



### Engagement Report

PROJECT	<p><b>A68 Local Safety Scheme</b> Proposed Crossover Closures at Burtree Lane &amp; the Farm Access Crossovers on the A68 between Swan House &amp; Rotary Way Roundabouts.</p>
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## **Information and Analysis**

1. The report provides a summary of the feedback received along with officer comments on the issue raised.
2. Through the ongoing analysis of the personal injury accident database the crossover on the A68 at Burtree Lane has been identified as a location with a high concentration of accidents. During the three year study period there have been 11 personal injury accidents, three serious and eight slight.
3. Analysis of the causation factors suggests that there is an issue with motorists being able to turn right from the A68 into Burtree Lane safely.
4. In conjunction with the Police a series of options were considered to produce a solution that would reduce or prevent accidents from occurring.
5. A series of options were considered including traffic lights and lane removal. As part of the feasibility a cost benefit assessment is undertaken. Some of the options considered were not being financially viable.
6. The scheme that has been taken forward involves the permanent closure of the central reserve.
7. In addition, the proposed solution will remove the ability for drivers to ignore the existing right turn ban from Burtree Lane onto the A68 that already exists. The feasibility identified that this is being ignored on occasions.
8. The closure of the A68/Burtree Lane crossover is to reduce accidents at this location and the primary reason for proposal. However, in closing this location consideration must be given to the other crossover locations and whether motorists will simply perform 'U' Turns at other locations that are less safe, and thus potentially displace the accident risk.
9. Therefore, the proposal is to close all six farm crossovers between Burtree Lane and Swan House Roundabout. The closures will prevent motorists attempting to u-turn and stop the current practice of large agricultural vehicles straddling the outside lanes of both carriageways when crossing the central reserve. There are also two farm crossovers between the A1(M) Interchange and Rotary Way Roundabout that are also proposed to be closed for the same reasons.
10. The proposal aims to improve safety of motorists along the route.

### ***Ward Councillor Briefing***

11. The location is on or adjacent to the boundary of a number of Council Wards. A briefing meeting was held with Ward Councillors to discuss the rationale for the proposal and the issues that had been investigated. The Ward Councillors who attended the briefing were:
  - (a) Councillor Brian Jones
  - (b) Councillor Gerald Lee

- (c) Councillor Eric Roberts
- (d) Councillor Barrie Armstrong

Councillor David Lyonette was briefed on the A68 Study as part of the Portfolio Holder Briefing.

### **The Consultation Process**

12. The proposal was circulated to:
  - (a) Ward Councillors via letter.
  - (b) Residents and Businesses directly affected.
  - (c) The standard list of consultees via letter (groups and organisations with an interest in traffic management proposals).
13. Councillor Armstrong expressed concerns that his residential constituents on Faverdale should be consulted. The proposals have the potential to affect all motorists on the A68 and as such it is difficult to define a cordon for consultation
14. Officers assisted Cllr Armstrong with an item for his Ward Newsletter and the feedback received via Cllr Armstrong is tabled, together with officer response, in Appendix A

### ***Resident & Business Consultation Process***

15. Residents & Businesses directly affected by the proposals were hand delivered a consultation letter. Those consulted are listed below:
  - (a) Greystones
  - (b) Swan House Farm
  - (c) Humbleton Farm
  - (d) Coldsides
  - (e) Barrons Caravans
  - (f) Buetree Inn
  - (g) Borrom House Farm
  - (h) Holly House Farm
  - (i) Burtree House
  - (j) Burtree Cottages

- (k) Whessoe Cottage
- (l) Quess How
- (m) Whessoe Grange Farm
- (n) Whessoeville
- (o) Kitchener's Point
- (p) Whessoe House
- (q) Whessoe Holms
- (r) Coatham Grange

16. From the 18 properties consulted we received three letters of objection from:

- (a) Bottom House Farm
- (b) Burtree House Farm
- (c) Whessoe Grange Farm

17. Phone calls were received from four other properties:

- (a) Holly House Farm
- (b) Coldsides
- (c) Barrons Caravans
- (d) Burtree Inn

18. A full list of the comments received is tabled in Appendix B, together with officer response.

### ***Standard Consultees***

- 19. The standard consultees are those organisations and stakeholders with an interest in highway schemes. For example, Emergency Services, Bus operators, Disabled Groups, etc. Letters with scheme drawings were sent to the standard list of consultees.
- 20. The police are fully supportive of the scheme because of the history of personal injury accidents at Burtree Lane junction.
- 21. The North East Ambulance Service offered their support even though they occasionally use Burtree Lane for access and egress.
- 22. No other responses were received.

