

Ickleford Parish Council's letter to all residents regarding the current traffic calming scheme.

Responses from www.mostsimply.com campaign for safe roads and no road humps in Ickleford shown in red (21 March 2010)

15th March 2010

Dear Resident,

You will probably have seen evidence of the strength of feeling about the traffic calming measures via items in the Comet, and petitions in shops, pubs and on-line (<http://mostsimply.com/>). The Parish Council shares some of the frustrations which have been voiced. The road works have progressed quite slowly, the impact on local businesses during the road works has been significant, and the communication from Highways and their contractors on road closures has not always been clear or accurate. We will continue to work with them to improve these situations.

The opposition to the traffic calming measures is for some residents more deep-rooted. Some believe that there isn't a problem with speed through Ickleford. However, in the Parish Plan questionnaire 504 households expressed concern about speed of vehicles through the village; 89 said it was not an issue. When Highways performed speed monitoring in December 2007 vehicle speeds were in excess of their criteria for implementing traffic calming.

The Parish Plan Questionnaire states *"Traffic speeding through the village has been identified as a major concern by some residents"* and then immediately goes on to ask *"Are you concerned with the level of speed of vehicles travelling through the village?"*. This question is flawed in that it states an opinion before asking for yours and therefore the results cannot be relied upon. According to the results that IPC confirm have not been independently checked, a further 26 households specifically answered "Don't Know" to this question, and 60 more households returned their questionnaire but did not answer this question. Results can be seen at http://www.icklefordpc.com/Traffic_Transport_summary_of_questions_by_road.pdf.

Easy to read analysis of all traffic speeds in Ickleford can be seen at <http://mostsimply.com/speeding.htm>. On the Bedford Road, coming away from Hitchin, 50.7% of vehicles (22,039 per week) were speeding and yet no safety measures are planned here. Driving towards Hitchin on Bedford Road 21.7% of vehicles (9,481 per week) were speeding. The single biggest cluster of injury accidents in the last 30 years has been at and around the Bedford Road roundabout where no safety improvement works are planned. Where the humped Zebra crossing has been installed, 96% of vehicles were travelling within the speed limit and there have been no accidents causing injuries at or near this location for the last 30 years.

Many residents were disappointed that we were not offered a greater choice of options to reduce traffic speed, especially as the Parish Plan questionnaire listed several possibilities. The questionnaire was created without input from the experts in Highways and the police who have looked at all possible ways to slow traffic (please see [the Parish Council](#) or [Herts Highways](#) websites, or contact either organisation for more details):

- **Chicanes** cannot be used in Ickleford because of the high volume of traffic on Arlesey Road and Turnpike Lane; they would cause excess traffic congestion. The number of

driveways and road junctions onto these roads also preclude the use of chicanes.

- **Flashing speed limit signs** only reduce average speed by 2-3 mph, and only have that impact in the immediate vicinity of their location. In addition, Arlesey Road and Turnpike Lane do not fulfil Highways' new criteria for these signs.
- Ickleford does not meet Highways' criteria for **traffic lights, fixed speed cameras or average speed cameras**.
- **Speed-dependent traffic lights**, which turn to red if vehicles travel over the speed limit, and are used in Spain, are unfortunately not available yet in the UK
- Although the police occasionally do **mobile speed checks** these are only effective at the time they take place. As the police cannot do these 24/7, speed checks cannot permanently slow the traffic.
- We have asked the police about having a **20mph limit**, especially around the school. As they are unable to enforce the current 30mph limit there is little likelihood that they can enforce a 20mph limit.

We have repeatedly asked Hertfordshire Highways for the criteria they have been working to but as yet received nothing. The section on "Traffic Calming and Speed Reducing Measures" in the Department of Traffic (DfT) Advisory Leaflet for Village Speed Limits at <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/roads/tpm/tal/trafficmanagement/villagespeedlimits.pdf> is clear. There is no real mention on road humps, but talks about chicanes, and Vehicles Activated Signs as viable solutions in detail.

We have looked at the DfT Traffic Advisory Leaflet for Vehicle Activated Signs at <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/roads/tpm/tal/signsandsignals/vehicleactivatedsigns.pdf>. This is dated March 2003 and therefore would like to know the "new criteria" to which your letter refers. This leaflet explains that "a limited range of warning signs are allowed in combination with a 'SLOW DOWN' plate and will not require special authorisation". These warning signs include signs on the approaches to roundabouts and side roads which appear may be suitable to Ickleford.

We believe that there are a number of better and viable alternatives but Hertfordshire Highways have only opted to only select solutions that do not require special authorisation from the Department for Transport.

We were therefore left with **road humps** as the one and only technically feasible option (see [the Parish Council website](#) or contact us to see the type of humps proposed), and this was the subject of the village-wide survey in October 2008. We effectively posed a take-it-or-leave it option which frustrated some residents. However, that was precisely what was on offer from Highways; road humps to reduce traffic speed or the status quo. For Turnpike Lane, 566 voted in favour of the proposals, 298 voted against. For Arlesey Road, 602 voted in favour of the proposals, 256 voted against. We believed this to be a clear-cut decision. However, some residents feel that the views of the 600 villagers who did not reply to the survey need to be factored in. We don't know how this can be done, and no election or referendum can ever take into account those who chose not to express their view.

This letter states 65.5% were in favour of the scheme on Turnpike Lane - i.e. (566/864)*100. But the IPC previously reported 63.1% were in favour of the scheme at http://www.icklefordpc.com/html/vote_for_speed_humps.html.

This letter states 70% were in favour of the scheme on Arlesey Road - i.e. (602/858)*100. But the IPC previously reported 67.5% were in favour of the scheme at http://www.icklefordpc.com/html/vote_for_speed_humps.html.

IPC began this consultation with a highly leading question which overstated the problem of speed in the village. IPC inflated percentages by ignoring those who returned their questionnaires and specifically answered "Don't Know". In contrast to the interest generated by the Parish Plan (86% response rate), over 40% of the village did not return their Traffic Proposals Survey 2008.

IPC used no expert advice in the wording of their questionnaires and furthermore at no point have IPC results been independently collated or verified. We have repeatedly asked for copies of the completed questionnaires from the Highways Department, but have had no reply. Many residents have mentioned that they put written comments on their response forms. IPC have not been able to advise whether these comments have been recorded or considered.

There are many parts of this long and complex process which we think could have been handled more effectively, and we will perform a genuine review of the actions and processes to see how we could do a future consultation better. We will be happy to share the outcome of this review.

We understand that the large number of residents who voted against these proposals are angered and dismayed that the traffic calming measures are now being implemented. But we feel we have a duty to enact the wishes of the much larger number of residents who voted in favour of the proposals.

All residents should bear in mind that by failing to register a vote against road humps, the IPC will assume that you are in favour of them being installed. You can stop this and insist on a better solution by signing our petition. **Ickleford deserves better.**

With best wishes,
Ickleford Parish Council