
Meeting: Delegated Decisions by the Executive Member for Community Services on Traffic Regulation Orders
Date: 13 September 2016
Subject: Sharpenhoe Road, Barton-le-Clay – Consideration of Petition for Speed Reducing Measures
Report of: Paul Mason, Assistant Director Highways
Summary: This report is to note the receipt of a petition submitted to Central Bedfordshire Council and suggest a way forward

RECOMMENDATION(S):-

That the contents of the petition be noted and that the lead petitioner be informed of the outcome of the meeting.

Contact Officer: Paul Salmon
paul.salmon@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: Barton-le-Clay
Function of: Council

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS
<p>Council Priorities: The petition is in relation to the safe and efficient use of the highway network</p> <p>Financial: None from this report</p> <p>Legal: None from this report</p> <p>Risk Management: None from this report</p> <p>Staffing (including Trades Unions): None from this report</p> <p>Equalities/Human Rights: None from this report</p>

Community Safety:

None from this report

Sustainability:

None from this report

Background and Information

1. A petition has been received, signed by 77 people, requesting the Council to install traffic calming measures to help address their concerns about road safety and excessive speed in Sharpenhoe Road.
2. The petition highlights a number of traffic collisions that have occurred in recent years and seeks to reduce this number. The Barton bypass substantially reduced the number of vehicles passing through the village on the A6, i.e. in a north-south direction, but did nothing to address the movement of traffic traveling east-west and vice versa. The petition's supporting letter points out Sharpenhoe Road has no physical traffic calming measures and it is often only parked cars that restrain traffic speeds. Several solutions are put forward; one involving a new link to the A6 and the other some traffic calming features.
3. The collision data for that length of Sharpenhoe Road for that length of road from the start of the 30mph speed limit to Bedford Road/Luton Road from 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2016 shows the following:-
 - July 2011 – Slight injury collision outside no.36 Sharpenhoe Road. This involved a vehicle heading westwards, overtaking parked vehicles, failing to see an oncoming vehicle and colliding with it.
 - May 2015 – Slight injury collision at the Sharpenhoe Road/Bedford Road/Luton Road mini-roundabout. This involved a motorcycle heading south failing to give way to a vehicle entering the roundabout from the right.
 - October 2015 – Slight injury collision outside no.24 Sharpenhoe Road. A total of five occupants in two vehicles sustained injuries. The Police report states that the driver of a car travelling west is believed to have fallen asleep and collided with a parked vehicle. The vehicle then collided with an oncoming van which itself hit a parked vehicle.
4. These incidents are regrettable, but not excessive for a road of this type. There is nothing to indicate that excessive speed was a major contributory factor in any of these incidents. It is acknowledged that a number of damage only collisions might have occurred along this length of road over a number of years, but these are not recorded by the Police.

5. It is accepted that Sharpenhoe Road is used as a through-route by traffic heading in an east-west direction, but directional signing does not positively encourage this movement. For those drivers heading westwards following the B655 from Luton will naturally use Sharpenhoe Road as a continuation of that route. The number of HGVs using this route is relatively low as it has a 7.5 tonnes weight restriction.
6. The Council does have some speed data that was collected in May 2015. This shows average speeds are 29.25mph and 85th percentile speeds were 32.25mph. These indicate reasonably good compliance with the speed limit, although they do suggest that a small percentage of drivers are travelling at inappropriate speeds.
7. The possible solutions put forward are appreciated. The idea of adding slip roads to the A6 would involve significant engineering works and possibly land acquisition. The costs involved in this could not be justified to address the relatively localised issues that exist in Sharpenhoe Road. The traffic calming proposals put forward are reasonable and are the types of features we would probably employ if traffic calming was considered for this road.
8. There are already some measures in place to moderate traffic speeds, such as gateway treatments and a vehicle activated sign.
9. The funding we have for safety improvements has to be targeted at locations that have a poor injury collision record, so that we can reduce the number of people killed and injured on our roads. The aforementioned collision data and speed measurements indicate that the installation of engineering measures is currently not a high priority for this Council.
10. It is recommended that the petition organiser brings this to the attention of Barton Parish Council who may wish to consider using Central Bedfordshire Council's Rural Match Funding scheme to promote road safety improvements in Sharpenhoe Road.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Petition and accompanying correspondence

