

Traffic concerns in Kington Langley

1. For presentation to Kington Langley Parish Council 12th December 2016

2. Introduction

- 2.1. In September 2016 a short survey was conducted into the views of Kington Langley residents about speeding and over-weight traffic in the village. Around 40 residents signed a petition expressing concern and asking the Parish Council to action a plan to reduce and enforce the speed limit and enforce the weight restriction on the grounds of the community's safety and enjoyment.
- 2.2. These concerns were raised with the Council on 10th October 2016 who invited a proposal to be put together to address the problems. This proposal is offered for discussion of the issues it raises.
- 2.3. Since 10th October, over 200 villagers have signed the petition in the time available. The concerns raised in this document reflect the views expressed by many of the residents as the petition was collected. Views were also expressed via email to the dedicated email address KingtonLangleyTraffic@gmail.com.
- 2.4. It is important to recognise that, whilst this document illustrates the level of concern, none of the proposals have been discussed in any detail or made public at this stage. Therefore residents' views on how to tackle the problems are not yet fully known. This proposal amounts to a consultation document on the issue of speeding in the village, which would benefit from the widest possible discussion through the forum of the Parish Council.

3. Background

Kington Langley (KL) is a rural village with historic, open commons giving it a very special character. The commons are in frequent use by the village community for gatherings throughout the year. These activities contribute to the considerable car, foot and horse traffic in KL at all times of the day:

- 3.1. On Middle Common, the village school, St Peter's Church and the Union chapel are thriving.
- 3.2. On Church Road the busy hub of the community is the village hall and recreation ground incorporating playing fields, tennis court and children's play area.
- 3.3. The very popular two-day Scarecrow Festival in the early summer welcomes a large number of visitors to the village
- 3.4. KL is home to two equestrian stables (one a busy equine dentistry centre, one on Middle Common)
- 3.5. Greathouse Cheshire Home for the disabled at the Eastern end of the village, across the B4069, hosts some community events
- 3.6. There are commercial offices by Gate Farm at the East end.
- 3.7. There is a caravan park at the west end of the village.
- 3.8. Residents and visitors walk, cycle and ride their horses through the village lanes, with a principal route being the road that bisects the village from the A350 Plough Lane to Greathouse Cheshire Home on the B4069.

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4. Current Problems and Reasons for Concern

The problems outlined below represent the views and concerns of the majority of villagers expressed during the process of preparing this proposal and completing the petition.

4.1. *The village is used as a short cut*

- 4.1.1. Traffic to and from the B4069 from Lyneham (with the new Defence technical training centre) Christian Malford, Sutton Benger (with the new housing estate) cuts through KL to reach Chippenham supermarkets & industrial estates, and the A350 if going South.
- 4.1.2. Traffic from the M4 Junction 17 (at the North end of A350) cuts down Day's Lane through the village from the North, often at speed, to cut off the corner to reach the East side of Chippenham and its industrial sites.
- 4.1.3. Periodic closure or diversion of the M4 leads to traffic clogging the village and more drivers becoming aware of the short cut.

4.2. *Traffic volume*

- 4.2.1. The volume of traffic throughout the village (not just along main road) has increased since the last speed check in 2006 by at least an estimated 1/3rd in the last 5 years.

4.3. *Speeding*

- 4.3.1. Villagers estimate that between a 1/3rd to 1/2 of all traffic exceeds the 30mph limit. Most commonly speeds are estimated at around 40-45mph, but rogue speeders (mainly cars and motorbikes) transit at excessive speeds of up to 50mph with some showing aggression when waved to slow down by villagers. Every day at least one or two vehicles are seen travelling at even more extreme speeds and there has been racing between cars and motorbikes on the longer straights on the commons.
- 4.3.2. The last speed check conducted in the village (circa 2006) in fact amounted to active policing of the speed limit conducted by Police officers in high-visibility clothing and large marked patrol cars positioned on the commons in clear sight of traffic.
- 4.3.3. If the object of this exercise was to conduct a discrete and accurate measurement of the problem of speeding in the village, then it was self-defeating and produced, it is argued, a false picture. The worst offenders were said to be villagers themselves although no empirical records were seen or are available now.

4.4. *Accidents*

- 4.4.1. There have been several recent accidents:
 - 4.4.2. Three accidents in 2016 on the double bend at the top of Plough Lane hill (2 cars recently going too fast along the common Westbound to take the bend ended in the hedge, another hit a bus on the corner).
 - 4.4.3. One accident at the blind bend by the Church when a large Contractor's tractor hit and badly damaged a VW car going the other way.
 - 4.4.4. Two cars racing each other travelling east ran onto Upper Common to avoid collision with oncoming traffic.