## **Recommendations**

23. In considering the way forward the Council as Highway Authority have a duty placed upon them under the Road Traffic Act 1988 to carry out studies into accidents arising out of the use of vehicles on roads within their area and must, in the light of those studies, take such measures as appear to the authority to be appropriate to prevent such accidents.
24. Officers appreciate that this proposal will cause some degree of inconvenience and alteration to existing practises. This is reflected in comments received at Appendix A & B. However, the majority are in relation to convenience. In officers opinion the duty under the Road Traffic Act 1988 and the desire to reduce people injured on Darlington's roads outweighs concerns in relation to convenience on this occasion.
25. Where road safety concerns have been raised by residents they have been examined closely by both Council and Police Traffic Management Officers.
26. The existing access arrangements through the central reserves for agricultural vehicles are not ideal in terms of road safety. Officers register the concerns of those persons operating from these accesses that the proposed arrangements may introduce new hazards. As a result it is the intention to provide additional warning signs of 'vehicles turning', remove the overgrown vegetation and traffic signs within the visibility splay of Holly House Farm, which will increase awareness.
27. On the basis of the consideration of issues raised during consultation it is recommended that the following actions are taken:
  - (a) Officers proceed to obtain Delgated Powers to process the necessary Traffic Regulation Order to close all of the crossovers.
  - (b) Additional Warning Signs are provided and vegetation is removed at locations identified as part of the consultation process.
  - (c) Any unresolved objections received following the advertised period are to be reported to Cabinet for consideration.

## **28. Appendix A**

Councillor Barrie Armstrong provided a list of comments that he had received regarding the proposed permanent closure of Burtree Lane crossover.

## Summary of Objections and Officer Responses

Objection/Comment	Officer Response
<p>Burtree Lane is the quickest route to work for traffic from West Park to Stockton as it is too busy through the town centre.</p> <p>DBC should be encouraging motorists to stay out of town for the daily commute, not forcing them through town.</p> <p>Roundabout will solve the accidents at the junction.</p>	<p>This route will not be closed. However, the journey would be approximately two miles longer via Swan House Roundabout. When balancing potential accident reduction against the increase in journey time officers consider this to be acceptable.</p> <p>The cost of providing a roundabout at this location is not financially viable.</p>
<p>Traffic lights would slow down traffic and stop accidents happening at this point.</p> <p>People would rather travel into town via West Auckland Road rather than going to Swan House Roundabout.</p>	<p>The provision of traffic signals at this location would require considerable alterations to the road layout. In addition, the proximity to the A1 (M) and the potential for queues would also need to be considered.</p> <p>The cost of providing Traffic Signals at this location is not financially viable and would not remove the risk of accidents. There is a potential that providing this type of junction at this location could increase accidents.</p> <p>Motorists still have the choice of which route to take, albeit there is a 2 mile increase in journey distance to use the Burtree Lane route.</p>
<p>During the recent road works, the crossover has been closed for some time and causes much inconvenience and stress.</p>	<p>The current temporary traffic management layout is in place for approximately one year until the bridge works on the A1(M) are complete.</p> <p>The current diversion around Swan House layout has been a good trial before the proposed permanent closure of the crossovers.</p> <p>No personal injury accidents have been reported at Swan House Roundabout during the diversion works, although there has been a serious accident involving a u-turning motor cyclist at one of the farm crossovers. This underlines our concern and need to consider closing all crossovers.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Ctd/..</p>

Objection/Comment	Officer Response
<p>The permanent closure would add extra time onto the journey to work so motorists would speed up on the diversion and cause even more accidents.</p>	<p>Ctd/..</p> <p>This concern has been identified with Officers and concerns are noted that speeds may increase on the return journey of the diversion. The Police have undertaken to monitor speeds and if necessary undertake enforcement campaigns.</p>
<p>Closing Burtree Lane crossover would add 5-10 minutes onto the journey time to Teesside. Traffic lights or roundabout would be better.</p>	<p>See previous responses</p>
<p>The junction would be better with a roundabout installed.</p>	<p>See previous responses</p>
<p>The obvious answer is traffic lights.</p>	<p>See previous responses.</p>
<p>Burtree Lane is an essential shortcut when travelling east to Teesside. The current temporary closure has demonstrated that the detour is too long in terms of miles and time.</p> <p>The junction would be safer if a 50mph speed limit were to be introduced.</p> <p>The best answer however, is the construction of a roundabout at the junction.</p> <p>The completion of the cross town route, might also make redundant the need for the right turn at Burtree Lane.</p>	<p>See previous responses.</p> <p>The current speed limit complies with national guidance when setting speed limits. DBC are reviewing all speed limits on A and B class roads with the Police. The Police were asked to consider a reduction in speed limit but at this stage will not support any reduction in the speed limit due to the rural nature of the road.</p> <p>The completion of the cross town route at Rotary Way would obviously help vehicular movement, but this is very unlikely to happen in the foreseeable future.</p>

