

TITLE OF REPORT: TRAFFIC ISSUES IN CHURCH LANE GRAVELEY

REPORT OF THE NORTH HERTS ASSISTANT DISTRICT MANAGER

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide information on measures already planned for the location and to outline possible further measures, including potential sources of funding and processes to secure that funding.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At the meeting of the Southern Rural Area Committee of North Hertfordshire District Council held on 15 March 2007, Mr Peter Kelley, the Chairman of Graveley Parish Council, spoke regarding traffic issues in Church Lane, Graveley. He highlighted the perception that the lane was being used by large volumes of traffic and vehicles not suitable for such a small road. He drew the Committee's attention to a part of the lane known as Crow End, a pinch point in the road, and stated that at this point damage had been caused to the verges and property.

Mr Kelley suggested the following solutions to the traffic issues:

- New signage before the Church to warn of a pinch point;
- Weight restrictions on Church Lane;
- High kerbstones to protect properties and verges;
- Installing bollards at the Crow End turnings;
- Close the lane other than for access.

- 2.2 At the meeting of the Panel held on 15 October 2007, this issue appeared on the agenda as an item referred from the area committee and it was resolved " That the District Manager at Hertfordshire Highways be requested to enter into discussions with the Chairman of Graveley Parish Council in order to clarify precisely the problems and what type of traffic management controls could be put in place."

- 2.3 A meeting was held on site between Mr Lines, Chairman of Graveley Parish Council, the resident of The Cottage and the Hertfordshire Highways Assistant District Manager, at which the following issues were discussed.

- 2.4 **Lorries using Church Lane** - Officers have looked at the area and from on site observation the majority of lorries are using the B197 and the only lorries that would use Church Lane are for deliveries and horse boxes to the stables at Chesfield. However a temporary increase of lorries is likely to be due to the development at the care home at Crow End. These works should be substantially completed by October 2008. Therefore there is little justification on the introduction of a 7½ tonne weight limit zone that would have a minimal affect, as delivery lorries to businesses or lorries having journeys starting or stopping in the area would still be legally able to pass through it.
- 2.5 **Kerbing works and bollards** – Concrete bollards are already erected on the verge outside The Cottage and at the corner house on the bend and any more would have little highway benefit. Kerbing is also present along the road outside the house and any extension of this would narrow the road even further. The verge damage at the edge of carriageway is likely to be caused by delivery lorries accessing the development at the care home. These deliveries will decrease once the building works nears completion.
- 2.6 **Closure of Church Lane** - Such a closure will cause effects on the surrounding road network, the extent and scale of which are very difficult to predict. A very extensive traffic modelling exercise would be needed. But even then, the outcome may not accurately predict the final effect, as has been seen to be the case with the Baldock Bypass before and after traffic study. In addition, there will be an issue of potential conflict with the duty to meet the right of the public to use the highway.
- 2.7 **Information signs** - The missing information signs have been re-erected at the junction of Church Lane/High Street informing motorist the road is unsuitable for HGVs. Officers will also investigate the provision of additional signing before the spur to the Church, to reinforce the message to motorists that the road is narrow so they have the opportunity to turn around, as well as the signing on the sharp bend at Crow End and the signing at junction with Weston Road.
- 2.8 At the meeting of the Panel held on 21 April 2008, Parish Councillor Alan Lines spoke about the damaging affect of traffic on the road surface in Church Lane, Graveley and made a request for a traffic assessment and consequently traffic control measures to alleviate this problem. Councillor Lines distributed photographs of damage to verges and driveways and put forward several suggestions to mitigate the problem: warning signs, signage to warn of a pinch point at Crow End, weight restrictions in Church Lane, high kerbstones, install more bollards at the pinch point and closure of Church Lane except for access. Several Members expressed experience of this country lane and the JMP considered several other remedial measures including: a one way regime and the construction of passing places. The North Herts District Manager (NHM) advised that closure was not a viable option as closures elsewhere had resulted in unpredictable migrations of traffic to other roads in the local area, causing unforeseeable problems elsewhere. A one way system was also not a preferred option to explore for the same reason. However, the NHM considered that it would be worthwhile to investigate the feasibility and cost estimates of constructing passing places, and the JMP noted that financial support may be provided by Graveley Parish Council.
- 2.9 It was resolved by the 21 April 2008 JMP meeting " That the Hertfordshire Highways – North Herts District Manager be requested to undertake the appropriate investigations as to the viability of the construction of passing points in Church Lane, Graveley with

signage indicating passing priority;" and also " That the Hertfordshire Highways – North Herts District Manager be requested to present to the next meeting of the JMP to be held on 23 June 2008 a report on the outcomes both technical and financial concerning passing points and signage in Church Lane, Graveley."

3. ISSUES

- 3.1 Church Lane is a local access road that runs from B197 High Street, Graveley to Chesfield and then onto Weston Road, which leads into the Great Ashby estate or to Weston Village.
- 3.2 We have no available traffic data for this road but it can be reasonably assumed that the development of the Great Ashby estate has contributed to an increase of traffic heading to the B197 through Chesfield and Graveley
- 3.3 The road is in a rural location and has suffered from verge over run in many places and unofficial passing places have been formed.
- 3.4 An initial investigation has been completed for the installation of formal passing places that would be constructed similar to 2 space lay bys with splays and kerbs to reduce any edge erosion. These would also be built to highway specification and carriageway construction.
- 3.5 The proposed passing places would be located at various locations along this route at places where informal passing places are already being formed. A check would be carried to ensure that consecutive passing places will be intervisible, to aid drivers in making the decision whether to proceed or to wait.
- 3.6 Several vehicle conflicts have been experienced at Crow End, which are likely to be due to the narrow nature of the road, the 90 degree bend and no advance warning to motorists.
- 3.7 Officers have been informed that lorries have experienced difficulties due to the nature of the road but they are likely to be lorries delivering to properties along this road.
- 3.8 A sign survey has now been completed and a proposal has been drawn up of proposed advance signing in Church Lane in the vicinity of Crow End plus signing at the Weston Road end to inform motorists of the narrow road ahead.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 A temporary road closure order would be required for the implementation of the construction of passing spaces.

5. FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The proposed advance signing would include the introduction of "unsuitable for heavy goods vehicles" road narrows, bend ahead, single track road and chevron signs. These signs will be erected on new galvanised posts.

The estimated cost of these works is **£3100**

Human resources to progress this signing scheme will be provided by the existing Hertfordshire Highways staff establishment.

- 5.2 The initial estimate for the provision of the 6 passing places (approximately 12m long plus tapered sections at each end) including the construction cost, traffic management, road closures and design costs is **£47500**. (Works are estimated to cost £39000 and the estimated design cost is £8500). A more detailed design and estimate can be produced if funding is made available.
- 5.3 Human resources would be provided from within the Hertfordshire Highways establishment.

6. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

- 6.1 Consultation on any scheme as identified and approved will be carried out with residents, HCC and NHDC members and the Parish Council in accordance with Hertfordshire Highways procedures.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 That the Panel notes the update information.
- 7.2 That the Panel considers whether the proposed signing should be added to the current year programme for discretionary funded works.
- 7.3 That the Panel considers whether the proposed passing places scheme should be added to the current year programme for discretionary funded works, so a detailed scheme can be developed subject to match funding being provided from the Southern Rural Area Committee.

8. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 To assist the District Manager to progress the issues raised by the Parish Council

9. APPENDICES

- 9.1 None

10. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 10.1 Adrian Redrup, Assistant District Manager (North Herts), Hertfordshire Highways.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 None.