

**Standard letter from Justin Murphy of Hertfordshire Highways.  
Emailed to Suzanne Roynon on 3 March 2010  
Annotated in red with our comments**

I have considered the points you raised about the scheme and please see my response below.

Hertfordshire Highways (Design Team) have proposed the traffic calming measures based on relevant design criteria published by the Department for Transport (DfT).

Due to the high number of vehicles using Arlesey Road and Turnpike Lane it is not feasible to implement horizontal traffic calming measures such as chicanes and pinch points. Such measures would result in congestion through the village, particularly during peak morning and afternoon times.

*I drive through the village at least four times each day. There are always parked cars providing very effective chicanes or pinch points. They do not cause congestion – even during the morning and evening peak periods. The one thing that does cause congestion is the school crossing patrol which slows traffic down to between 0 – 20mph without the need for speed humps.*

Hertfordshire Highways have been working with Ickleford Parish Council to address areas of concern raised in the Traffic and Transport section of Ickleford Parish Plan. High vehicle speeds along Arlesey Road and Turnpike Lane were raised as serious issues within the village. Particular concerns were raised regarding the crossing near Ickleford Primary school on Arlesey Road. As explained at the Village Hall meeting in October 2008, the proposals for road humps/speed cushions are based on two key factors.

*It has been established that the statistics quoted in the Ickleford Parish Plan and the methods used to obtain these statistics were flawed. The questions asked were leading and worded in a way that does not meet the criteria for the "Code of recommended practice on local authority publicity" in particular point 22 which states "Where material is distributed on matters closely affecting vulnerable sections of the community – for example, the elderly – particular care should be taken to ensure that is unambiguous, and unlikely to cause needless concern to those reading it" – see <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/155067.pdf> . Therefore this cannot be regarded as a valid survey of the views of the village.*

The first factor is the desire in the Ickleford Parish Traffic and Transport Action Plan for traffic speeds to be reduced on Arlesey Road and Turnpike Lane. The speed survey information reported in the feasibility report (85th%ile speeds in excess of 38mph on sections of Arlesey Road) confirms that speed reducing measures are justified.

*Easy to understand analysis of the traffic speeds in Ickleford can be seen at <http://mostsimply.com/speeding.htm>. If speeds were genuinely regularly over the level at which drivers could be prosecuted, it would be reasonable to expect that the police and Highways Department would have installed a revenue generating speed camera, despite the lack of serious traffic incidents in the village. Following changes in legislation, a speed camera would now be a viable option despite the lack of fatalities, but only if there was a genuine expectation of it providing an income.*

*Where the humped zebra crossing has been installed 96% of drivers were within the speed limit and there have been no injury accidents at or near this location for the last 30 years. In contrast 31,520 vehicles routinely speed on Bedford Road each week and apart from one Vehicle Activated Sign there are no significant safety improvements there. However the biggest cluster of injury accidents in Ickleford over the last 30 years has been on Bedford Road.*

As mentioned previously and advised via Parish Meetings, traffic flows here are too high for chicanes to operate satisfactorily. Speed cushions/road humps are therefore proposed instead. The spacing used is in line with the guidelines issued by the DfT to ensure that speeds are brought down below 30mph and that "between hump" speeds are moderated.

*As previously explained, parked cars create effective chicanes without causing congestion. If residents were encouraged to park fully on the road rather than halfway onto the pavement, there would be no need to install any form of traffic calming at all.*

The second factor requiring the introduction of speed cushions is the zebra crossing on Arlesey Road. Design guidelines for zebra crossings prohibit their use where traffic speeds exceed 35mph. Traffic speeds on Arlesey Road currently exceed this figure. The speed cushions are therefore needed to moderate the speeds on the approaches to the new crossing.

