



August 2021

**Report on responses to the consultation on the potential relocation of the Finchampstead War Memorial**

**1. Summary**

Following detailed discussion by the Council on potential relocation sites on 15 April 2021 a working group was established to consider the detail of any proposals. Consultation documents were prepared and circulated to the 5500 households in the Parish between late June and the end of July 2021.

596 responses were received via an online survey, email, or letter. This is a 10.8% return rate and statistically significant

529 (89%) of those responding agreed with the proposal to remove the Memorial from its current site and relocate it to the verge adjacent to the Memorial Park, The Village.

67 (11%) of those responding disagreed with the proposal. However, a total of 26 of these respondents agreed that the Memorial should be relocated but disagreed with the proposed location.

All comments from those disagreeing with the proposal have been carefully considered and the issues raised are covered below.

In addition, and to prevent any bias weighting, comments from those agreeing with the proposal have been considered and are also addressed below.

**2. Background to the consultation**

The Finchampstead War Memorial is located at the junction of the B3348 Rectory Hill / The Ridges, and the B3016 Jubilee Road. It was erected, as many were, by public subscription in honour of those who lost their lives in service of their Country in the absence of body repatriation and burial. It is now owned and looked after by Finchampstead Parish Council.

The Memorial was unveiled on 31 October 1920 and is often referred to as the 'Wayside Cross'.

The level and nature of traffic experienced on the roads alongside the Memorial have led to a number of issues:

- The Remembrance Parade and Service can no longer take place to / at the Memorial due to health and safety concerns following the removal of Police support for road closures and Parade escorts.
- There is no parking at the Memorial site and limited and narrow pavements leading to it, and it is considered unsafe for people to visit the Memorial to pay their respects.
- The roads are increasingly busy, with many large vehicles, and the Memorial is at risk of significant damage through collision.
- The road junction has an angular configuration with restricted sight lines and is considered unsafe by many. There have been several personal injury accidents

(PIA's) at the junction.

- A contractor cannot be found to maintain the Memorial surrounds due to difficulties with traffic management arrangements and the extensive public liability insurance required.
- Options have been drawn up by Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) highway engineers for improvements to the junction while keeping the Memorial in situ, or moving it to the side, but no significant improvement can be made while keeping the Memorial in its current location, or one close by.

The Parish Council has considered various potential locations for the Memorial and has assessed these on the basis of the criteria of visibility, accessibility and safety for visitors, and practical considerations.

The Council agreed on 15 April 2021 that the wide verge adjacent to the Memorial Park, between the Park and The Village, was the most appropriate location for the Memorial should it be moved.

In this location the Memorial will be highly visible, maintaining the context behind the choice of original location, and there will be a green and treed backdrop to the Memorial. There is sufficient room for quiet contemplation and for larger events, with easy access from and to the large car park at the Memorial Park.

The exact location for the Memorial would be professionally planned, taking into account the topography and the constraints of the existing trees and utilities, neither of which would be negatively affected.

The purpose of the consultation was to gather the views of residents from across the Parish on the proposal, and to understand and consider the points raised by any objections.

### **3. Comments received**

#### **3.1 Comments from those agreeing with the proposed relocation (529 / 89%)**

Those supporting the relocation to the site adjacent to the Memorial Park commented on the improved safety and accessibility in the new location, and on how the relocation would allow improvements to be made to the road junction. Many suggestions were made on how the junction could be improved which will be referred to the WBC highway engineers.

Plaques for the current and new locations were suggested, and as noted under 3.2.2 below these will be provided should the Memorial be moved.

#### **3.2 Comments from those disagreeing with the proposal (67 / 11%)**

The comments received can be categorised into five main areas which are covered below, with a further category covering a number of other areas on which comments were made.

##### **3.2.1 Traffic and road safety**

At the time of the dedication of the Memorial in 1920 much of the traffic would have been horse drawn and the traffic island on which the Memorial sits was designed with this in mind. The junction is now busy with vehicle traffic – both cars and lorries – and this will continue to increase with the additional development in the area.

Many comments stated that the traffic should be better managed and made suggestions about changes to the junction.

WBC Highway engineers have drawn up options for changes to the junction while

leaving the Memorial in situ or moving it to one side of the junction but have stated that the only way a significant improvement can be made is by moving the Memorial from the site.