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4.5. Contractors' Vehicles

- 4.5.1. KL is a rural village situated between arterial roads and surrounded by farmland. The main road across the commons is used as a transit by very large tractors often towing farm machinery or large trailers.
- 4.5.2. Large contractors' vehicles have been logged exceeding the speed limit up to 40mph and take no account of the narrow carriageways and the footpaths that run close beside them.
- 4.5.3. They are driven in the main by seasonal contractors' staff obviously under time pressure to get their work done.
- 4.5.4. Residents complain of a particular problem at Church Bend and along the main route across the commons where they pose a real hazard to users of the footpath as well as other vehicles.

4.6. The Village Footpath

- 4.6.1. Much of KL is not wide enough for pedestrian pathways and in many places the thoroughfare is single lane which all pedestrians, horse-riders and cyclists must share with vehicles.
- 4.6.2. The main path along Middle Common is dangerously close to the road at several points where speeding is prevalent, endangering children and other pedestrians as well as equestrians, horses and pets.



5. Particular Problem Areas by Location

5.1. Church bend

The worst problem area is perceived to be the blind bend by St Peter's church, on the corner with Church Lane, close to the school. The dangers here are:

- 5.1.1. This is virtually a single carriageway bend at the end of a long straight across the commons on which traffic naturally increases speed as it approaches.
- 5.1.2. The bend is by the school and church and the footpath gives out onto the road on the blind corner. This area is a busy school drop-off point at least twice a day and whilst the number of vehicles, families and children creates an obstacle impeding traffic, many cars don't slow down as they approach this junction from the commons.
- 5.1.3. Children and families gather and cross to and from Church Lane to the school as well as entering their cars on the carriageway side.
- 5.1.4. A serious or fatal injury to a child is a real possibility at this point which cannot be ignored.
- 5.1.5. Larger vehicles such as refuse lorries, buses and farm vehicles are unable to pass freely traffic going in the opposite direction.



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- 5.1.6. The high bank on the South side of the carriageway (which carries the footpath above and around this bend) is being eroded as vehicles seek to make space for each other, and one day may collapse.
- 5.1.7. The point at which pedestrians leave that footpath in Church Road (and of necessity enter the carriageway) is concealed by the blind bend from drivers coming from the West across the commons, as are the house drives on either side of the road at this point.

5.2. Church Road

- 5.2.1. From the church bend the road takes a long straight with houses or banks on both sides and no footpath, past the village hall. Frequently heavy foot traffic going to the hall has to mix with vehicle traffic.
- 5.2.2. Residents in the houses at the Eastern end (both parts of Fairleigh Rise and other roadside housing) either place themselves at risk to walk up to the village and hall, or have to resort to their cars. As a result some residents feel isolated at the east end of the village.
- 5.2.3. Cars often hurtle down Church Road posing real danger to pedestrians and cars coming out of drives and the junction with Day's Lane.
- 5.2.4. Traffic on this part of the road has damaged roadside fittings and water service valve boxes.



5.3. Ashes Lane

- 5.3.1. Northwards from Middle Common and the village pond this lane has a blind bend, single carriageway track next to house walls up to the stables and houses with doors and windows opening directly onto the carriageway.
- 5.3.2. Vehicle traffic routinely exceeds even the 30mph speed limit, posing considerable risk to residents.



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5.4. *The North Village*

5.4.1. This hamlet is illogically outside the present 30mph limit and should be brought within it for safety.

5.4.2. The houses and farms at Bowldown and Lypgate form a small hamlet on the Northern edge of the village, with houses on both sides and gates and drives that issue onto Day's Lane at the point of a blind bend.



5.4.3. Children cycle and play in this area, families with dogs and horse riders make their way down the small hill and blind corner to reach the Byway that stretches out from the North East corner of the village. There are no footpaths.

5.4.4. Residents in this part of the village report large lorries following their satnavs on Day's Lane, posing real risks to pedestrians, causing some damage to walls and harming verges. Recent examples include a 3-axle 20 ton articulated lorry with a very large container used for transporting goods at sea as its load.

5.4.5. This is a vulnerable area particularly for pedestrians that could easily be brought within the village speed limit simply by moving the 30mph signs from Newlands Green to a point North of the Byway entrance on Day's Lane.

5.5. *Further south in Day's Lane*

5.5.1. Residents of Dovey's Cottages and houses that border the road down to the junction of Day's Lane and Church Road complain of the excessive speed of vehicles taking this shortcut from the motorway. Children play at Newlands Green, and much of this road lacks a footpath.

