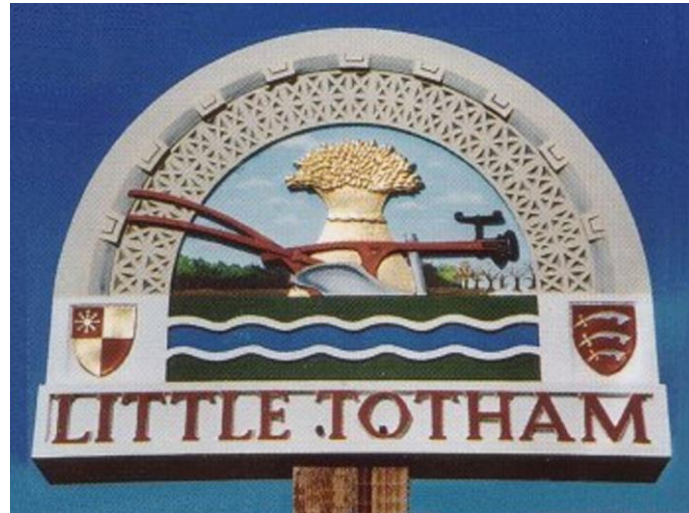


Little Totham Parish Council



Traffic and Road Issues in Little Totham

Richard Siddall
Chairman, Little Totham Parish Council
Fern House,
The Street,
Little Totham
Maldon
Essex CM9 8JQ

Telephone: 01621 890809
Mobile: 07979 853947
Email: richard@advocatetraining.com

1 Current Situation

Little Totham has been affected by traffic problems and HGV vehicles for a long period of time. Problems have been raised in the past and proposals have been put forward to resolve these issues, however no concrete or long term solutions have ever been implemented. Little Totham is blighted by the speed, volume and type of vehicle that travels through the village. The village has benefited from the implementation of new speed limits, however these need to be reviewed and enforced more effectively.

Considerable time has passed since these matters were last raised, and in that time the volume of HGV's and traffic has increased, with additional organisations – such as Wilkin and Son - now based at the business park in Tolleshunt Major. We understand that the business park is now well established and that there is little chance of it moving from its totally unsuitable location.

With the increase in the number of businesses at the Beckingham business park, local and central government will have benefited in additional revenue from the organisations based at the site. As the village most affected by the traffic, it is important that we derive benefit from an investment in our infrastructure, using some of the revenue that the business park produces. If the right solution is implemented, that investment will benefit Little Totham, the businesses at the business park and the wider surrounding area.

The government initiative launched in July – transport investment strategy – is tailored made to our village. The strategy sets out how investment can deliver a stronger, fairer Britain — with priority for projects which cut congestion, support growth, boost Britain's global competitiveness. Investment should support every part of the country, and, where needed, fast track smaller schemes.

We would like our representative to help us address traffic and road issues in 2 phases, dealing with the effects of the current traffic problems and then a longer term strategy to address the root cause.

2 Current Problems

2.1 Speed – In the Village - The Street and School Road

In September 2016, the highways installed a traffic monitoring system on The Street and School Road. The results indicate:

- that the **average** speed of vehicles was 35 mph in a 30 mph zone. This establishes that many of the vehicles are going well in excess of the speed limit. This is particularly dangerous in the village due to nature of the roads and pedestrian access.
- The average speed of vehicles means that 37% of vehicles are exceeding the speed limit.
- The average shows 35mph this means that 50% of vehicles were travelling between 35-40mph and others in excess of these speeds. If police speed checks are introduced, it would result in police prosecuting for excess speed under their current guidelines. This means that potentially per day based on the figures given that 516 vehicles per day would potentially be served Notice of Intended Prosecutions.
- That there were 398 movements through the village made by Heavy Goods Vehicles. This is an awful lot for a small village and disproportionate to any other local village of this size and infrastructure.
- This equates to at least 14% of traffic being a form of HGV Commercial Vehicle.

Due to the work of a resident, who is a police officer, we have now been risk assessed and approved for a police speed and a commercial vehicle check in the village. This is a positive result, however it is a measure that will deal with the effect of the traffic and not the cause. Due to the stretched resources of the Police services, we are unsure how often the checks will happen. We would appreciate help from our representatives in lobbying for regular speed and commercial vehicle checks. We have also been in communication with Adrian Rayner, the Community Protection Team Leader at Maldon District Council regarding the use of the community rangers, as they now have been trained to conduct speed check.

The only traffic calming measure we currently have in the village is a broken 30 mph flashing warning sign, positioned on School Road. This was reported broken in August 2016, and as yet no action has been taken by Highways to repair the device. As a matter of urgency we would like this fixed. Ideally this sign should be repositioned at the entrance of the village and a second one located at the other end of the village.

