

Traffic Management Working Party

Monday 23rd October 2017

MEETING NOTES

Present: Irene Roy (Chairman), Nick Rushby, Martin Whitehead, Rod Shelton, Howard Leicester, Ian Bell and Graham Bignell (new member of the working party).
Highways Officers, Geoff Bineham & Julian Cook and Kent County Councillor Roger Gough

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1. Introduction

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Cllr Roger Gough and the Highways Officers, Geoff Bineham and Julian Cook, for kindly attending the meeting.

For the benefit of the Highways officers, the Chairman outlined the objectives of the Traffic Management Working Party and why a study had been undertaken. These were summarised into three categories: The need to protect the village from increased traffic as a result of new developments; to make the village a safer and more pleasant place to live and to provide a traffic management strategy for the future.

2. Criteria for traffic management improvements

Crash history is the main qualification for traffic calming improvements. To receive assistance and funding from Highways traffic calming schemes are assessed against any history of serious traffic incidents, those involving personal injury. Only data from the previous 3 years counts with a threshold of 4 accidents in rural areas and 6 in urban areas before safety improvements will be considered. Official data for the whole village for the last 3 years for accidents attended by the emergency services shows 17 incidents, 2 serious and one fatality. Traffic management schemes not deemed to reduce personal injury accidents are unlikely to be considered for assistance or funding from Highways.

Traffic management proposals not meeting this criterion will be considered by Highways, but funding the process, design and installation would have to be done on a self funded 3rd party basis.

Traffic management schemes designed to tackle congestion, such as a roundabout, are assessed through a feasibility study; these are notoriously expensive.

3. Highways Procedure for traffic management improvements

Obtaining clarity from the Highways Officers on the procedure for acquiring traffic calming measures proved difficult. There appear to be several steps in the process, each involving various levels of financial commitment, and no guarantee of a successful outcome. The conditions for each step are as follows:

1. Speed data collection. Before Highways will look at a scheme speed tests have to be carried out. A highway's engineer will carry out speed tests at suitable points in each location for 7 days over a 24 hour period. KCC funding is unlikely to be available for these tests which cost approximately £500 to £700 for each site.

The speed test results will establish the average vehicle speed and whether a scheme will require some form of physical calming. The cut off point for physical calming is an average speed of over 24mph; average speeds less than 24mph require a signed only scheme.

It is important to note that obtaining the average speed and type of scheme required does not mean automatic qualification to the next step. There may be other impediments, such as the geometry of the road or highways regulation. Other Parishes were not made aware of this and spent money on speed tests only to discover that speed reduction schemes were not suitable.

2. Scheme Design. If a scheme can go ahead this will need to be designed by a qualified highway's engineer. Schemes not qualifying for assistance from Highways would have to use a contractor approved by Highways for consultation and design. The Officers have already indicated that Otford would have to proceed on this basis. A list of approved contractors will be forwarded by the Officers. The design costs of a small signed only scheme start at approximately £2,000.
3. Public Consultations. Once a design for the scheme has been approved by Highways a formal public consultation will be undertaken. This will include the usually statutory consultations. Public notifications are made via notices displayed in the locality and a public notification placed in the local newspaper. If no objections are received the TRO can be progressed. If 5 or fewer objections are received, a report is prepared for the Director of Highways who will decide if the scheme can go ahead or if the decision should be referred to the JTB. If 6 or more objections are received, the decision will be referred to the JTB. The cost of a public consultation for a small scheme is approximately £1,200.

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By this stage a significant amount of money will have been invested in the scheme. It is imperative therefore that we consult with the Parish well ahead of this stage to promote a positive image of any plans. Other local schemes have had very few objections.

4. Traffic Regulation Order (TRO). If the proposal for a scheme is accepted an application for a TRO can be made. In our case, the Parish Council would make the application. Further information on applying for a TRO to be forwarded by Officers. The TRO will take between 2 to 3 months to process. The approximate cost for an unchallenged TRO for a small scheme is £860 if there are objections additional costs are approximately £500.
5. Implementation. Schemes are contracted out to Highways approved contractors who generally do not have long waiting lists. Granting a licence for permission to close roads for the work to be carried out could add significantly to lead times of up to 9 months from date of application. To install a small signed only scheme start at £2,000.

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4. Proposed Highway Improvements

Gyratory system. The Officers explained that it would not be possible to make alterations to the current traffic system around the pond to help ease congestion. The current gyratory system was designed to give the A225 running through the village priority. A typical roundabout system here would not work as traffic coming along the A road would have to give way to traffic on the B road. A roundabout system would also mean the loss of parking spaces outside the shops on the pond; the pond itself does not have any bearing on the current design.

Highway improvements. The Officers made the following comments on the proposals put forward:

1. 20mph Speed Limits.

Pilgrims Way East (PWE). Speed tests were carried out on the PWE in December 2016 on behalf of Kemsing Parish Council. Tests revealed that the average vehicle speed was over the threshold of 24mph requiring any scheme to have some form of physical calming. The lack of street lighting on the PWE rules out any physical calming. In addition to this, the geometry of PWE is not suitable due to the bends in the road and narrow section.

