

Pluckley Village Possible improvements for walking around village and traffic calming

Consultation/Discussion suggestions - Draft v5-1-24

Introduction and Summary

John Elliott and Jamie Finch were appointed to review the arrangements for vehicular and pedestrian movement in the village in order to provide ideas to the Parish Council and the residents and businesses in and around the village. Any ideas were to be put before a consultation meeting in the hope that appropriate measures could be introduced to meet the public's wishes and to be incorporated into the village plan and hence Ashford Borough Councils Plan for the district.

The objectives as understood by the consultants was to allow residents including children to move around the village on foot with reasonable safety to the main destinations without feeling really uncomfortable from fast moving cars and lorries. Measures to achieve this objective would hopefully also reduce through traffic and restore the village feel.

This report has the following sections:

1. The problems as described to John Elliott during a site visit with the chair of the Parish Council together with thoughts from John Elliott and Jamie Finch following subsequent visits and meetings and assessing other issues such as accident records, reviewing sightlines etc
2. Considerations for possible measures including present traffic practices, traffic restrictions including 'passive' speed limit reductions, acceptability and compliance of motorists, physical restrictions such as humps or road narrowings
3. Ideas/outline proposals in different parts of the village - recognising that the present practices advised by Department for Transport (DfT) do not accommodate some of the thoughts and ideas. Cooperation would be needed from Kent County Council to buy into the suggestions and gain support from the government's DfT possibly for an experimental scheme or demonstration project with the philosophy being able to be used in other villages. Political support from Ashford BC and Kent CC together with local MPs could also be helpful (if the suggestions find favour with the villagers).

1. Problems as perceived by consultants

The core of the village was developed a few centuries ago around a farming community. Movement within the village would have been by foot or horse using the whole highway between the property boundaries. Coach and horses were probably used also for travel to surrounding villages or towns. For longer journeys the train service would have been available from Chambers Green from the latter part of the 19th century. The level and speed of the 'traffic' would have allowed mixing of the constituent parts within the then available highway. Footways and kerbs were developed in towns when traffic levels grew and most developments since early last century have included footways adjacent to the highways. At some time a few foot paths were added to the local highway network in Pluckley some at significantly higher level where the roadway is in a cutting.

The village and the local area have grown over the last hundred years and the village has absorbed much new development. Employed work moved to the towns. With the arrival and development of

motor vehicles, the availability of reaching places some distance away by motorway has also exacerbated the local traffic problems. Conditions for local residents especially when making immediate local journeys (eg to the local primary school, shops or church) from the speed and volume of traffic is difficult, potentially dangerous and threatening.

The through routes in the village from Charing to Smarden, from Ashford and towards Bethersden and Headcorn and various other villages have no realistic alternative routes than to pass through this rural area.

The footways provided seem to have been designed to favour vehicular traffic over local needs and are often very narrow and cannot be used at all by child buggies or wheelchairs. There are missing links within even these footways and crossing the various routes is very difficult with the speed and volume of traffic with blind bends at points pedestrians need to cross and no footways at all for significant parts of the village. This situation is particularly threatening for parents taking young children to or from home to the school especially in the half light of late afternoon in the winter or when there is rain.

2. Considerations for possible measures

Any footway needs to be wide enough for wheelchairs or buggies to pass along and individual people should be able to pass each other. If there is no possibility of providing a continuous footway a marked edgestrip preferably with a different colour surfacing needs to be provided. Footways or marked edgestrips should probably be provided linking all the main developments including points of interest such as the school, post office, shop, village Hall, pub, sportsgrounds etc. Footways on at least one side of each road and priority pedestrian crossings crossing facilities need to be provided to assist people walking to any significant development destination.

Short lengths of alternate one-way vehicle flow would work without major inconvenience to motor traffic, this cannot easily be extended over large distances and the virtual edgestrips will need to be used by passing vehicles when no pedestrian is present. Traffic speeds need to be marked and rigidly controlled in the core of the village to 20mph or less by physical methods – humps, kerb build outs, speed tables, coloured road or footway surfacing etc.(in the absence of public and political acceptance of sufficient ‘secret’ speed cameras).

Normally pedestrian crossings have approach Zig-Zags, good street lighting, including beacons, and should have adequate sightlines. Although it is understood that there is a strong wish to avoid any streetlighting it may be appropriate at some crossing points to install heat sensitive lights powered by photovoltaic cells and battery back-up.

