

Report on Site Visit to Bubbenhall by WCC Safety Officer Wednesday 10th February 2016

Present:

WCC Road Safety Officer: Ms Jo Edwards, Councillor Wallace Redford, Bubbenhall Parish
Councillors: Steve Haynes and Bob Powell

The main purposes of the visit, which had been proposed in the January BPC meeting, in response to parish councillors' and villagers' concerns:

- to examine whether a new speed restriction (20mph) could be introduced through the village;
- to consider road safety factors in Paget's Lane;
- to re-examine speed and safety concerns on the A445;
- to remind relevant persons about the need to complete tasks that had been planned for some time, e.g. new 'No HGVs' signs.

20mph

There is little chance of introducing this limit in the village. Reasons given included population volume, enforcement problems and cost. These limits are more likely to be found in urban areas - although we did cite Ryton as a local example which has a 20mph on a dead-end road similar to Lower End.

RoSPA has studied carefully the effect of the introduction of 20mph zones (which include traffic-calming measures) and 20mph limits. It concluded:

'The measures that are most effective in reducing vehicle speeds and thereby reducing road death and injury are area-wide traffic calming schemes and 20 mph zones.'

RoSPA strongly supports the use of 20 mph zones as they are an effective means of reducing road crashes and casualties. They are very effective at protecting our most vulnerable road users, including children, pedestrians and cyclists, and significantly decrease the risk of being injured in a collision. RoSPA encourages their greater use, especially in residential areas.

RoSPA supports and encourages the wider use of 20mph limits. They have been shown to reduce traffic speed, although not as much as 20mph zones with traffic calming. However, they are considerably less expensive to implement, which means that wider areas can be covered. They also provide additional benefits, such as encouraging more physical activity, such as walking and cycling. They can also greatly improve the character of a residential area and quality of life of the residents.'

I have examined the Government document: Setting Local Speed Limits, July 2012. Here it states that:

'Traffic authorities can, over time, introduce 20 mph zones or limits into:

- 1 Major streets where business on foot is more important than slowing down road traffic and*
- 2 Lesser residential roads in cities, towns and villages, particularly where this would be reasonable for the road environment, there is community support and streets are being used by pedestrians and cyclists. Where they do so,*

general compliance should be achievable without an excessive reliance on enforcement.'

Perhaps Bubbenhall Parish Council should continue to monitor public opinion regarding speed limits in and around the village and re-visit these issues in the not too distant future.

Paget's Lane

There are national rules about speed restrictions on main roads and adjacent lanes. Drivers are expected to respond to the road conditions in determining their maximum speed. It is not possible to change the current national speed limit on the lane. Costs were also mentioned as being prohibitive since re-designating a road requires a change in the law.

A445

It was thought that by taking stock of the number of accidents that have occurred in the village on this road, we would have a stronger argument in favour of reducing the speed limit to at least 40mph. We were informed that this is not the case. Collisions between vehicles or vehicles coming off the road so not count when deciding upon changes in road regulations. Human injuries or deaths do, however, influence decision-making

We revisited the top of Spring Hill to see the area where traffic heading into the village have to negotiate a right turn - an exercise which is perceived to be increasingly dangerous because of:

- a) the increase in permitted speed of HGVs (from 40mph to 50mph on single carriageways)
- b) the restricted visibility of oncoming vehicles owing to tree growth in front of the nursery
- c) general increase in volume of traffic, especially at peak times.

It was decided to find out who is responsible for cutting back the vegetation. The cost of creating a filter lane would be prohibitive. The existence of the lay-by/road exit would also be problematic. It was argued that a right filter might even make things more dangerous in that traffic would continue to pass the turning vehicle on the left whereas, at present, traffic has to slow down - or even stop. **ACTION**

Afterthoughts

There are still no road junction warning signs on the A445 for traffic approaching the village. Compare this to the significant warnings both sides of Weston Lane and the Ryton Pools Entrance (where, arguably, there are far fewer traffic entrances and exits!). The Parish Council should continue to lobby for these additional signs and any other elements which would make entering and exiting the village safer. **ACTION**

We were told that 40mph restrictions were usually introduced in urban areas where there is housing on one side of the road - Leicester Lane, Leamington was an example given.

The Government Guidelines (Setting Local Speed Limits, July 2012) state the following:

Roads suitable for 40 mph are generally higher-quality suburban roads or those on the outskirts of urban areas where there is little development. They should have good width and layout, parking and waiting restrictions in operation, and buildings set back from the road. These roads should, wherever possible, cater for the needs of non-motorised road users through segregation of road space. Alternatively, traffic authorities should consider

whether there are convenient alternative routes available and ensure that any roads with a 40 mph limit have adequate footways and crossing places as necessary for pedestrians, cyclists or equestrians.

There is a circular argument here: we need safer crossings on the A445 and this would be a requirement of a new 40mph limit; we need to slow down traffic in order for people to be able to cross the road more safely. I simply do not buy the argument, heard more than once in our discussions with CC Officers, that drivers will tend to travel at speeds they consider appropriate for the road conditions, that the A445 is relatively safe (no fatalities to date) and that changes to highways regulations are too expensive.

ACTION

The Neighbourhood Plan should include some specific proposals for improving road safety in and around the village - in order to avoid accidents in the future.

Bob Powell