Appendix B – Location plan

Appendix A

Dear Sirs

Traffic Calming to Sharpenhoe Road, Barton le Clay

Please find attached letter and signed petition from the residents of Sharpenhoe Road to request urgent implementation of traffic calming to reduce or prevent the steadily increasing appalling traffic situation on this road. Please note that we have deliberately not used electronic social media or extended the radius of addresses to falsely boost the numbers of petitioners. All have been gained by discussion & foot slogging and we trust this will add some weight to our cries for help.

Please contact me should you require any further clarification to any of the points raised.

We need traffic calming in Sharpenhoe Road now!

Signature	Name	Address	I have previously had my vehicle damaged by passing traffic in Sharpenhoe Road

Traffic Calming for Sharpenhoe Road, Barton-le-Clay required NOW!



This was the situation at 7:15am Thursday 22nd October 2015. The speeding Fiesta traveling west out of the village trying to squeeze through a non-existent gap, struck the parked Alfa ripping off the rear wheel and suspension, moving it over a metre and then flipping and colliding with a Peugeot van carrying 4 people on the opposite carriage way. All 3 emergency services were involved, injured parties were cut from their vehicles and hospitalised and 3 cars removed with recovery vehicles. The Alfa was subsequently written off. This is but the latest in a series of accidents that have occurred in our over 30 years of living on Sharpenhoe Road. The current speed of vehicles is a hell for the residents and we can be silent no longer. We refuse to wait for someone to die before this issue is tackled!

History – Pre bypass

Before the 1990 bypass the A6 through the village was a bumper to bumper crawl commonly back to the Gravenhurst turning for traffic going south into Luton. This dissuaded crossing traffic which would routinely back up the length of the built part of Sharpenhoe Road during peak times. Similarly the Hexton Road could be stationary to Arnold School.

The Bypass removed the blockage from North South traffic through Barton but with no consideration to the fact that this also removed any constraint to east west traffic flow and as many residents predicted at the original consultation the Sharpenhoe Road rapidly became a rat run between M1 junction 12 and the A1M junction 7 at Stevenage North.

Subsequently

Removal of the old direction signage to Toddington & Harlington has had no affect on chosen routes as the wholesale use of sat nav devices is now the determining factor for chosen routes of non-local traffic. The 7.5 tonne limit however has made some difference and has removed substantial amounts of HGV traffic from the road, although it is still used at night and early hours of the morning by Lorries willing to try their luck.

It is no surprise that extending the 30 speed limit zone to west of the bypass some 4 years ago has made not an iota of difference to speeds in or out of the village.

Warning signage does not work. The vehicle activated speed warning sign erected on Sharpenhoe road around 5 years ago at the position of the old 30 mph sign has been knocked down by vehicles leaving the road on at least two occasions since installed. It does not give the driver their speed but just flashes "slow down " when 30mph is exceeded Subjective viewing gives the impression it is used almost as a game to make it flash!

This latest carnage shown in the initial photographs is but the latest in a string of major accidents that have occurred due to excessive speed on Sharpenhoe Road resulting in complete write-off of resident's parked cars, damage to boundary walls by impact and injury to people over the last 20 years.

The major ones are these:-

In 2013 a sports car speeding over the bridge, lost control and left the road 200m inside the 30 mph zone by no.36, causing major damage to a vehicle parked in its own drive 3ft from the kerb!

In 2010 a car again travelling east into the village left the road and went through the hedge of no. 40 and over 2 children walking back to their home at no.44 in the middle of the afternoon after their school-bus drop off. Miraculously for themselves but not for any statistics they were both uninjured and thus no record of the incident appears to have been made in any official records that we could find? Such was their trauma it was not surprising that the family sold their house and left Sharpenhoe Road very shortly afterwards

in 2011, for it could so very easily resulted in 2 child deaths. We refuse to let this happen before something is done about the ludicrous traffic situation!