The DfT guidance for pedestrian crossings includes a ‘magic’ formula for consideration of a crossing when the pedestrian numbers times vehicle numbers squared equals over 1 million. This tends to be only met in fairly busy urban streets - possibly why many villages like Pluckley haven’t got any.

As it would be virtually impossible to meet the normal pedestrian crossing requirements in the places where there is most need to cross the roads, we are suggesting a new type of crossing facility for which we will need to gain support for from KCC as the highway authority and approval from the DfT – this is only likely to be possible if both authorities could accept them as an experiment or a demonstration project.

3. Suggested measures

The 4 drawings attached show the suggestions in various parts of the village. Larger drawings showing most of the village and the suggested scheme elements will be displayed at the public meeting. The suggested measures in the four drawings are described below:-

Drawing 1

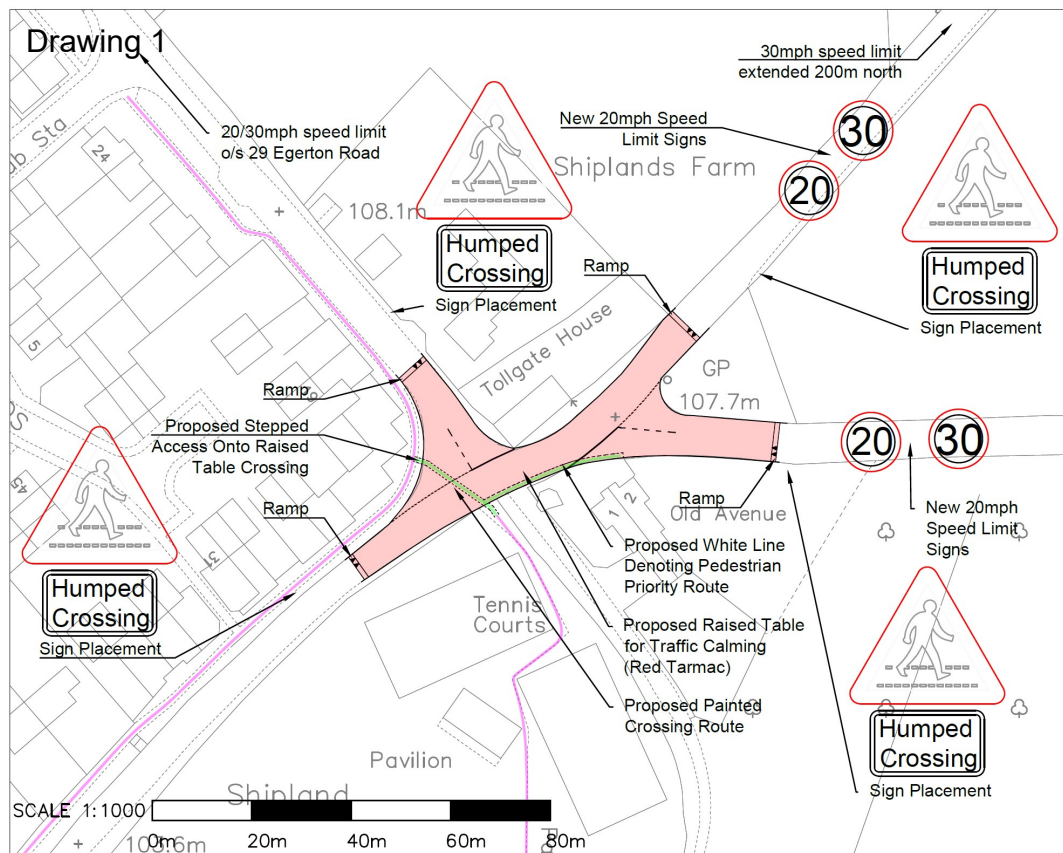
At the north eastern approach to the village the 30mph limits are moved back and replaced in the same place with 20 mph limits on both the Pluckley Road and Swan Lane. Egerton Road would also have 20mph limits on approaching the northern part of the village.

The whole of the area around the junctions would be on a raised 'table' with ramps on each approach to ensure that drivers properly modified their speed.

Warning signs of the special pedestrian arrangements and the ramps/humps would also be provided on the approaches to this 4 way junction. Swan Lane already has a give way to slow traffic down.

An edgestrip footway on the eastern side Smarden Rd from Swan Lane to the pedestrian crossing to Ederton Rd as below.

