about 22ft. of the cottages.

A secondary consideration would be that the ham-bone junction would be unnecessarily detrimental to the visual amenities.

The Ministry of Transport's reason for not accepting the original plan was that they were worried about the number of accidents at the crossroads over the previous three years.

NOT ONLY ANSWER

Sir George said he did not accept that the ham-bone junction was the only way of dealing with the problem. He fully supported the Council's desire to increase road safety at the junction and that the present condition was dangerous.

A representative of Brickwoods Ltd. did not think a ham - bone junction was necessary because of obvious defects. Col. Kirkland's scheme was preferable. The ham - bone junction would be very close to the car park of the Cat and Fiddle Inn and might result in nose-to-tail accidents. It would have a blanketing effect on the inn which would result in a serious loss of trade.

On behalf of the Bransgore Residents Association, Mr. Ronald Ferguson said the ham - bone junction with its heavy cost, was far more drastic than was necessary and would create new hazards. Existing hazards arose from the speed of vehicles using the crossing, the lack of warning signs, and the camber and poor surface of the road.