Below is a further illustration of an earlier incident outside no. 38



In the Hansard of 8th November 1972 David Maddel the then MP for Bedfordshire South noted

"Traffic uses Barton to get from the A1 to the M1, and that means a large number of heavy vehicles on the Sharpenhoe Road."

18 years after that original statement we got half a bypass, 43 years later the heavy vehicle problems is largely gone but the east west issue hasn't changed a jot except that the hgv's have been replaced by a vastly greater numbers of faster accelerating cars - how many more years do we have to wait?

Today

Cars now accelerate & brake far faster than 30 years ago and the random nature of UK speed limits mean that the majority of car drivers drive at the maximum that road conditions, layout and visibility allow.

Approaching west from Harlington vehicles commonly drive below the 40 mph limit through Sharpenhoe village itself due to that roads constant curve and consequent limit on forward visibility. In constructing the bridge crossing over the bypass in 1990 the old bend where speeding cars previously ended up in a ditch damaging only themselves, was remodelled and the road straightened. The result is cars now accelerate as they enter the bridge on Sharpenhoe Road and down the half kilometre straight into Barton.

A check on internet route planners for the shortest route between Stevenage and Milton Keynes will send you straight down Sharpenhoe Road. The only possible deterrent is to introduce measures to delay and deter motorists so that the alternatives of the A507 Shefford and Ampthill bypasses or the A421 Bedford bypass to M1-J13 become the preferred routes that the road planners originally intended?

Unlike virtually all the villages surrounding it, Barton does not have a single physical traffic calming installation anywhere in the village. There is absolutely nothing outside Arnold Middle school to slow those vehicles using the derestricted B655 from Hitchin & the A1 as they enter the village? Why has Barton been allowed to become a free for all for speeding drivers?

The only current constraint to users of Sharpenhoe road is the almost sacrificial parking of resident's cars on the southern side. This is at the cost of constant damage to bodywork and particularly mirrors of those parked. We have personally suffered 3 major body damage incidents and at least 10 wrecked mirrors over 30 years of being a resident, concluding in the carnage that introduces this petition.

Attempting to enter or exit your parked car on Sharpenhoe Road is a danger in itself. Passing drivers seem incredulous that you might possibly want to stop and park let alone get in or out of your car? Blaring horns, hand "signals" and even verbal abuse are the common result of stopping them for 10 seconds of their journeys!

Drivers travelling west out of Barton commonly have to use the north carriageway due to parked cars on the south side of Sharpenhoe Road. A large percentage of them recreate the Santa Pod drag strip to accelerate and avoid any possibility of stopping or having to give way to oncoming traffic

The kerb on the north side of Sharpenhoe Rd between no's 32 and 26 for a length of some 100-150m is virtually flush with the pavement. Without the constraint of any kerb, car drivers will drive along the pavement rather than suffer the ignominy of stopping.

See photo below of tracks taken during a previous winter illustrating the typical driving of east traffic on a daily basis



