

Highways Committee

12 June 2009

Objections to the Proposed Permanent Prohibition of Driving on the Unclassified Side Road Adjacent to Woodside Cottage, Shincliffe Village



Report of Ian Thompson, Corporate Director, Regeneration and Economic Development

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To advise Members of objections received following the advertising of proposals to apply a permanent prohibition of driving to an unclassified side road that connects the main A177 road to Low Road in Shincliffe Village.
- 1.2 This report requests that Members endorse the proposal to introduce the proposed road closure with this prohibition order. It should be noted that the side road is currently closed by use of bollards which was exercised under a temporary traffic order.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 During the construction of the Wheatley Hill to Bowburn Bypass scheme, temporary road closures put additional traffic onto the B1198 Mill Lane over a sustained period. It was recognised that it was already difficult for traffic on Mill Lane to access the A177 and for pedestrians to cross the A177 from the local bus stop into Shincliffe. A traffic signal scheme was implemented in August 2007 to address the problems and improve vehicular movement at this junction. The signals included facilities to enable pedestrians and cyclists to cross the A177 under light control.
- 2.2 To enable installation and operation of the signals, it was necessary to introduce a temporary prohibition of driving order on a narrow section of highway that links the A177 with Low Road (main route into Shincliffe). The prohibition of driving on the side road would simplify vehicular movement and signal phases whilst retaining the highway as a pedestrian/cycle route (see location plan in *Appendix 2*).
- 2.3 When it was proposed to make the temporary closure permanent, an informal consultation (2008) was carried out which included letters to residents. As a result eleven residents responded, the majority objected to the prohibition and two supported the proposals (see *Appendix 3*). When the order was advertised in 2009, three residents wrote again to formally object.

- 2.4 It should be noted that all of those who objected suggested the County Council convert the road to one-way, with access being gained from the A177. The reasons stated in paragraphs 3.1 to 3.5 also address this option.

3.0 Reasons for Permanent Closure

- 3.1 Having provided a new signal controlled crossing on the A177 and encouraging more pedestrians and cyclists to use these facilities, the safest option is to avoid potential conflict and close the side road.
- 3.2 It is not considered wide enough, even if one way, for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists to share. The road is just under 5 metres wide with no footpaths (see photos *in Appendix 4*).
- 3.3 If converted to one-way, the short length would lend itself to some motorists taking a risk of shortcutting through no-entry signs given the road is not controlled by the signals or delayed by queueing traffic and the risk of being caught will be very low.
- 3.4 A one-way system would conflict with the property on the corner that needs access/egress into their drive/garage and would mean they would exit on to a one-way system. Movement of traffic in and out of the 'Mews' development is also safer.
- 3.5 Prior to the road being closed, some residents have commented that some vehicles drive too fast across the junction to use the road as a shortcut. There is concern that under a one-way system, vehicles may travel faster due to the fact they are not expecting an opposing traffic flow.

4.0 Objections Received

- 4.1 **Objection Point 1** – Vehicles on B1198 Mill Lane heading for Shincliffe now have to turn at Low Road which is a sharp reflex turn (approx 135 degrees). This requires the vehicle to exit signal control turning right onto the A177 to then immediately slow down to less than 10mph preparing for the sharp left into Low Road. Other vehicles are accelerating away from the traffic lights and are not anticipating or considering the vehicle ahead and are driving dangerously close to them or having to swerve to avoid a collision.
- 4.2 **Response** – *it is acknowledged that Low Road is a junction that requires a sharp turn manoeuvre to enter. Low Road is, however, easily distinguishable as a junction (unlike the side road) and traffic on the A177 should be expected to anticipate a turning movement at such a location.*
- 4.3 **Objection Point 2** – The side road is adequate for both pedestrians and vehicles to share. The road is short and straight and therefore pedestrians are clearly visible to approaching traffic. There have been no accidents. Converting the side road to one-way would be a safer, convenient and more visible route into Shincliffe, compared to the conditions and manoeuvres required at Low Road junction.

4.4 **Response** - *Having no vehicles on such a narrow road is better from a pedestrian safety point of view than having any vehicles entering. A one-way system would be difficult to enforce and there would be concern that it would be contravened and used as a shortcut to avoid the traffic signals. A one-way system would also not be practical for vehicles exiting from the driveway of Woodside Cottage.*

4.5 **Objection Point 3** – As there are no waiting restrictions and a garden centre business close by, vehicles are often parked at Low Road junction obstructing vehicles trying to turn off the A177, which makes this manoeuvre difficult and hazardous, especially as they are not able to see if there is any oncoming traffic approaching from the opposite direction.