At the western corner of the junction of Smarden Rd and Egerton Rd steps down from the high level footway would be provided linking directly to a new 'special' pedestrian crossing. For wheelchair users or children's buggies they would follow round the corner from Smarden Rd into Egerton Rd to where the present footway is virtually at the same level as Egerton roadway itself and the access would be provided back to the junction leading to the 'special' pedestrian crossing.



Drawing 2

In the core of the village a ramped speed table would also be provided at the junction of The Street and Smarden Rd.

The left turning from Smarden Rd to the Street would be realigned with kerbs to ensure that vehicles entered the Street at suitably low speeds.

Steps would be provided from the high level footway to the bus stop to ensure that, once an acceptable bus service is provided, people on foot can reach the stop as quickly and easily as possible; for wheelchair users and buggies there are already ramps from the high level footway to the bus stop.

A special pedestrian crossing would be provided across Smarden Rd immediately north of the street linked to the changed geometry of the junction as above; this would also link with the existing footpath leading north west from the junction.

The footway on the north side of the sStreet would be marginally widened to just accommodate wheelchairs and buggies between Smarden Rd and the pub..

A special pedestrian crossing would lead from this pub corner to the post office.
The south side of the Street has an adequate footpath as far as the Yew Tree. At this point a hump would be constructed with a pedestrian crossing on it leading to the footpath through the church yard.

Just east of this point the marked edge footpath would start continuing in Drawing 3

South of the table at thew junction of Smarden Rd and The Street hump and pedestrian warning signs would be provided and a little further south the 20mph limit would be signed.

On the west side of Smarden Road there is an adequate footpath leading on to Drawing4.

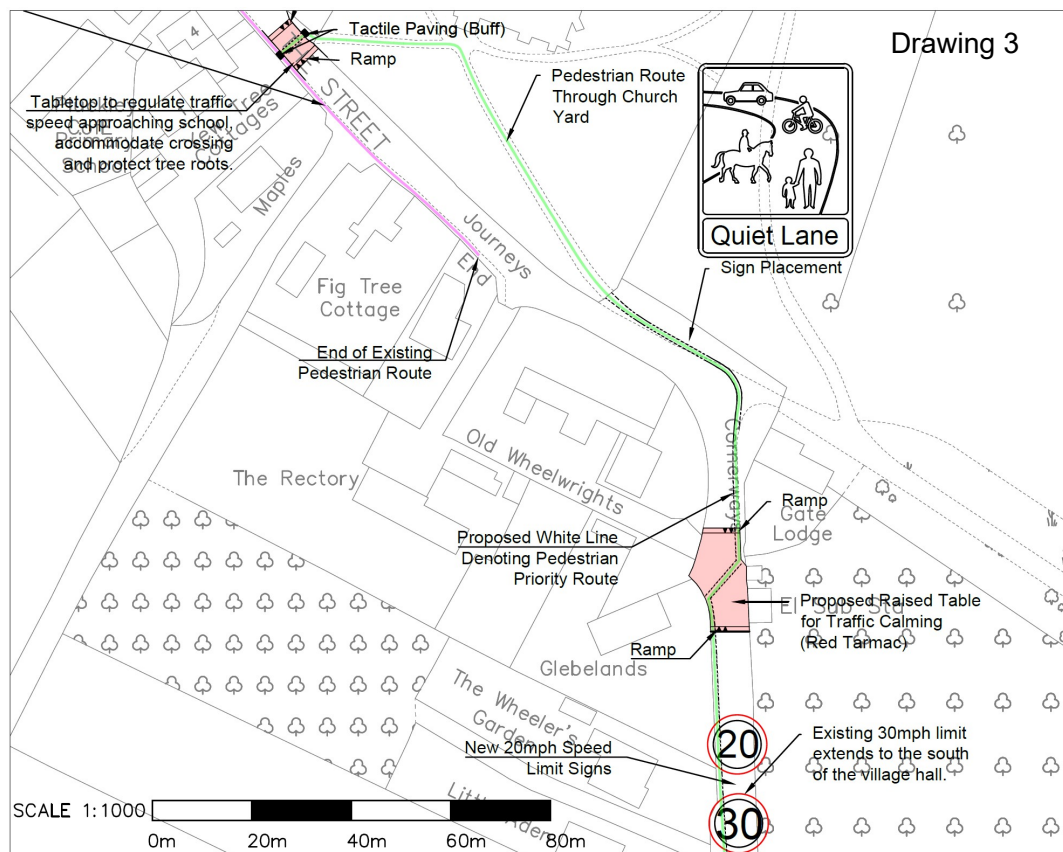
[illegible]

Drawing 3

The edge marked footway on the northern and eastern side of the Street would extend to Gate Lodge where a hump with and angled pedestrian crossing would be provided to the western side of Station Rd.