5.6. *B4069 by Greathouse*

5.6.1. Following the last speeding consultation the speed limit on the B4069 past Langley Farm and Greathouse was reduced from the national speed limit to 40mph. Whilst this reduced speeding for a period, the residents of Manor Cottages complain they now suffer from a greater volume of general traffic and large lorries exceeding the speed limit, making the houses (which have shallow foundations) shake as they thunder past.

5.6.2. This stretch of road is approached by two long straights (most obviously from the North) in 50mph zones and cars seldom bother to slow down by 10 mph, knowing they will shortly exit back into the 50mph zone. Whilst lorries are slowed briefly by the bends, residents complain that even 40mph is too fast for such large vehicles in close proximity to houses.

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- 5.6.3. Whilst this is a main route for the many Wavin lorries to their factory, other lorries use the route to get to the East side of Chippenham too. There are other areas in Wiltshire with less dense housing and straighter roads where speed limits have been revised downwards for example St Edith's Marsh, on a long straight stretch of road, with a 30mph limit. Safety now demands that similar standards be applied to this stretch of road in KL.
- 5.6.4. There is no obvious safe place for pedestrians to cross the B4069 at the junction with Church Road and in the area of Greathouse.

6. Future Development

- 6.1. Developments at Junction 17/M4 and in housing to the north and east of Chippenham will increase traffic flows going east/west through the village, requiring measures in KL to ameliorate that increase and highlighting the strategic need for a relief road around the north of Chippenham.
- 6.2. The proposed development plans for the Jct 17 site include provision for 1000 workers on that site and, as there is no public transport to reach it, an increase in private car traffic in the area is inevitable.

7. Weight Restrictions

- 7.1. The 7.5 tonne weight limit (except for access) is routinely abused
- 7.2. Larger 3 axle vehicles up to 18 tonnes are seen regularly transiting the village without delivering.
- 7.3. Large multi-axle lorries (potentially over 30 tonnes) are occasionally seen in the village, sometimes because they are lost or in some cases, seeking directions to the Truck Stop on the B4122.
- 7.4. A six axle articulated lorry recently parked on Upper Commons.
- 7.5. The size of these vehicles poses real risks to children, horses and foot traffic on the footpaths or in the carriageways as they are directly beside the road at points, with no clearance room.



Photo of over-weight lorry and school minibus meeting on church bend. (Nov 2016)

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8. Conclusions

- 8.1. There is considerable concern in the village at the dangers posed by speeding and over-weight traffic.
- 8.2. In the course of gathering over 200 signatures to a petition deploring the current state of affairs it was apparent that there is strong feeling about this amongst residents with many, particularly those very close to the roads, feeling under siege from the traffic.
- 8.3. We urge the Parish Council to consider and consult on our proposals, before putting forward an agreed plan to Wiltshire Council to give urgent consideration to dealing with these problems appropriately. Some proposals as to how this might be done are given below.
- 8.4. Nothing in these proposals is meant to detract from or destroy the uniqueness of the open commons that gives the village its special character. In making these proposals this committee feels certain that preserving Kington Langley's character will be the paramount consideration of the Parish Council.

9. Proposed Solutions to Traffic Problems in Kington Langley

The committee considering how to tackle these problems suggest that, due to the considerable interaction between traffic and pedestrians at various points in the village giving rise to the risks of accidents, the Parish Council give consideration to recommending the following modest traffic calming measures to Wiltshire Council.

9.1. The case for a Reduction in Speed Limit : 20mph zone

- 9.1.1. Information from Government and RoSPA websites explains that a large number of evaluation studies have demonstrated a link between the introduction of 20mph zones and a subsequent reduction in accidents and casualties. There is similarly strong evidence showing the benefits of traffic calming measures, when used in 20mph zones.
- 9.1.2. 20mph limits without traffic calming also reduces traffic speed, although this effect is smaller than when they are introduced with traffic calming or other measures. Their lower cost means that wider areas can be covered.
- 9.1.3. An informal test timing a transit through the village observing a 20mph limit (without other traffic present) demonstrated that from the A350 to junction on the B4069 by Greathouse, took a mere 45 seconds longer than at 30mph.