4.6 **Response** – *We acknowledge that this scenario exists and does cause difficulty for vehicles turning in to the Low Road junction. A consultation will shortly begin with a view to providing double yellow lines and a no waiting order at the junction to deter parking near to this junction. This consultation process will begin in June 2009.*

5.0 Local Member Consultation

5.1 Both Councillor Mac Williams and Councillor Jan Blakey have offered support to the proposal to permanently close the side road.

5.2 Durham Constabulary also support this proposal.

6.0 Recommendations and Reasons

6.1 It is recommended that the Members endorse the proposal to set aside the objections and proceed with the closure.

Background Papers

Scheme file and objector's letters.

Copies of correspondence have been placed in the Members' Resource Centre.

Contact: Jon Hogarth Tel: 0191 383 3985

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance

No physical works required; only costs will be the advertising costs for the TRO.

Staffing

None

Accommodation

None

Crime and Disorder

None

Sustainability

Priority for pedestrians/cyclists.

Human Rights

Not affected.

Localities

As detailed in report.

Young People

Casualty reduction targets

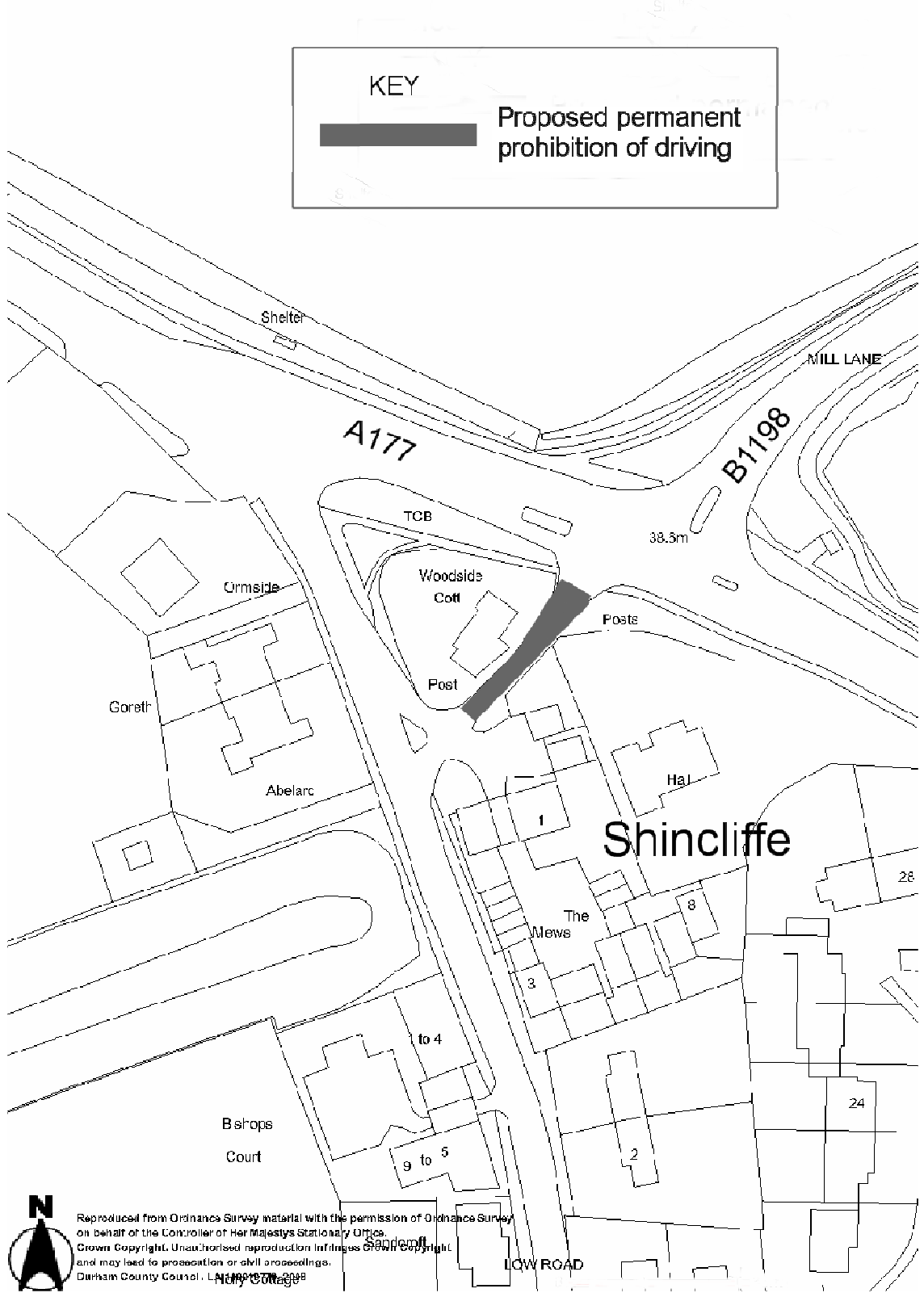
Consultation

A full consultation has been carried out. Details of the Order were posted on site and a copy was posted to residents of Shincliffe.

