

## **HIGHWAYS ISSUES IN RINGMER**

### **Paper for Discussion at Greens and Amenities Committee – 18/02/21**

This paper has been prepared in discussion with Ringmer Safer Roads group.

#### **Issue**

There are a range of highways improvements required for the benefit of all residents, be they motorists, pedestrians, cyclists or wheelchair users and which are not being addressed by the relevant statutory bodies. This paper highlights some issues which require immediate action and other areas where we need to take a more strategic view. It seems clear that the focus of ESCC's highways policies is the safety and comfort of motorists whilst there is little regard to the wider environmental and social concerns of residents. There is no recognition within their policies of the existence of Conservation Areas and that the fragility of some listed buildings requires exceptional approaches.

#### **Proposal**

Greens and Amenities Committee is asked to consider the list of issues below and agree that they should be included on an agenda for a meeting with ESCC. The meeting should be requested with Rupert Clubb, Director of Communities, Economy and Transport at ESCC to take place as soon as possible. I would be happy to prepare an expanded and illustrated version of this paper in advance of any meeting.

#### **Consideration**

In March 2020 the Parish Council agreed that a meeting should take place with ESCC to discuss its current list of highways issues. That meeting did not take place and the list of issues reported by residents has since grown whilst the problems of existing issues has intensified.

#### **Current issues:**

##### *Speed*

Excessive speed throughout the Village is a problem reported by many residents and noted by Speedwatch. Sussex Police carry out spot checks occasionally but Speedwatch activities have been severely curtailed by the COVID-19 lockdown rules. There are no permanent speed enforcements (eg cameras) or physical traffic calming measures in the Village. Previous attempts by the Parish Council to install replacement signage have been ruled out by ESCC, even though it would be self-funded.

##### *HGVs*

HGVs will always need to use our roads. There are industrial units within Ringmer which provide much needed local employment opportunities and we would not want to see those restricted. Construction projects also generate a lot of HGV traffic. However there is a lot of HGV through traffic, coming from the A22 and using Ringmer as a rat-run, avoiding the A27 bottlenecks and in preference to continuing to the junction of the A26. There is also a lot of HGV traffic generated by the Gliding Club works which are now in their third year of activity. The poor condition of many of our

roads increases the nuisance of noise and vibration from these vehicles and which are frequently observed exceeding the 30mph speed limit of our roads. It also clear that in some areas around construction sites, the HGVs have caused damage to the roads and verges and there appears to be no requirement for the developer to remedy the damage.

### *Conservation Area / Historic Buildings*

Ringmer has a designated Conservation Area (CA) including around the Grade 1 Listed Church. Much of the area includes a section of the B2192 but there is no signage to indicate its existence. Neither does there appear to be any specific duties or recognition by ESCC of the fragility of many of the buildings within the CA. Many residents have reported cracking to their properties as vibrations from vehicles are felt keenly whilst they are prevented from undertaking work to their property to ameliorate the worst effects of the vibration and noise because of the Listed status of their homes and the restrictions imposed by the Conservation Area.

The section of road around the Church has a number of problems. It is very narrow on a bend and is bordered by a very narrow and sloping pavement without a raised kerb to protect pedestrians from vehicles; vehicles frequently mount the pavement at the bend to avoid oncoming traffic. Signage prohibits vehicles bound for the Bovis construction site from using Vicarage Way / Church Hill (but is not always observed); but is available for use by any other HGV that chooses to use it. Currently the route is being used by Browns and Haulaway dumper trucks travelling to and from Upper Lodge Farm on the Uckfield Road. Several dozen each day are using the route.

### *Pavements and Verges*

Many of the pavements throughout the village are in a poor state of repair. Many are very narrow even where they border the main road; they are unsuitable for use by wheelchairs and mobility scooters and are difficult for families with young children to use safely. We have four residential care homes in Ringmer which accommodate wheelchair-dependent adults. The poor condition of the pavements makes it virtually impossible for their carers to take them out of the homes other than in a vehicle. Some pavements could be improved by better maintenance of grass verges which are sometimes overgrown and reduce the available width of the pavement.

### *Cycling*

ESCC recently issued a consultation (Sustrans) on cycle and walking routes. The Parish Council response is attached at Annex A which set out some problems with the proposed route. It would be useful to get an update from ESCC on their analysis of that consultation and their proposed way forward.

### *Poor Maintenance of Roads*

The poor repair of roads is not a situation unique to Ringmer and potholes etc are reported and repaired in a piecemeal fashion. There are, however some repairs which the Parish Council could advocate are accelerated, as described below.

*i) Vicarage Way*

The verges in Vicarage Way have been churned up by vehicles parking on them. The road is too narrow to accommodate parked vehicles and still allow access for buses and HGVs. Anecdotally it is believed that some of the vehicles are parked there by people using the bus service, whilst other vehicles belong to residents of Lovegrove Villas and Church Villas (which do not have driveways) as well by contractors working on properties in Vicarage Way. At times the road becomes very muddy and therefore slippery.

