

## Chillaton Traffic – Correspondence between Allr Asbridge and Mr Jones, Senior Traffic Officer

22<sup>nd</sup> February – Correspondence from Cllr Asbridge to Mr Jones, Senior Traffic Officer

Dear Mr Jones

Many thanks for your quick response to my email sending you the report on traffic in Chillaton. I will ensure that the Parish Council is aware of your comments, when it considers that report next week. The simplest way to reply is to annotate your response [blue] with my reply in red, as set out below:

I wasn't aware of any significant traffic between the Bere Peninsula and Exeter passing through Chillaton. Is there any evidence to support this?

The anecdotal evidence from local residents who have lived on the Bere Peninsula or know people who do, is backed up by the RAC's route finder, which shows the route through Chillaton as their preferred option, being 10 minutes quicker than via the A38 and 15 minutes quicker than across Dartmoor.

Edge of Carriageway Marking – should not be marked more than 250mm from the Edge of the Carriageway – of course non-engineered rural roads often require a practical departure from the regulations.

The line of detritus pushed to the side of the carriageway by passing vehicles conforms pretty well with the current marking, which is about 800mm from the edge of the carriageway and was obviously laid down to create a demarcation between road users. I do understand that 'virtual pavements' do not have any legal status and that, other than for practical reasons as you say, variations to the rules governing specific markings are not permitted. That currently leaves the residents of Chillaton dependant on practical arrangements being implemented by the contractor concerned, whenever such markings are to be reinstated following re-surfacing.

Is there any other way of properly securing what is currently a practical means of allowing residents to walk in relative safety around their village and that, whilst it offers no physical protection, is generally respected by road users? There are some hatched markings at the end of the current edge of carriageway line. I believe that these do have legal status. Could they be employed as an alternative to the current lines?

I believe that the pavement provided fairly recently on the bend above Tavistock Hospital is of a non-standard width. If that is the case, would it, in theory, be possible to provide non-standard width pavements instead of the current edge of carriageway markings?

20mph Speed Limit – DCC Policy reflecting National Guidance is that speed limits should be a minimum of 600m in length. This avoids a "blink and you're through it" situation and a proliferation of signs. The length of road identified is probably the area where speeds currently fall below 30mph but it does fall well below 600m and any attempt to lengthen it might present serious compliance issues.

In Section 7 [Rural Speed Management] of DfT Circular 01/2013, Para 124 states that where there is a substantial *potential* risk to vulnerable road users, roads currently without a high collision rate should be assessed as roads with a local access function. Para 132 states that it may be appropriate

to consider 20 mph limits in built up village streets that are primarily residential in nature or where pedestrian and cyclist movements are high, but not on roads where the movement of vehicles in the primary function. Para 135 allows traffic authorities to reduce the length of a speed limit in villages from 600 metres to 400 metres or in exceptional cases to 300 metres, where the level of development density exceeds 20 or more houses.

I therefore think that it is reasonable to conclude that the roads through the village would be categorised as having a local access function and that a shorter length restriction could be considered, given that the number of houses in the sections concerned easily exceeds 20. Would you please re-consider this issue?

30mph Roundels are only permitted adjacent to repeater signs which in turn are not permitted in a street lit areas which means that they could not be provided at the locations indicated.

Noted. Do you have any other suggestions to deal with this problem?

Yellow Bar Markings have been shown to be largely ineffective as speed reducing measure and DCC no longer maintains them.

The road on the approach to Lamerton from Milton Abbot was resurfaced last year and my recollection is that what look like yellow bar markings were either re-instated or applied for the first time. They were noticeable because of the tyre noise generated when driving over them. If they are not 'yellow bars' but some other device, could they be installed instead?

Road Humps/Cushions. These need to be installed within a 30mph speed limit and need to be illuminated with illuminated signing on the approaches. Construction in non engineered roads which are basically farm tracks with bitumen overlaid for the last century can be a problem. The issue is that of constructing solid object with a substantial foundation surrounded by a non engineered flexible sandwich . Its not insolvable but can be expensive. The challenge always presents at the joint between the new structure and the older sandwich.