Health

Promoting walking/cycling as an alternative to the car.

APPENDIX 2 – Location of proposed permanent prohibition of driving



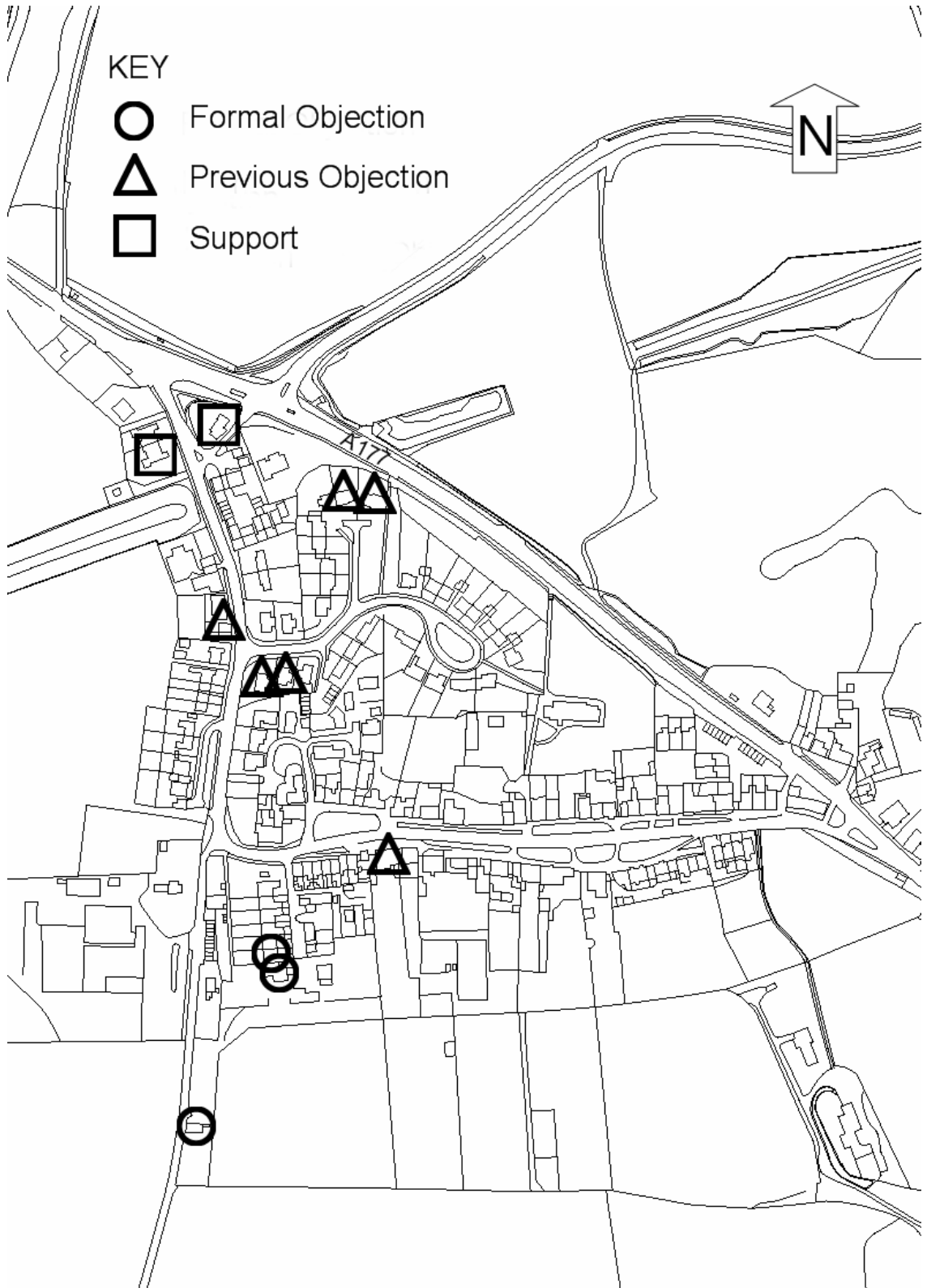
KEY

Proposed permanent prohibition of driving



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APPENDIX 3 – Location of residents who support and object to the closure



APPENDIX 4 - Photographs



Looking Northeast



Looking Southwest