The pavement is narrow and grass encroaches on it on both sides further restricting its width. At the bottom end near the Lewes Road junction a drain which takes surface water from Little Manor's driveway is frequently blocked by debris from overhanging trees and grass cuttings and so floods the area, making the pavement unusable for much of the year.

The situation could be improved by narrowing the verge on the kerb side to allow cars to park completely on the road area. Meanwhile the pavement could be widened by taking some of the grassed area on the house side. The alternative would be prohibit parking but that would create problems for residents who have nowhere outside their houses to park.

*ii) St Mary's Church*

The area around the Church where the edge of the road on the Vicarage side has many large holes in it, further restricting the width of the road which can be used safely.

*iii) Church Hill*

Church Hill near the junction of Delves Close where a sunken channel has appeared across the road (possibly a collapsed drain). Vehicles noticeably "bounce" when they drive over this channel and unsecured debris from open back trucks or trailers has on occasion flown out and landed on the road pavement. One resident has collected a number of examples, including a roll of roofing felt. Clearly this is dangerous for pedestrians and other road users but the Highways Steward has ruled out repair work because the depth of the channel does not currently meet specified limits.

*iv) Bishop's Lane*

Bishops Lane has seen a big increase in traffic use by vehicles accessing the new Bovis development and also the heavy construction vehicles accessing the Diplocks area. The road has disintegrated on the edges of what is already a narrow road with cars parked along one side most of the time.

**Financial Implications**

There are no immediate financial implications for the PC in holding this meeting with ESCC but it is possible that there will be emerging ideas which would require contributions from the PC. If so they would developed and discussed with PC according to due process.

## **Presentation**

Whilst it is not envisaged that members of the public would be invited to attend a meeting with ESCC the PC should report back on the areas discussed and action points from it.

## **Conclusion**

Can Greens and Amenities agree that a meeting with ESCC should be arranged to discuss areas of immediate concern and gain a better understanding of the strategic issues? Members are invited to submit additional issues of concern for inclusion on the agenda for that meeting.

**Cllr Sarah Phillips**  
**9<sup>th</sup> February 2021**

## RINGMER PARISH COUNCIL RESPONSE TO ESCC CYCLING AND WALKING STRATEGY CONSULTATION 11/12/2020

Dear Sir,

Please find below comments on the East Sussex Cycling and Walking Strategy. The focus of my comments is Ringmer, near Lewes.

### Overall

We absolutely support the encouragement of more cycling and walking as opposed to car use around Ringmer and between Ringmer and Lewes / other destinations. We are very keen to see improvements to the roads to allow for the safe use of bicycles and for pedestrians to walk safely and comfortably. However the proposed route described in section 310 of the strategy we believe to be flawed for a number of reasons. Our preferred solution would be to see improvements made to the main road through the village (B2192) and feeder roads to better benefit residents of the Parish as a whole. The strategy ignores whole groups of pavement and road users and ignores large areas of the Parish.

We would like to have seen the consultation go further to be fully inclusive and encompass wheelchair users (both self-propelled and assisted) and mobility scooters. This is of particular relevance to Ringmer with its high proportion (and growing) of elderly residents. The B2192 houses three residential care homes (two for elderly and one for young adults). A fourth care home is in Harvard Road. None of these residents or their carers are currently able to use the pavements comfortably and safely to access the shops, health centre, church, Village Hall or Village Green. There are also two retirement complexes in Vicarage Way and Delves House. Many residents of these homes need assistance in walking using frames for example, or who use wheelchairs and mobility scooters. The condition of the pavements makes this dangerous. There are also many young families with small children using the two schools and play areas in the village. None of these areas are served by the proposed route for Ringmer.

It's a pity the document is two years old, some of the information is out of date. It is also disappointing that the Parish Council wasn't included as a stakeholder for the original consultation.

It's not clear to what extent the conclusions are based on actual data – I couldn't find a source for measured traffic surveys for example. It's also evident that barely more than a "drive-by" survey has been carried out by the authors. Some of the comments about the pavements and road conditions would not be borne out if they had actually walked or cycled the routes proposed.

The route does not take account of the housing development at the Forges which houses many young families. Anyone there wishing to cycle to Lewes would enter the B2192 onto a 40mph section, bordered by narrow and uneven pavements. This section of road should have its speed reduced to 30mph, its pavements widened and levelled to create a shared use path down to New Road and pick up the shared use path to Lewes.

Instead of the proposed route it would be of greater benefit to residents of Ringmer to introduce traffic calming along the B2192 so that it can be used safely and comfortably by all users. As a minimum pavements should be levelled so they can be safely used by wheelchairs and mobility scooters and where possible should be widened to enable shared use with bicycles. In parallel ESCC should

discourage the use of the B2192 by HGVs and introduce measures to enforce the 30mph speed limit, thus making it safer for cyclists.

