

The Future of West Kennett Avenue

Gathering more of your views

What is the issue?

- The status of the B4003 West Kennett Avenue is a subject that generates a wide range of views in the Parish.
- The Transport Group has been attempting impartially to collect views of all stakeholders on the recommendation in the WHS Transport Strategy that the Avenue be closed to all but farm traffic.
- The strategy noted that “the input [of the community and the Parish Council] should be sought at an early stage”.

What have we done so far?

- The Transport Group decided to move forward with other proposals in the WHS strategy in the meantime, and not to take a rapid view one way or the other on the WHS recommendation.
- Over the last year we have tried to move the debate forward by collating a list of ‘pros’ and ‘cons’, set out below, based on input from a range of people, and further discussion with Wiltshire Highways traffic experts, the county archaeologists, and others.
- The current exhibition is an opportunity to gather more views in the parish. Although the WHS strategy took account of views of wide range of stakeholders, there is clearly a need for people to be able to review the facts and consider them carefully.

Possible ways forward

- The table below attempts to show, on a factual basis, the arguments we have received for and against closure. Alternative solutions have also been suggested, for partial or temporary closure, one-way traffic, speed restrictions or weight limits. While nothing is off the table, the conclusion of the WHS strategy after consulting experts was that all of these had ‘unacceptable potential disadvantages’. So this table concentrates on the simple closure proposition.

Pros	Cons
Highways experts say that slowing and narrowing A4 in West Kennett to make it safer for all road users requires Avenue closure.	Increased journey times/distances. Timed journeys carried out by the Transport Group via Beckhampton show increases of between 1min 20s and 2min in the journey from West Kennett to/from the Red Lion. The journey time between the Trusloe junction and West Kennett is generally a few seconds quicker via Beckhampton.
Improvement to the condition in integrity of the stone avenue, improvement to the landscape and setting of the monuments, provision of a high-quality route for walkers, cyclists and horse riders, decreasing the impact of roads on the WHS. Preventing erosion damage to the verges of the Avenue.	Some increased A4 traffic through Beckhampton and past Avebury Trusloe
Improved amenity value for residents and visitors – ability to walk around monuments with fewer road crossings.	Inconvenience to farmers and land managers, even if access for them continues to be allowed.
Some reduction in overall traffic through the parish as less incentive for ‘rat-running’ from elsewhere.	Possibly statutory signage requirements, perhaps minimised by gating the road.
Busses would actually go through Beckhampton en route to Swindon – benefit for Beckhampton residents.	Requirement for a Traffic Regulation Order and possibly Scheduled Monument Consent.
Deterring informal parking and informal camping at summer solstice.	
Enhanced and safer cycle-path 45	
Allows National Trust to make more use of neglected farm at West Kennett – eg park and walk/park and cycle to Avebury, other potential uses of farm buildings.	
Relatively low-cost / high impact compared with many proposals in WHS strategy	

Any additional thoughts are very welcome.

West Kennett Avenue Questions and Answers

Additional journey times: how have you measured them – surely depends how you drive.

The timings were taken during afternoon rush-hour, so that they would be at the speed of other traffic. That avoids unfair measurement by going faster on one route than another. But it may also bring different results from timings at other times of day. The timings were taken from Red Lion to middle of West Kennett and vice versa, so they include time spent at junctions. They are a best estimate based on averages.

Why not put in speed limits?

Highways have advised that they think a speed limit would not be effective on this road because it would be difficult to enforce, and in such cases the authorities do not approve them because it undermines the credibility of speed limits. Additionally it would mean introducing extra obtrusive signage in the heart of the World Heritage Site.

Traffic calming measures (speed bumps etc)?

While this would have some effect on speed, it goes against the design principles in the WHS strategy, which tries to preserve the rural setting of the site. It would not protect the verges and the buried archaeology from damage.

One-way closure?

Would not reduce speed or bring the other benefits of a better environment/setting in the WHS. Farm traffic and National Trust vehicles need to use the road both ways.

How would the Avenue be closed in practice?

This would be subject to detailed designs, which would again be consulted on. One way to do this would be to put in gates at either end, unlocked so that farm traffic would be able to move in both directions with only one extra gate to open. The road surface could either be left, or replaced/grassed over. Or short stretches at either end could be grassed, as a low-key way to show closure without signage. The eventual solution would need

to balance the requirements of farm traffic, walkers, cyclists and others.

What would be the effect on traffic in the village?

It is likely there would be a net decrease on traffic through Avebury, because some traffic that would otherwise have come this way (in particular the 'rat runs' across country to Swindon) would be deterred. How much effect this would have isn't quantifiable without doing it. There would be a net increase on the A4 and on Beckhampton Road.

What is the consultation process?

No steps would be taken without the full statutory consultation process for a change of this type.