

Extraordinary Meeting

15th October 2018 - Old A40 Closed Road

Supporting Information

Background

The road in question, known locally as the Old A40 runs between the A40 at Puesdown and the Old Prison at Northleach.

It is a route well used by local people as an alternative route to Northleach and to surrounding villages such as Yanworth and Compton Abdale.

This road is an important route for local traffic and has supported an average of 400 vehicles (both directions) every day.

The Old A40 road was temporarily closed just above the Fosse Way junction in December 2015 amid safety concerns. Increased cracking was evident in the carriageway and structural damage to a retaining wall appeared such that the carriageway could be in danger of complete collapse.

The section of road is just outside the Northleach Parish boundary but is considered a key route into the Northleach hub connecting neighbouring parishes and outlying residents with social and economic facilities

Since the road has been closed it has been used by dog walkers, runners and has also been subject to use by temporary travellers.

Following the closure of this road, the traffic is diverted along the busy A40 and roundabout which is considered to be an accident hot spot and along less prominent smaller roads like All Alone and past the school.

Current Situation

Gloucestershire Highways (GH) have been monitoring the situation over a period of 12 months. Representatives of GH attended a Town Council meeting in September 2018 to brief Councillors on the current status of the landslip on the Old A40 Road.

GH employed testing instruments and inserted bore holes into the ground around the landslip to monitor movement. These were checked monthly over the course of a year to determine the failure line and the impact of seasonal weather. Although failure lines can go up to 30 metres into the ground, it was established that the failure on the closed section is quite shallow. GH concluded that if there is movement only a shallow section would be affected.

Community reaction has on the whole been positive to reopening the Old A40. Cllr Hodgkinson has conducted 2 community Polls. The first poll was petitioned in Autumn 2016 which gathered over 500 signatures and supported reopening of the road. A second poll was conducted in 2018 with residents completing a short survey online. 150 people completed the survey, 85% were in favour of re-opening and 15% against.

Alternative Solutions

Option 1 – Partial Reopening of the Old A40 closed road costing £58K

- Gloucestershire Highways have approached Northleach with Eastington Town Council to support reopening of the closed section of the Old A40.
- The proposed plan put forward by GH will result in the Old A40 reopening to traffic in 6 months
- This solution will offer immediate benefits to both Commercial and Private road users who commute to and who live in Northleach. It has already been noted that following the closure of this road the traffic has had to be diverted along the busy A40 and roundabout which is considered to be an accident hot spot resulting in rat running along less prominent smaller roads like All Alone and past the school.
- The total cost of the project to fund the partial reopening of the Old A40 road will be £58K.
- Highways have committed £21K and Cllr Paul Hodgkinson has pledged £17K from Highways Local and funding pots from this year and next year, leaving £20K outstanding. Highways have proposed that if a further £10K is provided from the Parish. This can be community match funded to provide all the costs required.
- Stowell Park Estates have offered £5K towards the £10k to fund the partial reopening of the Old
- The Finance and Funding Committee of the Town Council reviewed its finances on 9th October to identify options to fund the remaining £5K shortfall. It was unanimously agreed that the £5k should be funded from General Reserves and not raise this through the Precept 2019 -2020 or virements.
- The Town Council has the authority to fund schemes like this through the Highways Act or Section 137.
- Unrelated to the Town Council – a Crowd funding project was independently set up (update on 9/10/18 is that £435 has been raised by 12 supporters. This funding will only be realised if the £5K target is reached by 22nd October). Currently this has not be taken into account in our discussions to fund the required £5k
- There is of course a risk that the partial reopening could fail. GH have minimised this risk by placing limitations of the weight of vehicles that will use the road if it is partially re-opened

Option 2 – Await a Complete Reopening of the Old A40 closed road costing £500K

- A complete reopening of the road was the initial scheme proposed by Highways. It involves a total rebuilding of the supporting wall and a full repair to reopen the road at an estimated cost of £500K.
- The scheme would have to be set against other busier and higher priority roads in order to get funded by Gloucestershire Highways.
- Highways explained that they would not have been able to justify the cost and the road would not be opened in the near future.
- The last comment from Highways regards this scheme said that funding would not be available for this scheme in the near future
- This solution would be not be planned for years, meanwhile the road will continue to fail

Option 3 – Leave the road closed

- If the Town Council decide not to support with the outstanding balance of £5K, funding from other sources is possible but unlikely at this stage.
- The existing Crowd Funding option would need to raise £5000 by 22nd October to be realised.
- Adjoining parishes are unable to provide funds to support Option 1 as they do not raise a Precept via Cotswold District Council
- Since the temporary closure of the road, there has been a number of complaints raised to the Town Council about unauthorised camping and caravans on the closed road. In addition, complaints about illegal tipping and joy riding have been passed from the Town Council onto the District Council, Highways and the Police.
- Residents in the housing estate opposite the Prison have reported suffering from significant air pollution since the road has been closed due to the heavy traffic diverted along the Fosse Road.
- Home owners above the closure have explained to the Town Council about the negative impacts on them and the inconvenience the closure has caused
- Closure of the Old A40 road has seen an increase in traffic using All Alone and the roads around school which is causing verge and pothole issues and increased maintenance on these roads.
- If the road remains closed, Highways will continue to spend money monitoring the situation, maintaining the signage and site safety.

Recommended Solution

Gloucestershire Highways recommend - Option 1 Partial reopening of the Old A40 to the Town Council within a timescale of 6 months

Required Funding

<u>Funding Source</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Highways	£21K	Some funds already spent on analysis and safety
Cllr Hodgkinson	£17K	Highways Local Pot and Community Fund
Stowell Park	£5K	Donation
Town Council	£5K	Contribution potential from Reserves
Community Match Funding	£10K	Highways to match Stowell Park and Town Council