

INTERIM REPORT ON REVIEW OF SPEEDING IN THE VILLAGE AND TRAFFIC CALMING OPTIONS FROM RINGSHALL TO BEANEY CORNER

As amended by issues raised in the Parish Council meeting held on 18 October 2021

Background

1. Concerns have been raised with the Parish Council (PC) about exceeding existing speed limits in the village and speed limits and speeding around the village school and, to a lesser extent, on the village green. There have been a number of comments from pedestrians that the narrow path makes it feel unsafe when vehicles pass at speeds in excess of the 30mph speed limit so close to them. It is a real safety issue, particularly for those with young primary school age children walking to school, and especially for mothers who may also be pushing a buggy and with a dog on a lead. This is exacerbated when hedges are allowed to overgrow the path and vehicles park on the footpath.
2. Two residents living on the stretch of road have complained at the lack of traffic calming on this stretch of road where motorists regularly exceed the 30mph speed limit. This is supported by drive safe statistics. The residents in question have created an informal chicane by parking their cars at a distance on opposite sides of the road. This is a perfectly legal action.
3. The prioritisation protocol of 20mph roads is part of a County wide assessment to be considered by the HCC Highways Panel and any 20mph limit by the school and surrounding area will be included in that. The PC must await the outcome of this review and the 20mph speed limit does not, therefore, form part of this interim report.

Roles and Responsibilities

4. The enforcement of existing speed limits is a matter for the Police. Responsibility for the public highways rests with Herts County Council, including changes to speed limits and traffic calming measures. The Parish Council has neither authority nor budget for these matters and can only have an influencing role.

Action to date

5. Terry Douris has provided the PC with guidance from the Department of Transport (Local Transport Note 1/07) on the legal requirements for the various options for traffic calming.
6. I have made enquiries of Parish Councillors regarding the historical situation and of Terry Douris as to the reasons why Little Gaddesden does not have traffic calming measures when other villages do.
7. Councillor Hyde had previously applied for a police camera van but was told there was no suitable location to park the van on that stretch of road as they are not allowed to park on grass verges. It was clarified in the meeting that the police are reluctant to use driveways

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- due to possible repercussions for the householder. Enquiries will be made about the position if the householder is happy to proceed.
8. Enquiries were also made about the new cobbled surface (rumble strips) at Albury which has been laid on the road between the shop and pond. This was paid for by the Police and Crime Commissioners Safety Fund. Other traffic calming measures had also been introduced including wooden bollards either side of the road by the school, re-aligned curbs and gates at the edges of the village on Tom's Hill and by the Church. There was an initial scheme design followed by a village consultation. The implementation was a considerable time later.
 9. A meeting was held on 13 October with the residents who complained about speeding.

Traffic Calming

10. The Department of Transport guidance has the following stated aims:
 - a. To help reduce the impact of through traffic in villages and rural roads and
 - b. To make them safer and encourage public transport, cycling, walking.
11. Local Authorities must carry out a comprehensive assessment of the impacts of any scheme. They must consult with the police and interested users such as the emergency services, cyclists, equestrians and the British Horse Society, and agricultural users. The road is on the Chiltern cycling route, is on the edge of Ashridge where there are many horse riders and is used by farmers with their agricultural equipment.
12. There must be consultation of local users who may have different priorities, and consultation with residents could include an attitude survey. This is important as some measures have been removed due to local complaints. This occurred with the rumble strips in Ringshall, by the junction with Beacon Road, which were removed, as I understand it, due to complaints from residents about the noise they generated.
13. The Local Authority must carry out some monitoring before the installation of any scheme. This will include the determination of the number of injury accidents in the proposed area in the last three years (the minimum period that should be used). There have been none on this stretch of road, or indeed anywhere in the village, in this timeframe,
14. Traffic calming effectiveness has to be balanced against the effect on:
 - a. Buses- increased journey time, passenger comfort and safety and wear on vehicles.
 - b. Emergency services- reduce response times.
 - c. Public opinion varies.
 - d. Cyclists- can find some traffic calming measures uncomfortable, particularly where measures have high upstands. Design of measures needs to take cyclists into account and, where feasible, provide encouragement in the form of cycle bypasses.
 - e. Motorcyclists - can find some measures difficult to negotiate.
 - f. Equestrians- reported finding that some measures, such as pinch points, have an adverse effect on their safety.
 - g. Disabled people or those with back conditions can find measures, specifically but not exclusively vertical deflections, more uncomfortable and more difficult to negotiate than more able-bodied persons do.
 - h. Local environment- some measures can increase noise levels, vibration and emissions.

