

## **Suzanne Roynon – Speech to Hertfordshire Highways/NHDC JMP – Monday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2010**

Thank you for giving us this opportunity to address the JMP. Our fellow committee member Mike Palmer had hoped to speak this evening, but due to the volcano is stranded next to a swimming pool in California!

We wish to formally present a petition signed by 620 people who object to road humps in Ickleford.

### **May I firstly state that:-**

- The campaign group does not consist of disaffected people who are sulking because humps are being installed.
- Nor is it setting out to undermine the Parish Council which is generally well respected within the community.
- We represent a large number of residents who do not believe the feasibility report was comprehensive or that a proper consultation took place during 2008/9.
- The case is too complex to be presented in five minutes but we hope to provide sufficient detail to encourage the JMP to open discussion about the current situation.
- The actions of the Parish Council are inextricably linked with those of Highways in that they worked closely together to prepare and present the traffic solution to residents. Furthermore the Parish Council have acknowledged “there are many parts of this long and complex process which could have been handled more effectively”.

**The 2008 Feasibility report** was based on a “safer environment for village residents”, with great emphasis placed on pedestrians and in particular schoolchildren.

It surveyed the use of the crossing point adjacent to the school and showed that apart from half an hour at each end of the school day, usage was generally low - in fact in single figures.

The report referenced the out of date 2004 School Travel Plan which has not been updated in the last six years.

The report stated the accident level in the village was below the county average and evidence of speed-related accidents was negligible. (There have been no injury accidents near the school in the last thirty years.)

It was clear that all recommended road improvements and traffic-calming measures in the village were borderline decisions when based on speed, footfall and general risk. Nevertheless the report suggested swingeing measures of traffic calming including a proposal for fifteen sets of humps along Turnpike Lane and a part of Arlesey Road.

We believe there were many **omissions in the 2008 Feasibility study.**

Given the great emphasis on pedestrian safety, it is of concern that the Feasibility report:-

- Failed to measure the number of pedestrians using the affected roads, or recognise that around 50% of schoolchildren live outside the village and do not walk to school,
- It did not evaluate the number of children living in the village who are driven to school by parents who drive on to work.
- It omitted a stretch of Arlesey Road where traffic volume may increase as a result of road humps in Turnpike Lane.
- It failed to assess the environmental and other negative impacts for road users and residents.
- It failed to consider surrounding roads and communities, and
- Other than slowing down traffic, the measures of success are not clearly defined.

We believe the **Village Consultation Process** was flawed.

The Parish Council's consultation with residents was conducted over a one-week period providing little time for considered debate and fact-finding.

The Parish Council attributed that to Highway's imposition of:-

- An exceptionally short deadline for the Parish Council to respond.
- A "take it or leave it" offer with no option for variation.
- A "use it this year or lose it forever" statement from Highways.

There is no clear understanding why such pressure was applied to residents, especially given the two years between the feasibility study and work commencing.

The Parish Council's consultation document was weighted towards a "yes" vote, using data provided by Highways. It indicated average speeds higher than those quoted in the feasibility report, which had shown speed was not excessive on Arlesey Road; it also stated eight sets of road humps in Arlesey road were "**required**" for the pedestrian crossing, yet this was reduced by two sets in the final plans. Why did those humps cease to be required?

The survey response did not permit a specific vote against the road humps. Many residents therefore annotated their formal objection to humps on the survey form. These objections were not recorded or considered by Highways.

The statutory Highways consultation letter was sent to some residents at the beginning of the Easter break with a "respond by" date before the end of the school holiday. A number of residents who should have received the letter did not. Residents who had already objected to the scheme via the Parish Council did not realise they had to object again.

**(Summary)**

This summarises the reasons for the discontent within the village. We can provide a full report should this be required.

We ask that the current works are suspended until a proper and informed consultation can take place. Failing that, we ask to meet with Senior Highways personnel to understand the processes that led to the decision to spend over £155,000 on this scheme and why the JMP were not fully appraised of the opposition within the village.

On a personal level, since humps were installed on Arlesey Road I have driven through the village at three "off peak" times. Each time a convoy of vehicles trundled along Arlesey Road causing congestion unheard of outside school hours. A frustrated motorist overtook three cars and shot off towards Hitchin at speed. The humps seem to have made Arlesey Road more dangerous, and sadly it may not be long before a serious accident results.

Thank you for your time.