29. Appendix B

**Summary of Objections and Officer Responses**

Objection/Comment	From	Officer response
<p>Farm crossover vital for access to both farm and land. Large heavy goods vehicles can only access farm safely through the crossover.</p> <p>Sending all farm traffic round A1(M) Interchange will create a far greater hazard than using the crossover.</p>	<p>Resident of Bottom House Farm</p>	<p>A site meeting was arranged with the resident and Michael Straugheir of Durham Constabulary to discuss the proposal and current access arrangement.</p> <p>HGV's access farm approximately once a week.</p> <p>Appreciate proposed left turn in is not ideal but the right turn through central reserve is also not ideal. Long vehicles are currently stopping in northbound fast lane before turning right through crossover. Currently seeking authorisation from DfT for new warning signs for vehicles turning which will increase awareness.</p> <p>Also witnessed agricultural vehicles using the crossover, straddling both fast lanes.</p> <p>The detour is minimal due to the proximity of the roundabouts and is deemed safer than current practice.</p>
<p>Difficult for larger vehicles to access property if farm crossover is closed.</p> <p>Visibility of oncoming traffic reduced by overgrown vegetation.</p>	<p>Resident of Holly House Farm</p>	<p>HGV's currently stopping in fast lane of northbound carriageway to turn right which is an unsafe manoeuvre.</p> <p>Left turn into access will be safer with additional warning signs (currently seeking authorisation) and improving the forward visibility by removing the overgrown vegetation.</p> <p>Visibility from access will be improved with removal of vegetation.</p>



Objection/Comment	From	Officer response
<p>Traffic lights would be a better alternative for Burtree Lane junction instead of permanent closure.</p> <p>Closing the junction will have an effect on the farm business and mean additional fuel usage.</p>	<p>Resident of Burtree House Farm</p>	<p>See previous comments in relation to Traffic Signals.</p> <p>It is accepted that there will be additional travel. However, balancing potential accident reduction against this increase must be taken into account.</p>
<p>Additional travel at only 7 miles per gallon.</p> <p>Traffic lights would be a better alternative for Burtree Lane junction instead of closing the crossover.</p>	<p>Resident of Whessoe Grange Farm</p>	<p>See Previous response</p>
<p>Traffic lights or a roundabout would be better alternative for Burtree Lane junction instead of closing the crossover.</p> <p>A reduced speed limit on A68 would be beneficial to road users.</p> <p>Not concerned about loss of farm crossover.</p> <p>Supportive of 'Passive Safety' measures.</p> <p>Additional signs required.</p>	<p>Parish Councillor</p>	<p>See Previous responses</p> <p>The need for additional signs on the A68 is being investigated.</p>

<b>Objection/Comment</b>	<b>From</b>	<b>Officer response</b>
Additional traffic will use Swan House Roundabout and this could lead to more personal injury accidents.	Parish Councillor Ctd/..	Additional traffic will use Swan House Roundabout so new signs warning of u-turning traffic will be erected / investigated.
<p>If Burtree Lane crossover was closed, customers will not turn around at Swan House Roundabout and will continue up to Wolsingham to purchase a caravan.</p> <p>Loss of passing trade will affect the business.</p>	Manager of Barrons Caravans	<p>Wolsingham is approximately. 20 miles away compared to the detour of approximately two miles.</p> <p>Signage will be included in the scheme to advise of the access arrangements to Burtree Lane.</p>
Loss of passing trade will affect the business.	Manager of Burtree Inn	<p>Signage will be included in the scheme to advise of the access arrangements to Burtree Lane.</p> <p>Balancing potential accident reduction against this potential loss in trade must be taken into account. The duty placed upon the highway authority must also be taken into account.</p>