The simplest solution to speeding on School Road and The Street, would be the introduction of a 20 mph limit throughout the centre of the village. This would provide

a cheap immediate answer to the traffic problem in the village. If this was then backed up and enforced with regular speed checks, it would ensure that traffic proceeded through the village at a safe pace. Residents currently risk their lives when walking through the village, as there are no pavements on the roads.

2.2 Speed - Plains Road

Plains Road is the additional speeding problem that needs addressing. The Highways conducted a review and consultation process on the roads into the village, as a result new speed limits were introduced. These were implemented at the bottom of Loamy Hill Road, the entrance to the village on The Street and Witham Road. Limits of 40mph and 50mph were introduced around the junction with Plains Road. The decision was made by Highways that there was no need for a speed limit on Plains Road. This was a nonsensical decision, as this is the road with the most dwellings. The reason given was it was a county route and therefore the national speed limit should apply. This is totally contradictory as Loamy Hill Road is also a county route and now does have speed limits, as does Witham Road.

There is a desperate need for this decision to be revisited as a 60 mph limit is not safe. There are houses all along Plains Road, with no safe way for pedestrians and riders to safely navigate along the road. There are also 2 very long bends, one of which is blind due to the hedges. This also has a junction with Office lane. There are no triangle warning signs on the road notifying vehicles of the bends or the junction. There are also no 'SLOW' markings on the road to warn drivers to slow down. Again these would be immediate and simple solution to rectifying these dangerous problems.

When we have queried why the speed limit was not introduced into Plains Road, we have never had a satisfactory or logical reason. The reasons contradict the introduction of speed limits on the surrounding roads. We would urge our representatives to revisit this decision and help to get an introduction of a 40 mph speed limit.

2.3 Condition of roads

Due to the high volume and weight of the traffic, the condition of the roads through the village have deteriorated. The roads were not designed and built for the heavy vehicles. The Street and School Road have subsidence and cracking. The road markings, especially at the start of The Street are now none existent, as they have worn away. This is particularly dangerous, as vehicles no longer stay on the correct side of the carriageway. Significantly, this part of the road contains numerous bends and blind corners.

The condition of the roads through the village is especially bad where they narrow and therefore cause more hazards. There is rutting and cracking and raised drainage

covers. Due to these issues it exacerbates the problem of the HGV's. As they travel over the damaged road, it increases the noise and vibrations from the vehicles. If the road was to be repaired and resurfaced, this would immediately reduce the noise pollution and vibrations. (please see appendix).

2.4 Heavy Goods Vehicles

As previously mentioned, the village is blighted by the number of Heavy Goods Vehicles. They cause noise, vibration and environmental pollution. The village centre and roads were not designed or built for the size and volume of traffic. A lot of the older housing is built directly onto the road, which increases the effect the lorries have on the properties.

An immediate solution to the number of HGVs coming through the village is to ensure that the two designated routes to the business park are utilised more effectively. This would ensure that the volume of traffic is shared throughout the villages. Currently there are 2 designated routes to the business park, one through Little Totham, the other through Tolleshunt D'Arcy and Tolleshunt Major. The other route is underutilised by the vehicles travelling to the site and we would like our local representatives to help in liaising with the businesses, so that as many vehicles as possible can travel using this route.

The argument we have received is that this road is unsuitable, however it has been designated as one of the roads that vehicles can use. Our village road is also unsuitable as it is just as narrow in parts, as Beckingham Road. At the bottom of school road and at the end of The Street, the road cannot accommodate 2 lorries passing. This causes congestion and pollution. If all routes were used more effectively, it would be immediately beneficial, as the constant problem we have in Little Totham, is where two HGV's try to pass each other. Due to the narrow roads they are unable to pass each other safely and this causes congestion and a danger.

If HGVs were to use one route for arriving at the business park and the other to depart, this would ensure that the impact of the vehicles is reduced not only in Little Totham but also the wider area. It would enable the trunk roads to be used more effectively, removing bottle necks that exist on many of the congested roads. Spreading the HGV's use of junctions on the A12.

3 Long Term Solutions

The last time any proposals were put forward was in 2005. At that time the number of vehicles using the business park was significantly lower. The existing businesses have expanded and new organisations have moved to the business park, including Wilkin and Son. This has caused an increase in all types of vehicles travelling through the village. There has been a significant change in the design of HGVs they are much taller, longer and wider. This has increased the problem of vehicles not being able to pass each other, Due to the height of the HGVs, they are also hitting overhead trees, resulting in branches lying on the road, causing a hazard to other vehicles. The increased size results in extra noise disturbance and vibrations in properties. As previously mentioned they are constantly damaging roads which were not designed or built for the large heavy HGVs. This creates a vicious circle of additional noise and vibrations, then more damage.

