

TRAFFIC CALMING PROPOSALS

I have been liaising with Essex CC Highways Department on matters outstanding from the 2013 approved bid for traffic calming measures. I had been told that, after the road markings and extensions of the speed limits had been done, the balance of £22k earmarked for the agreed measures remained available. I now understand that it should be assumed that the balance is not available and that outstanding measures have not been carried forward. In effect, we should start again. It has also been suggested that we should not restrict our bid to the three suggested by the recent request from the Local Highways Panel but we should instead ask for all that we would like. This note sets out proposals for consideration by the PC to go in our bid to the LHP.

Extending the 30 mph limit in Church Road to the junction with Mope Lane and Station Road

One factor apparently supporting the recent extension of the limit in Maypole Road was the existence of five properties in the extended stretch. This factor applies to the Church Road extension (the five are The Rectory and Abbots on the north side and Bishops, 6 and 6A on the south side). Another relevant factor is that this stretch has the church on one side with its car park and cemetery on the other side of the road with no footpath on either side. This is particularly dangerous for pedestrians crossing between the church and the car park.

Exchange the two Vehicle Activated Signs (VASs – the 30 flashing signs) with Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs – “smiley/grumpy” faces and actual speed displayed)

SIDs are believed to have greater impact than VASs. They also record vehicle and speed data which can be used to support the view that speed continues to be excessive.

Provide additional posts for SIDs to enable the SIDs to be moved from site to site

One criterion for both SIDs and VASs is that mean traffic speeds should be in excess of 35 mph. This is not likely to be proved for Church Road but could be for Beacon Hill and, possibly, Kelvedon Road. Beacon Hill is, of course, in Gt Totham parish but speeding traffic impacts only Wickham Bishops. There may be environmental reasons not to have these signs there. In respect of Kelvedon Road, a SID just north of the Prances junction (also in Gt Totham but impacting Wickham Bishops) would enhance road safety issues for children going to and from the school. It is understood that there remains the “special offer” from ECC for additional posts to be funded by ECC if the parish council pays for the signs. Funds for this were earmarked in our 2014/15 budget.

Install white gates at entry points to the village

These are said to have a psychological impact on driver behaviour and are believed to have had a positive impact elsewhere. There are, however, positional difficulties in Maypole Road, Church Road and Beacon Hill and there is a view that they are more cosmetic than functional as speed reducers. A gate could well be sited at the Witham Road/Birch Rise junction, perhaps with road narrowing (see below).

Install road narrowing supported by priority signs

This is believed to be the most effective way of reducing speed. Examples are in Maltings Lane, Witham between Hatfield Road and Gershwin Boulevard. I understand they do not require street lights (unlike speed humps) and do not impede unduly emergency vehicles or buses. They could be sited at the Maypole Road and Witham Road entry points (Church Road and Beacon Hill might not justify them for speed and environmental reasons respectively) and for both ends of The Street. Installing in The Street would resolve the frequent complaints about the dangers of crossing the road there. One in Kelvedon Road at the Prances junction would assist crossing to and from the school.

Speedwatch warning signs

I am aware of at least one other county which has in place fixed signs indicating speedwatch activity in a village. The signs are the same size as, for example, the "Please drive carefully through our village" sign fitted below the VAS at Birch Rise. Neighbourhood watch signs, albeit much smaller, provide similar warning. Speedwatch signs could be affixed to existing speed camera signs.

Other road markings

Previous bids to the LHP have included

- A different coloured road surface in The Street at The Mitre to link with the dropped and coloured kerbs
- Rumble strips at various points
- A yellow line waiting restriction at Snows Corner. There is a view that this would merely move parking further along The Street to The Chequers and impede sight lines even more for traffic coming out of Tiptree Road.

In some cases, provision of one option would negate the need for another. For instance, there might not be a need for a SID at the Prances junction if road narrowing was there.

Fingerpost signs

The LHP will also consider improvements to signs. There is also a "special offer" for these. The following signs have been noted as in need of improvement/repair.

- The road sign at the junction of Hatfield Road and Spring Lane is broken (just inside our boundary, I think). This ought to be repaired anyway.
- The public footpath sign in Station Road pointing towards Mill Cottage and the footpath to the golf course is an old style concrete post which can hardly be seen and would benefit from being upgraded, especially if the trestle bridge signs are repaired and the bridge is more clearly identified as a site of interest in the village.
- Similarly, the public bridleway sign at the Kelvedon Road end of Handleys Lane is an old style concrete post and not in good condition.
- Generally, most footpath signs are the old style concrete posts and not in the best of condition with many obscured by vegetation. They are, however, less likely to be subject to vandalism than the newer wooden posts.

My proposals for consideration by the Parish Council

In order of preference my traffic calming proposals are:

- (1) Provide road narrowing at Witham Road, Maypole Road, The Street, Kelvedon Road (Prances junction)
- (2) Replace VASs with SIDs and resite in Beacon Hill, Kelvedon Road (near War Memorial junction) and at any or all sites in (1) where road narrowing is not implemented, with facility to move signs from site to site
- (3) Extend 30 mph zone in Church Road to junction with Mope Lane
- (4) Provide speedwatch area signs at entry points to the village
- (5) Install white gates at entry points where feasible (could be in conjunction with road narrowing)
- (6) Provide coloured road surface in The Street at the Mitre

In respect of signs:

- (7) Repair road sign at Hatfield Road/Spring Lane junction
- (8) Leave footpath signs to be monitored as now.