Shoreham Road, Station Road & Sevenoaks Road. 20mph limits on A roads are generally not permitted, although there are exemptions, such as Brasted. As an alternative to physical calming, the Officers suggested using road marking techniques, such as peripheral hatching, to reduce the width of the road so both lanes of traffic are narrowed (minimum road width for this technique is 5.4m). We might also consider some of the concepts being developed by Sustrans who encourage communities to make streets less car dominated. These options need to be explored and further information is available at: www.sustrans.org.uk.

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High Street. The Officers could not see any immediate reasons why a 20mph limit in the High Street would not be viable. The Officers would be prepared to have a brief look at a proposal once speed tests had been carried out. If vehicle speeds were in excess of 24mph we would need physical calming measures and would have to overcome the lighting issue.

- Traffic calming measures Pilgrims Way West (PWW). The road geometry for traffic calming needs to be suitable with good visibility. As all traffic calming measures require illumination this would have to be considered.

Village gateways. Any plans to make the gateways more conspicuous involving traffic calming measures, such as pinch points, will require lighting. Plans to use different road textures, such as rumble strips, to help define gateways need to consider noise nuisance if located in residential areas. Rumble strips do not have a long life and will need to be renewed.

- Pedestrian Crossings A225. A 20mph limit on the A225 would have permitted unlit informal pedestrian crossing points. Without a 20mph limit pedestrian crossings would have to be lit. This is likely to be cost prohibitive and will need to be reviewed.
- New roundabout at the junction of PWE and Station Road. For a roundabout to work efficiently traffic flows need to be relatively even on all sides. The flow of traffic on the A225 is likely to be too heavy for a roundabout to work on this junction. Space is another consideration as most of the available land at this junction is not owned by Highways. The Officers will check highways regulation to find out if mini roundabouts are permitted on A roads. A feasibility study may be necessary to progress this proposal. IR
- Improvements to road layouts. The Officers agreed to look at the suggested road improvements and forward comments. IR

5. Costs and Funding

Summary of approximate cost for a small signed only scheme (figures based on Chipstead scheme):

❖ Speed tests for each site.....	£500 to £700
❖ Scheme design (signed only) minimum.....	£1,800
❖ Public consultation minimum.....	£1,200
❖ TRO (plus £500 with objections).....	£860
❖ Implementation (signed only).....	£2,040

Summary of funding options:

- ❖ KCC - Proposals do not qualify for funding.
- ❖ Councillor Member Fund - Amount to be agreed.
- ❖ Parish Council - CIL, increase in precept to be considered.
- ❖ SDC - Build case on improving street scene around our historic buildings, benefits to tourism, etc.
- ❖ Otford Society - To be explored.

End of Highway's part of meeting. The Officers and Cllr Gough were thanked for their time and attending the meeting. TMWP continued with items on the agenda.

6. Summary of Highways meeting.

The Officers suggested the working party put forward a proposal for a smaller scheme to include:

- ❖ A 20mph limit in the High Street.
- ❖ Traffic calming on PWW.
- ❖ Peripheral hatching on Station Road.

The Officers would be prepared to have a brief look at the proposals once vehicle speed tests had been carried out.

It was agreed that the group would look at suitable locations for a highway's engineer to carry out vehicle speed tests. It may be prudent to carry out our own vehicle speed tests beforehand to ascertain whether we would require physical calming measures. ALL

Graham, who very kindly agreed to join the working party, will lead this initiative and put together new proposals. GB

There appears to be a lot of disparity with the information provided by the Officers and that provided by Adrian Berendt from 20s Plenty. In particular, 20mph limits on A roads and the requirement for physical calming in all roads in a 20mph zone. If we are going to achieve our objectives, these restrictions will require further investigation.

7. Traffic management schemes in neighbouring villages.

The reports on traffic calming schemes in neighbouring villages have also revealed a number of discrepancies in the information given by Highways. Our neighbours have been frustrated by the lack of information and clarity in the process. In some cases, this has been costly, for example, money wasted on speed tests in roads which are not suitable for traffic calming or money spent on designs which do not deliver due to limitations in highways regulation or other technicalities.

The long process to obtain traffic calming requires significant financial investment before a scheme can be considered for public consultation. It is therefore imperative that we consider the viability financially of any proposals and any limitations at the outset that may make our proposals unattainable.

Points to consider for our next meeting:

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- ❖ Cost implications at each stage of the procedure.
- ❖ Financial investment in a scheme that may not be approved by statutory consultees or the public.
- ❖ Funding physical calming measures.
- ❖ Street lighting requirements.
- ❖ Justifying 20mph limits without physical calming that only reduce average speeds by about 2mph. Or, do we consider a small reduction in speed worth it if it reduces injuries and fatalities and increases health benefits such as improved air quality or a shift towards walking and cycling.

8 Date of next meeting.

To be arranged for November.

Cllr Irene Roy
31st October 2017