### **Specifically**

The proposed route from the end of the existing shared use path way at New Road, along Gote Lane to Harrison's Lane and then back onto the B2192 effectively skirts much of the village and would therefore be of benefit to only a small proportion of residents. The route by-passes the shops which are a major destination for Ringmer residents. The roads around the shops are frequently narrow and heavily parked making them treacherous for cyclists. The pavements meanwhile are in a poor state of repair forcing users of mobility scooters to use the roads. A designated shared use path offering a safe route along Springett Avenue and Anchor Field / Shepherd's Way would therefore be preferable.

### **New Road**

The existing shared use path from Earwig Corner stops at New Road where it meets the B2192. The proposed route would see cyclists exit the shared use path, briefly enter New Road and then turn into Gote Lane. New Road at this point is narrow, has no pavement and is sited at a busy junction where the speed limit changes from National (60mph) into a 40mph zone. Vehicles turning left into New Road from Ringmer often travel at speed despite the bend being effectively "blind" with little warning of parked cars, pedestrians or oncoming vehicles.

### **Gote Lane**

Gote Lane is entirely unsuitable to be designated as a cycle or walking route. Para **310.1.6** notes that the speed limit would need to be reduced to 20mph from the existing 30mph but ignores other factors. It is described as "relatively quiet" which is too vague to be meaningful. Traffic is frequently observed exceeding the 30mph limit and yet there are no recommendations for traffic calming. The road is very narrow with barely room for two normal sized cars to pass and yet is used by large agricultural vehicles and others serving Gote Farm. There is no pavement along much of its length (and only partially on one side from Springett Avenue to Shepherds Way and yet is used by pedestrians and dog walkers accessing the footpath to the Mill Post and Potato Lane.

### **Harrison's Lane**

Gote Lane runs into Harrison's Lane which is residential and also has the primary school along it. Houses along one side of the road do not have driveways and therefore cars are parked on the road making the road accessible by single file traffic for much of it. The road becomes very busy at school drop-off and pick-up times with surrounding roads becoming heavily parked. The recommendation at **310.1.5** to reduce the speed limit to 20mph is welcome and we encourage ideas for the recommended traffic calming, but believe it remains unsuitable for a cycle route due to its width and heavy use by school traffic.

### **King's Academy (Referred to as Community College)**

Recommendation **310.1.2** refers to the need to construct a Zebra crossing for College students and the scope to widen the pavement on the north side footway. Such improvements would be welcome but would ask the authors to acknowledge that a Zebra crossing does exist near the junction of Har-

rierson's Lane and Bishop's Lane. However a second crossing at the entrance to the Academy, accompanied by traffic calming measures would be welcome given that the site also provides access to the Community Swimming Pool and Football Club.

#### **Yoemans / B2124**

The proposal to widen the existing footway between Yoemans and the B2192 / B2124 roundabout as described in para **310.1.1** is welcome.

#### **Additional Areas**

Cyclists and pedestrians are currently poorly served to the west of the Parish, whose boundary extends from the Barcombe Mills Road, down the Old Uckfield Road, and down to Wellingham. The route out of Ringmer to this area is via Church Hill and Ham Lane. Both of these roads are very narrow. Church Hill borders the Grade 1 listed Norman Church. It is a residential road yet has only a very narrow pavement and only on one side of the road. Around the church the pavement is level with the road, offering no protection to pedestrians from vehicles travelling around the corner at the road's narrowest point. Ham Lane is a National speed limit, has no pavement and is narrow and uneven, frequently floods in heavy rain and thus is entirely unsuitable for pedestrians wishing to walk to the A26 where there is a bus stop near the Cock Inn. The main A26 linking Wellingham and Barcombe with Lewes is mostly a 60mph speed limit and there is no pavement or safe walking route. The junction of Barcombe Mills Road and the A26 is the site of frequent accidents. We would like to see improvements to this section of the A26 to enable the route to be travelled safely on foot or by bicycle / mobility scooters.

Similarly the Parish has no safe walking or cycling route to neighbouring Glynde. New Road is narrow, with barely sufficient room for two cars to pass in places, is hilly and twisty. It is a popular cycling route nevertheless, offering access to the A27 and onto Firle, another popular cycling destination.

#### **Conclusion**

The proposed route through Ringmer is flawed and would be of little benefit to residents. A more beneficial route would be to make the B2192 safer for all road users by introducing traffic calming measures; reducing / enforcing speed limits; and improving the pavements. Meanwhile consideration should also be given to the wider Parish to provide safe access to Barcombe, Wellingham and to Glynde.

We look forward to seeing the outcome of the consultation would ask you to ensure that Ringmer Parish Council and other local groups are included in any future consideration of cycle and walking routes in Ringmer.

Yours Faithfully,

Sarah Phillips