This edgestrip footway would extend to the village hall

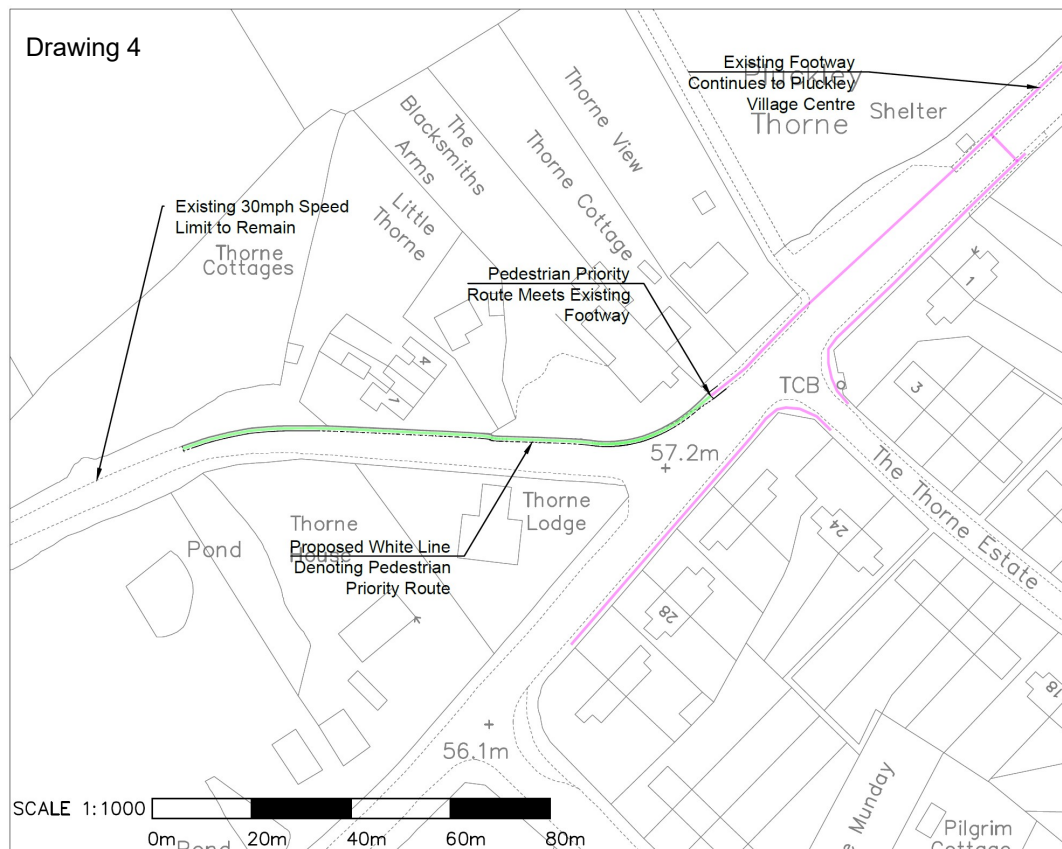
The 20 limit signs would be at a suitable point about 50m south of the hump and pedestrian crossing mentioned above.



Drawing 4

The existing footway on the west side of Smarden Rd extends to its junction with Smarden Bell Rd; it is suggested that round this corner into Smarden Bell Rd and edgestrip footway is provided.

There are planned developments in this area and it may be appropriate to move the 30 mph limit in Smarden Bell Rd a little further west.



4. Concluding comments

We believe for the objectives of improving pedestrian access around the village, practically all the measures would need to be implemented to provide a comprehensive upgrading of pedestrian movement. There may also be some other appropriate measures that could be applied. It should however be noted that the special pedestrian crossings and appropriate warning signs are not normally used or authorized. Approval of these measures would require National Government agreement but we hope that such a scheme may be welcomed as a pilot or demonstration scheme and may even be paid for by Central Government. Edgestrip footways are rare in the UK but we believe very necessary in such situations.

Villagers and any other interested parties are invited to review the suggested measures in this report and or come up with different measures, additional measures or any changes.