

9. AVONSIDE DRIVE RESOURCE CONSENT

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Corporate Plan Output: Transport Planning	

The purpose of this report is to inform the Council about the public consultation with residents associations regarding the form and function of Avonside Drive, including the proposal to close the road to motor vehicles. As an outcome of these discussions the Council is also requested to approve the resumption of the resource consent process to provide for the maintenance and stabilisation work to be carried out.

Representatives of the affected residents associations have been invited to the City Services meeting to present their proposals for Avonside Drive.

BACKGROUND

At the November 1999 meeting of City Services the Committee requested that staff seek a postponement of the resource consent hearing for maintenance work on, and alongside, Avonside Drive until further consultation had been undertaken with affected residents associations. A sub-committee consisting of Councillors O'Rourke and Wright was formed to assist with the consultation process.

CONSULTATION MEETINGS

Two meetings were held with representatives from the following associations: Avon Loop Planning Association, Inner City East Neighbourhood Group, Englefield Residents Association, Linwood Neighbourhood Committee, Christchurch Residents Association, Richmond Neighbourhood Cottage Incorporated and Francis Ryman also attended.

The first meeting consisted of a presentation by Council staff on the road network and traffic planning issues around Avonside Drive and a presentation by the residents associations on the concept of stopping Avonside Drive to motor vehicles and turning the road into a riverside park. Some of the issues regarding the consent application were also discussed briefly at this time.

It was agreed at the conclusion of the meeting that Council staff would give consideration to the road stopping and meet again with the group to discuss the implications on the surrounding areas.

The second meeting took place on 7 April and the following information was presented to the residents associations.

Consequential traffic growth on surrounding road network;

Potential Work required as a result of road stopping;

The potential direct costs of the minimum work which would be required as a result of the road stopping to enable the road network to continue to operate safely:

Stopping Avonside Drive	\$299,000 (physical works);
Worcester/Linwood	\$7,500 to \$10,000 (excl. signalisation)
Stanmore/Swanns	\$100,000 (excl. land costs)
England/Linwood	\$113,000
England/Woodham	\$75,000
Armagh/Stanmore	\$210,000 (excl. land costs)
Total	\$804,500-\$807,000

This was compared with the cost of \$289,000 to maintain Avonside Drive with its existing function as a minor arterial road.

The network costs of the proposed road stopping were also calculated to be

1996	\$7,490,000 per annum
2016	\$23,700,000 per annum

These costs are based on the Transfund values for the extra travel which would be imposed on motorists as a result of the stopping of the road.

There was a range of discussion regarding the pros and cons of stopping the road and also on the impact of the extra traffic on the residents of the areas affected.

ROAD STOPPING

The considerations with respect to the process of legally stopping the road were also discussed in some detail with the residents. Under the Tenth Schedule of the Local Government Act the stopping of a legal road needs to be approved at two Council meetings, be publicly notified at least twice, the adjacent residents notified individually and notices erected along the road itself. If no objections are received the Council may declare the road stopped. If **any** objections are received by the Council these must be forwarded to the Environment Court for their consideration.

Avonside Drive is currently a major route into the City not only for residents in eastern sections of the City but also for large numbers of commercial vehicles. Previous experience with proposed road stopping has shown a keen public interest in the process and it is highly unlikely, given the effects of the stopping, that any road stopping procedure would be successful even if the Council favoured this option.

RESOURCE CONSENT

The retention of Avonside Drive as a minor arterial road does require some maintenance work to be undertaken as outlined in the resource consent application. This work includes the retention of the river bank where some slumping has occurred, the construction of a safety fence and some widening and narrowing of the road to obtain a uniform road 9 metre width. The removal of 23 trees was also included in the original consent application to provide for new landscape planting.

However, after further consultation the number of trees to be removed has been reduced to two to enable bank retention work to take place. The residents groups of the area have agreed to be involved in the production of a new landscape plan when the physical works have been completed – if the resource consent is approved by the Commissioner.

The consent application process has been on hold for the past 5 months to provide the opportunity for further public consultation with the residents groups in the area. Although these groups would still like to see Avonside Drive stopped there is better understanding of the issues and implications involved with the proposal. Council staff still consider the retention and maintenance of this road to be the most appropriate course for the Council to follow.

CONCLUSIONS

Further consultation has been undertaken with the affected residents associations regarding the resource consent application to undertake maintenance work along Avonside Drive. As an outcome of this consultation it is considered that the work along Avonside Drive is still required and that the resource consent application process should be resumed, with the number of trees sought to be removed reduced to two trees.

The Chairman commented:

The consultation process concentrated mostly on the desire of the Englefield Residents Association to achieve the closure of that part of Avonside Drive between Linwood Avenue and Fitzgerald Avenue. The Association understands how difficult this would be, but wishes to persuade the Council to make the attempt. I therefore suggested to the Association that it either makes a deputation to this Committee at this month's meeting, or makes a deputation direct to the Council later this month.

The Residents Associations who attended the consultation accept the need for maintenance work on this part of Avonside Drive. The various matters upon which they expressed concern have been accommodated as far as possible. The main issue was the trees on the riverbank. It was clearly a mistake for the Council to proceed with a resource consent process which identified the possible removal of 23 trees, when in fact only one or two need to be removed in order for the road maintenance work to be carried out. It has therefore been agreed with the Residents Associations that only two trees will be removed as part of the road maintenance work. These two trees are 'crack willows', ie willows which have not been planted, and have grown themselves in a deformed way and which intrude into the river. They are both located very close to the Stanmore Road bridge and all agree that they should be removed. All of the remaining trees (including the dead trees) will remain, but after roadworks have been completed, a landscape plan will be developed in partnership with some of the local residents, so that the dead trees can be removed and new ones planted where appropriate.

Recommendation:

1. That the resource consent application for the Avonside Drive maintenance work as programmed, now proceed, on the basis of the removal of only two trees, being the crack willows at the Stanmore Road bridge.
2. That the Committee investigate options for reducing the usage of Avonside Drive between Linwood Avenue and Fitzgerald Avenue in the context of the road transport strategies currently being developed.
3. That after the Avonside Drive maintenance work has been completed, a landscape plan for the riverbank be developed in partnership with members of the local community, for implementation as soon as practicable.