The road concerned is the 'New Road', built when Chillaton was developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to serve local mining enterprises. Perhaps that might mean better foundations than a farm track, perhaps not. What is clear is that Chillaton is now experiencing far higher levels of traffic than when DCC Highways put forward proposals for reducing vehicle speeds in 2001. I only have a copy of Option 6, which was to install eleven sets of speed humps in the village, but clearly this was a matter taken seriously by your Department at that time. Of course, engineering solutions and traffic regulations have developed since then and the financial climate has changed significantly, but the underlying concerns remain and have increased over time.

As you know, Chillaton Cllrs have not *demand*ed solutions; they acknowledge resource constraints and that preventing potential accidents will have a lower priority than resolving problems where accidents have already occurred. They are trying to reach a position where a range of practical measures can be achieved either on the back of routine repairs and maintenance or via whatever funding can be accessed.

Some of the issues central to Circular DfT 01/2013 clearly reflect our concerns. It would therefore be helpful if there was some acknowledgement by the County Council that we do have a problem and that potential solutions as well as obstacles could be identified by the professionals concerned.  
Howard Asbridge

23<sup>rd</sup> February - Response from Mr Jones to Cllr Asbridge

Dear Mr Asbridge,

In our e-mail correspondence over the last 2 years I have attempted to provide advice from a professional and practical standpoint taking into account the County Council's policies and the national legal and regulatory framework where appropriate. I have also made it clear that resources both staff and financial to deal with these issues are extremely constrained and must also point out that I am the main contact on these matters for every local council in Devon. As the Devon Association of Local Councils has 357 members I hope you can appreciate that the small amount of time I have available to address these matters is at a premium.

With regard to your comment on acknowledgement of a problem and identification of solutions as well of obstacles my response is that Chillaton has a low and non-speed related collision history over the last 5 year period and that our correspondence has been predicated on the fact that the issues concerning the community in Chillaton are not at a level at which DCC would consider intervention but that the Community are seeking to fund road safety interventions where appropriate. DCC has no problem with this approach subject to the measures being assessed as safe and conforming to its policies but is not in a position to design these interventions unless funding is available. My own input has to remain advisory.

Notwithstanding the above I have again commented in blue below your red paragraphs.

The anecdotal evidence from local residents who have lived on the Bere Peninsula or know people who do, is backed up by the RAC's route finder, which shows the route through Chillaton as their preferred option, being 10 minutes quicker than via the A38 and 15 minutes quicker than across Dartmoor.

Between 7 and 8am approx. 60 vehicles travel north through the village from the direction of Tavistock. How many of them travel from the Bere Peninsula is not established. A member of my team who lives in Bere Alston and travels to Exeter regularly tells me that taking the route through Chillaton would be an unusual choice unless there were no time constraints. He would always take the A386 from Tavistock. The RAC route timings would of course depend on the parameters entered. Anecdotally as someone who uses the old A30 between Lifton and Sourton regularly between 7am and 8am I am not aware of large numbers of vehicles entering the road from the south between Lifton and Lewtrenchard at that time. I would therefore suggest that the Bere to Exeter point is of marginal significance.

Is there any other way of properly securing what is currently a practical means of allowing residents to walk in relative safety around their village and that, whilst it offers no physical protection, is generally respected by road users? There are some hatched markings at the end of the current edge of carriageway line. I believe that these do have legal status. Could they be employed as an alternative to the current lines?

Hatch Markings can be used in a variety of situations, often to guide drivers away from obstructions at the roadside which the natural line of the road might guide them in to. Like solid white lines they are not intended to provide a safe space for pedestrians and cannot be expected to deliver this.

I believe that the pavement provided fairly recently on the bend above Tavistock Hospital is of a non-standard width. If that is the case, would it, in theory, be possible to provide non-standard width pavements instead of the current edge of carriageway markings?

The footway in question does not fall below 1.2m in width which is quite permissible. If road width or land width is available within Chillaton, subject to funding I would support footway provision.

In Section 7 [Rural Speed Management] of DfT Circular 01/2013, Para 124 states that where there is a substantial *potential* risk to vulnerable road users, roads currently without a high collision rate should be assessed as roads with a local access function. Para 132 states that it may be appropriate to consider 20 mph limits in built up village streets that are primarily residential in nature or where pedestrian and cyclist movements are high, but not on roads where the movement of vehicles is the primary function. Para 135 allows traffic authorities to reduce the length of a speed limit in villages from 600 metres to 400 metres or in exceptional cases to 300 metres, where the level of development density exceeds 20 or more houses.