15. Many of these measures will have much more effect on urban situations than rural roads, eg the effect on buses and emergency vehicles.

Options

16. These can take the form of:
- a. Road humps
 - b. Thumps
 - c. Cushions
 - d. Rumble devices
 - e. Islands
 - f. Pinch point
 - g. Chicane, single or double lane
 - h. Gateways
 - i. Mini roundabout
 - j. Vehicle activated devices
 - k. Vehicle activated signs
 - l. Speed cameras
 - m. Road markings, traffic signs and furniture
 - n. Roundels
 - o. Coloured surfacing
17. These are listed in decreasing order of effectiveness on speeding with options a. to c. being the most effective in slowing down traffic and injury/ accidents and the best public acceptability but the biggest negative effect on buses and emergency services, and non-car road users.
18. Speed cameras are now used throughout the UK to combat the effects of excessive speed at sites where there is a history of road traffic collisions. However, as there is no such history on this stretch of road in Little Gaddesden this may make it more difficult to obtain agreement to their use. They can be fixed or average speed cameras. The triggers for speed cameras are set by the police and vary from force to force. There would need to be suitable site (or two sites for average speed cameras) and this may be a limiting factor. Enquiries made by Councillor Douris indicate that, whilst HCC will not fund cameras in the absence of accidents or deaths, but it may be possible for another body to fund them, provided the Police and Crime Commissioner approve them.
19. Studies have shown a small reduction in speeds with vehicle activated signs.

Aspects to consider with Physical Measures

20. Humps, cushions and chicanes are likely to be the most effective on a long straight stretch of road, but the effectiveness is commensurate on them being raised from the road surface which leads to other considerations.

Street Lighting

21. Raised structures such as humps, cushions and narrowing measures require signage and street lighting, which must extend for the whole length of the road containing the humps etc. See Paragraphs 2.8.2 of the Department of Transport (Local Transport Note 1/07). One of the residents consulted over this issue said that it has been reported that street lighting was being turned off at night in lit areas. This is correct but the lighting is only turned off after 1am so lighting is presumably still required earlier.
22. Similarly, chicanes must be clearly visible day and night and have street lighting around them. See Paragraphs 2.8.3 of the Department of Transport (Local Transport Note 1/07).
23. This does not apply if the structure is flat to the road surface, as in Nettleden and Aldbury, but this reduces the effectiveness referred to in paragraph 17 above and would make them particularly ineffective on a straight length of road where the motorist could simply drive over them if there was no oncoming traffic.

Safety

24. Research has shown that any measures which narrow the road are a serious safety issue for cyclists as motorists try to squeeze past or accelerate to get past quickly before the obstruction. This applies to horses as well as cyclists. It is more likely to be a hazard in a busy urban setting than a rural road with good visibility.
25. There have been reports of horses tripping on humps.
26. Physical barriers can cause cyclists to be toppled if they try to ride around the side (cushions in particular). Speed cushions can also present stability problems for motorcyclists, and if unmaintained, cause loss of control. Other design issues for motorcyclists include the visibility of road humps, speed cushions, rumble devices, narrowings of the road and chicanes.

Noise and Environmental Issues

27. Some measures can cause an increase in noise and pollution due to vibration and braking, accelerating and gear changing.

Traffic Signing and Road Markings

28. It is important to have traffic signing, including road markings, for directing and guiding all types of traffic around traffic calming measures. However, clutter should be avoided, particularly in sensitive areas.

Costs

29. It has been difficult to obtain information on costs to date and research is ongoing. Preliminary indications are that physical barriers are in the region of £100k which is more than 3 times the Parish Council's annual budget and exceeds the total £90k Highways Budget of Councillor Douris for 144 miles of roads and some pavements.
30. It has not been possible to identify costs for speed cameras at this stage.