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9.2. Proposals

9.2.1. *A reduction in the speed limit to 20mph in key areas*

- 9.2.1.1. Install a 20mph limit from the top of Plough Lane hill, before the double bend then across the commons past the school, church and village hall to the junction of Church Road with the B4069 (by Greathouse). This zone should continue up Days Lane from its junction in Church Road as far as Newlands Green and from there down Ashes Lane past the pond back to the main road on Middle Common, to include Church Lane. This would be a discreet and sensible triangular zone protecting vulnerable sites in the centre of village. (*See illustrative Map attached*). The reduction in speed is much sought after by the residents in these lanes.
- 9.2.1.2. If the speed limit is reduced only on the main road outside the school and round Church Bend it is feared that vehicles taking shortcuts through the village will use Days and Ashes Lanes as “rat runs” to avoid the restriction. This is why the triangular zone incorporating the lanes North of Middle Common makes such good sense.
- 9.2.1.3. The road in Parker’s Lane is a very narrow single carriageway throughout its length and logically should be become part of the 20mph zone

9.2.2. *Village entry picket gates*

- 9.2.2.1. White painted picket gates installed at either end of the main road through the village (replacing existing signs in their present positions) to engender the idea of entering a community, as shown at:

<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/parkingtransportandstreets/roadshighwaysstreetcare/costwiltshighwaysworks.htm>

9.2.3. *Road Markings*

- 9.2.3.1. Appropriate rumble strips, speed decals in the carriageway and large signs to mark the commencement of the 20mph zone, particularly from the West of the school to the other side of Church Bend.

9.2.4. *Vehicle Activated speed sign*

- 9.2.4.1. A flashing 20mph “Vehicle Activated Sign” on the commons pointing at the traffic from the west at the start of Middle Common [*SEE MARKER ON MAP*] on a straight where vehicles begin to speed up. Traffic from the East will have been slowed by the 20mph zone from the B4069 and Church Bend.

9.2.5. *Speed Watch*

- 9.2.5.1. A voluntary Speed Watch patrol with offending drivers reported to the Police. Support has been expressed for this idea (it is thought at Dovey’s Cottages).

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9.2.6. Install new, targeted signage for example

- 9.2.6.1. 'Pedestrians in the Road' signs in Church Road on north side, where the blind bend effect by the junction with Days Lane is reduced.
- 9.2.6.2. Caution Horses signs outside Limetree Farm and on Newlands Green.

9.2.7. Rationalise and improve the existing signage

- 9.2.7.1. Move the 30mph signs in Days Lane North from Newlands Green to a point beyond where the Byway enters Days Lane, to bring the Bowldown hamlet within the village speed and weight restrictions.
- 9.2.7.2. The "Welcome to KL please drive slowly" sign which was moved down to the traffic lights on the A350 to include more of the village is in now in fact badly placed. It cannot be seen clearly from either direction when turning into the village, is in an area of chaotic signage and its effect is lost. It should be re-sited a short distance up Plough Lane to be more visible but show that it includes the houses on either side at that point as part of the village.
- 9.2.7.3. The "Beware School" sign facing West on middle common is too far from the school although clearly visible to traffic from the A350 end. It should be placed closer to the school before relevant traffic calming measures. This would be a good site for a VAS flashing speed sign
- 9.2.7.4. The current signs on the A350 are unclear. Is it really necessary to have an end of expressway sign included amongst those on the main signpost at the entrance of the village?
- 9.2.7.5. Reduce the speed limit by 10mph to 30mph on the B4069 in the area designated 40mph in 2007 between Langley Farm and Greathouse

9.2.8. Enforcement of Restrictions

- 9.2.8.1. The speed and weight restrictions are very seldom actively policed. In order to ensure the safety of all road users in Kington Langley this needs to change. Some presence of Police and Highways Authority need to be observed in the village enforcing the restrictions with reasonable regularity.
- 9.2.8.2. This would encourage regular drivers to adhere to the speed and weight limits and drive with due caution through the village.
- 9.2.8.3. Physical enforcement measures such as chicanes in an appropriate location(s) should also be considered as an option within the whole scheme.

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10. Finally

- 10.1. This document and proposals has been prepared with a sincere wish to improve the road safety for all residents and road users in Kington Langley. It has been drafted in the context of the concern of a significant number of residents.
- 10.2. We ask the Parish council to consider these proposals which it is hoped will form the basis for discussion and consultation in the village before concrete proposals go forward to Wiltshire Council.
- 10.3. In view of the concerns highlighted in this proposal and particularly the significant development of the whole area from north Chippenham to the M4 and the inevitable rise in traffic wishing to cross between the A350 and the B4069 we ask that measures to mitigate the traffic problems in Kington Langley be expedited urgently and in addition to any additional more long-term measures that might be considered by Wiltshire Council and Highways.

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Illustrative map highlighting position of proposed traffic calming