I therefore think that it is reasonable to conclude that the roads through the village would be categorised as having a local access function and that a shorter length restriction could be considered, given that the number of houses in the sections concerned easily exceeds 20. Would you please re-consider this issue?

I have pointed out before that the observed benefits of introducing 20mph speed limits in rural villages in Devon have not been great. In some cases there has even been an increase in injury collisions. The guidance you have referred to relates largely to 30mph limits. However, your interpretation of para 124 in that there is a substantial potential risk to vulnerable road users is subjective.

I don't believe that engaging in a debate over interpretation of the potential for relaxation of National and DCC standards to their minimum when applied just to Chillaton is productive. Concentrating on the practicalities, I would make the following points

- The costs of introducing a 20mph Speed Limit involving 3 illuminated terminal points, road crossings for electricity supply and repeater plates to include the legal process required would be in the region of £15,000. Is this level of expenditure something the community would regard as value for money particularly as the effect on speed is likely to be minimal? This level of funding would be a substantial contribution towards the cost of more other measures such as Gateway enhancements, footways or the desire to provide a pedestrian area opposite the Public House.
- The existing 30mph limit would begin less than 100m from the proposed 20mph terminal from the Tavistock direction and approx. 250m from the Lifton direction. My "blink and you are through it" analogy applies here.
- Are there suitable locations for the terminal signs? Can they be sited effectively so that approaching drivers have adequate visibility. I don't know but looking on street view there may be difficulties.
- A departure from DCC's Speed Limit Policy would be required.

Noted. Do you have any other suggestions to deal with this problem?

This is a matter of Law. If the street lighting were to be removed and a new 30 mph Speed Limit introduced by Order then repeater plates could be provided along with associated road roundels.

The road on the approach to Lamerton from Milton Abbot was resurfaced last year and my recollection is that what look like yellow bar markings were either re-instated or applied for the first time. They were noticeable because of the tyre noise generated when driving over them. If they are not 'yellow bars' but some other device, could they be installed instead?

The Yellow Bar Markings at Lamerton were reapplied in error by our contractors. We have introduced procedure to help ensure that in future a repeat of this will become unlikely. However, the markings are permitted and there is potential for the PC to fund them as long as it is understood that maintenance will not be funded by DCC. Depending on traffic levels the markings can be expected to last around 3 years.

The road concerned is the 'New Road', built when Chillaton was developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to serve local mining enterprises. Perhaps that might mean better foundations than a farm track, perhaps not. What is clear is that Chillaton is now experiencing far higher levels of traffic than when DCC Highways put forward proposals for reducing vehicle speeds in 2001. I only have a copy of Option 6, which was to install eleven sets of speed humps in the village, but clearly this was a matter taken seriously by your Department at that time. Of course, engineering solutions and traffic regulations have developed since then and the financial climate has changed significantly, but the underlying concerns remain and have increased over time.

You may be correct about the structure of the road. This would need to be established by coring the road to examine the condition of the substructure. With regard to the 2001 proposals I have spoken with the Traffic Engineer for the area at the time who has since retired. He recalls that the then Local Service Officer Mr Brian George (also now retired) attended some PC meetings and the potential for a road humps scheme was discussed. The scheme was not found to be practical/affordable and signing and lining measures were introduced instead.

I do not have traffic data for Chillaton in 2001. However, comparison of data from 2006 with 2012 shows a substantial reduction in traffic flows travelling past the Marlow Crescent site. Traffic flows in rural Devon have declined generally between 2008 and 2013 and are only now being observed to increase. The reduction observed in Chillaton is well over 30% which is more than I would have expected. It is possible that some change in employment patterns perhaps at Lifton may hold the answer but my local knowledge does not extend back that far.

DCC appreciates that the Parish Council is aware of funding constraints. In our attempts to reduce the burden of road maintenance from diminishing budgets choices have been made over the effectiveness and value for money of certain measures. Many traffic calming measures relied on heavily for over 20 years are now identified as being of limited effect and as a consequence are no longer maintained.

I hope that the Parish Council will find my comments useful.