Other Villages

31. To the best of Councillor Douris' knowledge, in his County Council division, the following villages do not have traffic calming; Potten End (apart from Nettleden centre); Flamstead, Northchurch; Great Gaddesden (apart from the speed cameras which were put in place when the road was the A4146); Markyate (although that has a 20mph zone but without any traffic calming measures). Away from his division, he believes that Sarratt does not have any traffic calming.
32. There are traffic calming features in villages without street lighting such as Nettleden. However, as previously stated, these are flat to the road to accommodate agricultural traffic (which I understand is a requirement). The chicane in Nettleden is also at a visually narrow part of the road with a joining road. In Aldbury, it is likely the cobbles were put in place due to the proximity of the pub and the pond where people congregate. There are also houses fronting directly onto the road and a village shop, so the situation is not analogous to the long stretch of road from Ringshall. Enquiries are in train from the previous HCC councillor for the area with regard to the background to the Aldbury measures. The Bridgewater Road cushions in Berkhamsted, were instigated as part of the introduction of the 20 mph speed limit in central Berkhamsted following the A41 bi-pass being constructed. This road originally had chicanes which were removed and replaced by cushions due to damage to the chicane structure.

Drive Safe

33. The DriveSafe checks are not intended as a means of issuing penalty speeding fines to speeding motorists but are part of the Police programme to educate motorists to drive at the appropriate speed limit.
34. People caught speeding receive letters from the police and on the third one, a visit. It is worth noting that out of the 131 letters sent out from the police 32 went to Little

Gaddesden addresses. Councillor Douris' view is that the letters should be hand-delivered with 'words of advice' by a police officer, and he will raise this with the local Neighbourhood Police Inspector.

Summary

35. The relevant bodies are reluctant to pursue traffic calming measures in the absence of fatalities or accidents.
36. It may be possible to pursue some measures if a significant safety argument can be made but we will be competing for limited financial resources. The fact that motorists are exceeding the speed limit is an all too common problem, and it is unlikely that the police will be able to allocate enforcement resources on a long term basis.
37. Some physical measures are likely to be ineffective on a long stretch of straight road. They would probably have to be flat to the road for a number of reasons:
 - a. They would have to be low enough to allow agricultural vehicles to drive over it.
 - b. Rumble strips which may be cheaper to install may result in greater noise nuisance than the traffic noise.
 - c. If higher profile barriers were to be used it would necessitate street lighting and this is likely to be unpopular, and may be prohibitively expensive to install and to pay for the energy ongoing.
 - d. More than one set of barriers would probably be needed to be installed on that length of road to be effective and this would result in a commensurate increase in costs.
38. Non-physical barriers may be more effective as the traffic activated speed monitor (SID) did have an effect on speeds. It will also be difficult for people to object to a device which simply makes them obey the speed limit and has no "side effects" other than the camera and sign.
39. A fixed camera would possibly reduce speeding at the point of the camera location but may result in excessive braking leading up to it and acceleration away from it, which may also result in increased noise which may exceed that of the current traffic noise.
40. Average speed cameras would reduce the speed of traffic for the whole length of the stretch of road but it would need to be ended before the Beaney bend when traffic is slowing. Also, beyond that point, there are intersecting roads, dwellings and the shop which would reduce the average speed if people turned off or stopped at the shop. If other sections of the village were to be subject to average speed cameras, additional cameras would be needed.
41. One of the residents consulted raised two valid points in that firstly, the police would need to enforce the speed camera as, if it became known that it was not being acted upon, people would ignore it and even worse, may overtake drivers obeying the speed limit and create a greater safety hazard. Councillor Douris said that average speed cameras report automatically and can be quite small due to technological changes.
42. Secondly, the camera may be self-funding, at least initially, which may help the case. Next Steps

1. Check if all the Department of Transport rules are current, [Mrs Rothwell believes they are] and in particular what Herts CC Highways policy is with regard to:
 - a. Street lighting being necessary for raised barriers or chicanes.
 - b. The height of engineered restrictions with regard to agricultural vehicle access.
 - c. Surveys: confirm who should be consulted and by whom and suggested method.
 - d. Ascertain the requirements for street furniture and signage in relation to the traffic calming methods.
2. Councillor Douris will pursue:
 - a. the speed camera option and funding by third parties.
 - b. Raising the kerbs
 - c. Use of painted lines at the road edges
3. Liaise with the Hertfordshire Association of Town and Parish Councils (HATPC), to ascertain what other successful Hertfordshire parishes have done, whom they consulted and how it was funded.
4. Consult Ashridge Management College as to the feasibility of re-introducing tolls for none villagers as this may reduce through traffic.
5. Undertake a survey of villager views, including the separate request for a 20 mph limit in the area around the school and the village green.
6. Ascertain costs of preferred measures.
7. Pursue with the appropriate bodies eg (Police, Herts CC) through the relevant channels on any appropriate calming measures (physical or speed cameras).