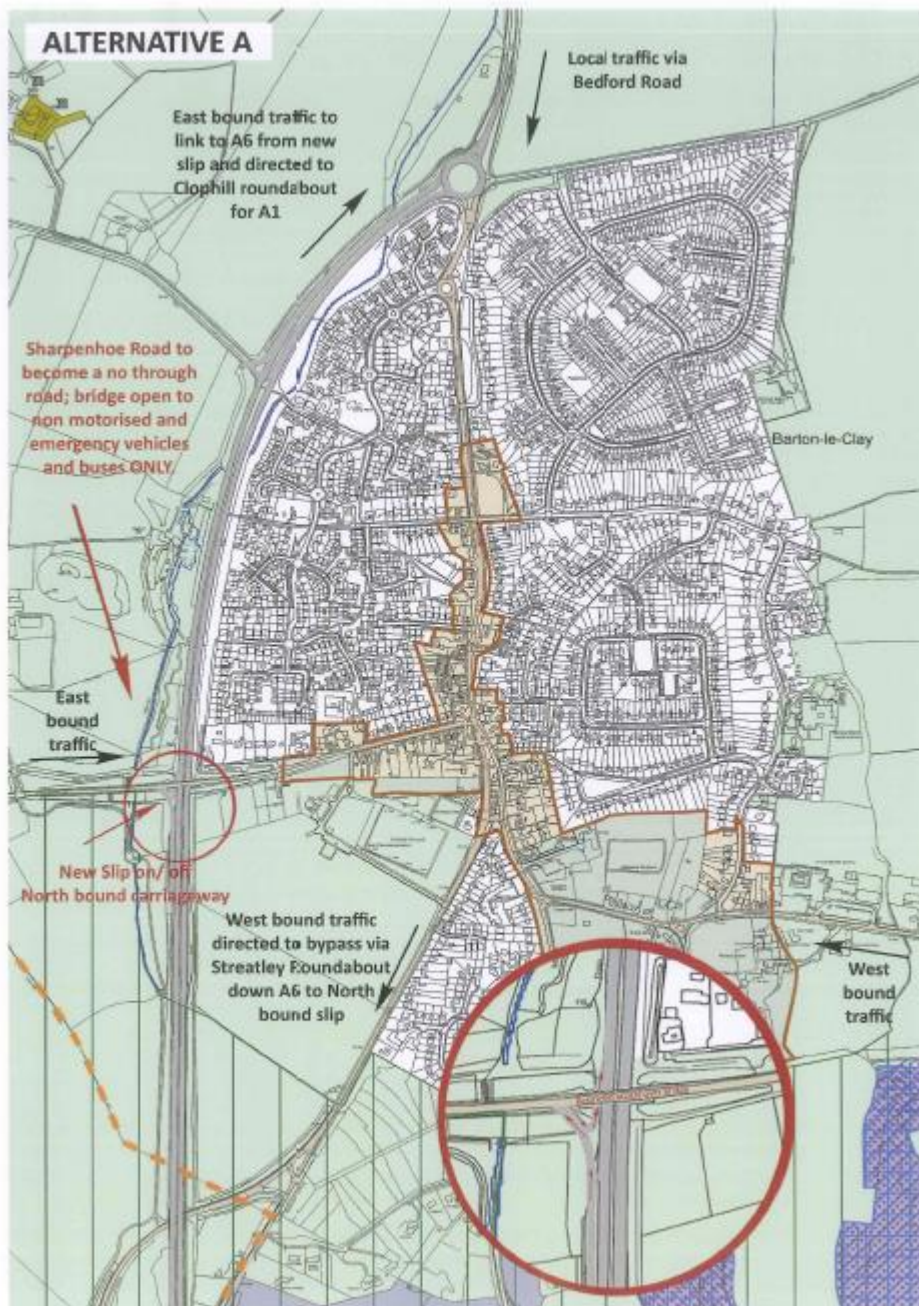
When the last bout of road maintenance took place in December 2010 -11 we were told that these kerbs were to be raised along that stretch. But it snowed for 2 weeks; the works were cancelled and have never been done since!