The adjacent roads are B class roads and as such no vehicles can be restricted from using these, nor can the amount of traffic be reduced.

A 30mph speed limit can only be introduced where streetlights are present, there are none at present and these may be overly intrusive in this location. The installation of traffic lights is not considered an option for the current junction layout.

### **3.2.2 The Remembrance Parade and service**

In order to hold the Remembrance Parade to and from the Memorial Park to the War Memorial, and the service at the War Memorial, road closures are required at five road junctions. A safety vehicle escort is required for the Parade.

Since 2019 Thames Valley Police have been unable to assist with arrangements for any Remembrance event in the Region. The Parish Council has looked into alternatives and there are no viable or safe options available for the road closures or safety escort.

### **3.2.3 Respect**

The proposed relocation will ensure that the Memorial can again reflect the original intentions of being a highly visible and accessible feature where respect can be paid to those lost in action.

It is proposed that if the relocation goes ahead, a service would be held at the Memorial before it is moved, and a dedication service held at the new location.

It is proposed that a plaque would be placed at the seats close to the current location, explaining the history of the Memorial and the reasons for the relocation after 101 years. A plaque would also be placed at the new location.

### **3.2.4 Location**

As noted earlier, the Parish Council considered several locations based on the criteria of visibility, safety and accessibility for visitors, and practical considerations.

The locations considered included land near St James' Church, but the Council agreed that this did not fit the criteria.

The Council agreed that the wide verge adjacent to the Memorial Park, between the Park and The Village, was the most appropriate location for the Memorial should it be moved.

In this location the Memorial will be highly visible, maintaining the context behind the choice of original location for the 'Wayside Cross', and there will be a green and treed backdrop to the Memorial. There is sufficient room for quiet contemplation and for larger events, with easy access to and from and parking at the Memorial Hall.

The exact location for the Memorial would be professionally planned and designed, taking into account the topography and the constraints of the existing trees and utilities, taking every care to ensure these are not negatively affected. At the current location there are busy roads on all sides of, and close to the Memorial. At the proposed location there will be a road on one side only, with a significant space between the road itself and the Memorial and readily available parking at the Memorial Hall.

### **3.2.5 Funding**

The relocation is estimated to cost in the region of £60,000. This would be covered by Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds secured by the Parish Council in connection with local housing developments. CIL funds are intended to

be used to provide or improve infrastructure and the use of CIL funds for the Memorial relocation is good and appropriate use of public funds. The relocation will facilitate improvements to the road junction where the Memorial currently sits.

### **3.2.6 Other comments**

#### **3.2.6.1 Maintenance of the Memorial surrounds**

Current regulations, notably the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 (NRSWA) and relevant Regulations and Codes of Practice set out the legislative framework for works on roads. Any contractor working on the roadside must comply with the Act, and in addition must have £10million public liability insurance cover. To date no contractor has been found who can fulfil these requirements. Maintenance by volunteers is inappropriate and not an option.

#### **3.2.6.2 Damage to trees**

The trees would be professionally surveyed and any work to improve their health and longevity implemented. Construction methods will avoid any damage to tree roots.

#### **3.2.6.3 Interference with utilities**

Utility companies will be consulted, and locations of any cabling mapped so no supply will be adversely affected.

#### **3.2.6.4 Vandalism and graffiti**

There is no evidence to support suggestions that the Memorial would suffer vandalism and graffiti in the proposed location. The Memorial Park and the wide verge are well managed and maintained, and closely monitored. Vandalism and graffiti are not issues experienced at the Park to date.

#### **3.2.6.5 A separate memorial**

A small number of comments suggested that an additional memorial could be provided at a separate location. There are no plans to do this and the plans for the relocation would negate the need for a second memorial.

#### **3.2.6.6 Children at play**

The children's' play area in the Park has a range of equipment and this, together with the informal open space provided in the Park, make it unlikely that children would choose to use the Memorial as a piece of play equipment. Children are now taught about the World Wars and other conflicts, and the numbers attending the annual Remembrance Parade and Service is testament to the respect they feel for the fallen. In addition, the close location association is an important reminder of the sacrifices that many have made for the children of today and tomorrow.

## **4. Next stages**

The Parish Council will consider the response to the consultation and decide whether to proceed with the project.

If the Parish Council decides to proceed, the next stage will be the submission of planning applications relating to the relocation.