As has happened on Loamy Hill Road, The Street and School Road, need completely resurfacing and remarking. This would immediately resolve a lot of the vibration and noise problems, as it would enable the traffic and HGV's to run smoothly through the village. We would suggest an investigation into the strength and design of the roads. Although Loamy Hill Road has been resurfaced, it is already subsiding.

Following on from the short term solution, we feel that a way of slowing traffic, whilst ensuring that it continues moving, is the best solution. There are now numerous types of road solutions, that do not involve road humps – we recognise these as negative solution, as they have been proven to increase noise and pollution. We would look for solutions that involve using methods of narrowing the carriageway, so that vehicles have to slow to pass each other. A change of priorities should be investigated, this would particularly work at the junction of School Road, The Street and Sawyers Road.

The best long term solution, which would solve the problem for all the surrounding villages is to reinvestigate the proposal for a new link road. This was considered in the past and due to a lack of funding was abandoned. The proposal was to create a link road from the business park to Goldhanger Road. This would be an ideal scheme for the transport investment strategy. It would improve the operation of the businesses, which is one of the priorities of the strategy and reduce the impact on the environment, by diverting the traffic to a more suitable route.

It would enable vehicles to travel to the business park in a more efficient and effective manner. It would also reduce the amount of traffic around the Witham bypass and then travelling from the A12 and up Braxted Road. This road constantly suffers from accidents and subsidence. There is severe congestion at the narrow Appleford bridge at the river Blackwater. With a new link road, the number of HGV's using this road would then be reduced. Currently the combination of Beckingham Business Park, traffic travelling to Tiptree and the Commodity Centre, increases the severe congestion at the Witham north junction and the very dangerous junction at Rivenhall End.

During the closure of Appleford bridge at Great Braxted and during the incident detailed in the appendix, HGV's were able to use alternative routes. This proves those routes are not, but could be, more properly utilised.

Using the Transport Investment strategy to fund a new link road would spread the number of HGV's more effectively and therefore help meet the needs of both business and the environment. It would also alleviate the problems of very unsuitable HGV's travelling through Little Totham.

4 Immediate Next Steps

Within the village we have created a separate working group to concentrate on the traffic problems. During September we will be conducting our own traffic survey. This will consolidate the previous electronic Highways survey. Once the survey has been conducted we will issue an additional report, with further details of road conditions, to build our case. We will also be including witness statements and photographs produced by the resident who is a Police Officer, and trained as a police advanced driver.

We will also be liaising with Great Braxted and Braxted Park, as we understand that Duncan Clarke from Braxted Park, has kept a record of all the accidents that have occurred in the area. Our liaison will also include meetings with the businesses at Beckingham Business Park, to build a cooperative approach.

4.1 Meeting

We would also welcome any of our representatives to a site visit in Little Totham. We feel this would really highlight to you the problems the village faces with traffic. We would also welcome any of you to attend one of our Parish council meetings. This would send a very positive message to our residents, that you are interested and concerned about our village.

Little Totham looks forward and welcomes your responses. We look forward to working with you to provide solutions.

5 Distribution List

Rt Hon Pritti Patel MP

Rt Hon John Whittingdale MP

Councillor Henry Bass

Councillor Mark Durham

Councillor John Keyes

Councillor David Sismey

6 Appendix

6.1 Highway Traffic Survey

The details of the traffic highway survey conducted in 2016 can be found at:

<http://www.essexinfo.net/little-totham-parish-council/traffic-monitoring/>

6.2 Incident 22nd August 2017

As the final stages of this document were being put together, an unfortunate accident occurred in the village on 22nd August 2017. A horse trailer had left the stables on Beckingham Road. Within a mile of leaving the stables, as it travelled up School Road, something spooked the horse. At this stage it is unclear whether something came loose in the horse trailer or a passing HGV disturbed the animal. The driver tried to calm the horse and went into the back of the trailer. Unfortunately, he was seriously injured and it became a major emergency incident, including the Essex Air Ambulance and Police marksmen.



In the ensuing chaos the centre of the village ground to a halt. Several of HGV's conducted dangerous manoeuvres, by doing U-turns in the road. As vehicles diverted down other less suitable routes, there was a head on collision between 2 cars on Sawyers Road. This unfortunate and terrible accident, demonstrates the serious issues the village is facing.