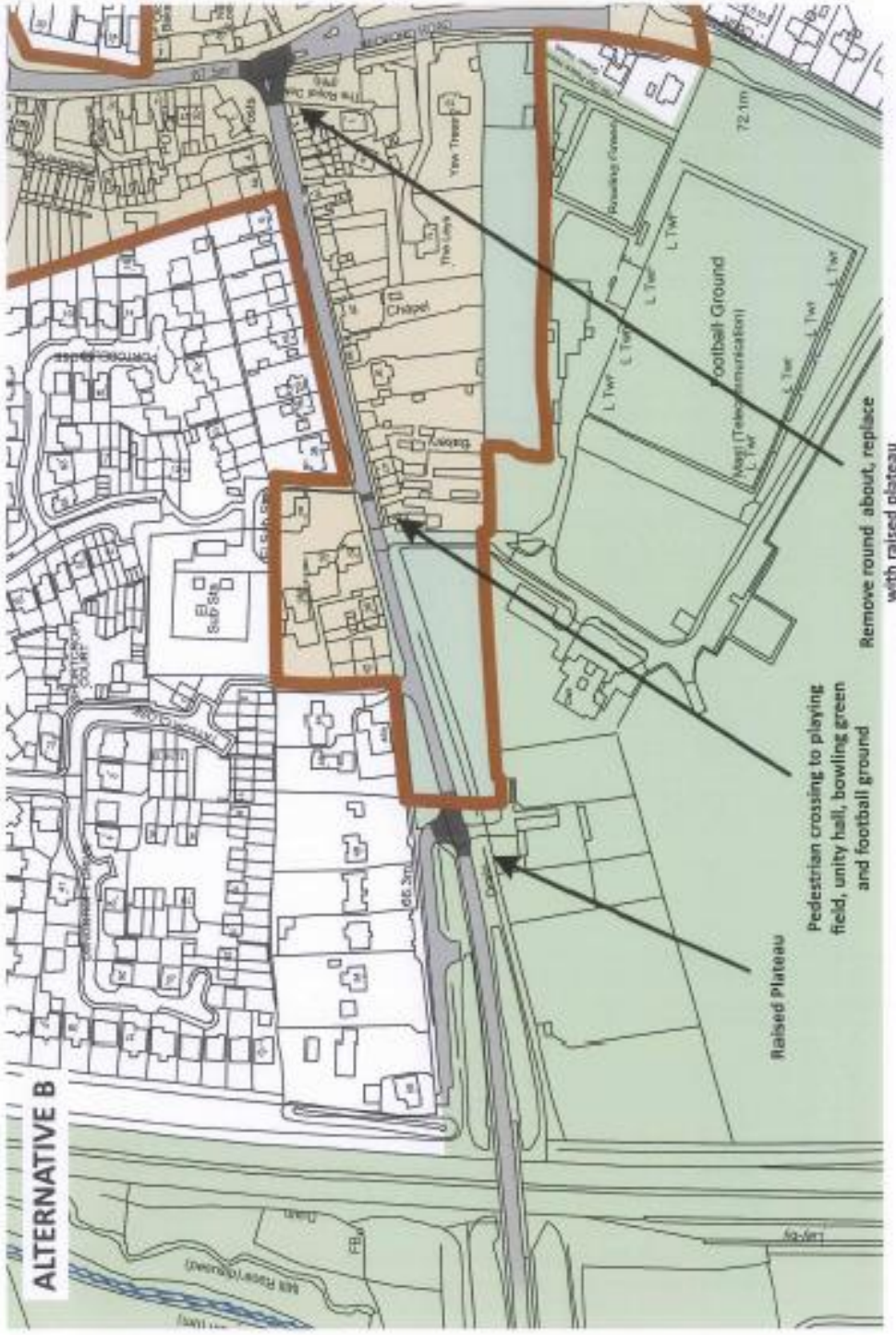
seen not a penny of any of any S106 agreement monies has been spent to improve Barton's roads for any of its residents.

This letter is sent directly to Central Beds Council with a copy to Barton Parish Council. Unfortunately the years of inertia on the issue of both Sharpenhoe Road and indeed the rest of Barton to prevent it being destroyed by traffic leaves me with little confidence in the Parish Council acting to achieve the required calming, however I would request that the Parish Council please now backs the proposals detailed in this letter.

Attached are the signatures of the residents of Sharpenhoe Road who agree with the proposal to introduce traffic calming to Sharpenhoe Road.

I trust that this petition and proposal will be taken up by Central Beds and implemented as a matter of urgency.





ALTERNATIVE B

Appendix B