*The traffic speed data provided by Hertfordshire Highways shows that 96% of vehicles are within the speed limit at the crossing. There is a new zebra crossing in Old Hale Way, Hitchin, which has not been created as a raised hump. Neither have the new zebra crossings on*

*Baldock High Street, which has long been recognized as having high traffic speed.*

*We have asked for evidence of the 'design guidelines for zebra crossings' as these are not clearly identifiable on the Department for Transport Website but have received nothing yet.*

*The new zebra crossing has already caused three 'near misses'. The first when a driver exiting the school thought she had been 'flashed' to pull out by an oncoming vehicle, and did so. The oncoming car had not 'flashed' at all, just that the lights had given that impression as the car mounted the raised zebra crossing. The second incident occurred when a pedestrian was crossing, but an oncoming driver did not notice the zebra stripes because they weren't clearly visible as he approached the crossing. The third occasion a pedestrian was most of the way across the road and a car approaching the crossing went onto the wrong side of the road to pass while the pedestrian was still on the crossing.*

Public consultation was carried out by Hertfordshire Highways in April 2009 with all residents of Ickleford receiving a letter and drawings of the proposals and overall a positive response was received.

*This is incorrect. There was NO public consultation in April 2009 'with all residents of Ickleford receiving a letter'. Ickleford Parish Council (IPC) states that only residents of roads 'in the vicinity' of the effected roads received a letter in April 2009. Neither IPC nor Hertfordshire Highways have been able to clarify what 'in the vicinity' actually means. Certainly no letter or drawings were received by us, and many other residents have said the same thing. We have recently discovered that it went to only 600 out of 840 Ickleford households. Furthermore the letter only said "Whilst we are pleased to receive your views and comments on the scheme and make minor changes as appropriate, we will not normally give responses to individuals". Most residents against the scheme said they did not reply as they felt it was not inviting them to oppose the whole scheme.*

Following this, notices of the proposals were advertised in The Comet as well as throughout the village as part of the mandatory legal Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) process that took place in June/July 2009. During the TRO process residents had an opportunity to formally register their objections to the proposals and have these brought before the Joint Member Panel (JMP) for consideration. During this process only one objection to the scheme was received, which was subsequently overruled by the JMP.

*We personally sent two letters of objection, and other residents of the village have also stated that they also wrote to the Highways*

*Department. It does seem remarkable that none of these letters reached the Joint Member Panel. Since then we have made aware of other letters of complaint – what about all the numerous letters of complaint and objections sent to the IPC? Were these not passed on to the JMP? Oddly enough, the JMP minutes state 4 objections had been received by June 2009. Interesting then that this information was not passed on to IPC, or acknowledged by Mr Murphy in his response.*

The public consultation for the scheme was carried out by Hertfordshire Highways in accordance with the new guidelines for Highways and Transport schemes consultation. Residents have had ample opportunity to raise objections to the scheme through the public consultation process of April 2009, Parish meetings, the formal TRO process of June/July 2009 and the leaflet that was sent to residents in November 2009. Hertfordshire Highways has followed all of the relevant technical, design and consultation processes throughout the scheme. The scheme has been fully endorsed by both the Parish Council and the JMP and will be progressing.

*Our comments above clearly show that the public consultation alleged by Hertfordshire Highways did not take place correctly. Written objections sent to Hertfordshire Highways were not brought to the attention of the JMP, there was no public consultation process for the WHOLE village in April 2009 and many residents did not receive the leaflet which should have been delivered throughout the village in November 2009. Two members of the IPC voted against the scheme and throughout the process residents have objected to speed humps.*

There are strict criteria that is required to be met for the use of flashing vehicle activated signs. Most critically of these is a minimum of three personal injury accidents within 1km of a proposed site in the past three years. No locations on Arlesey Road or Turnpike Lane qualify for the implementation of new vehicle activated sign. Generally such signs are not used in isolation but as part of a package of measures to reduce vehicle speeds. Furthermore, research conducted by DfT has shown that these signs generally achieve a reduction in vehicle speeds of between 2-3mph.

*Mr Murphy ignores the fact that despite the lack of personal injury accidents on Arlesey Road, a flashing vehicle activated sign has been in place since at least December 2006..*

*In fact, statistically Ickleford has a much lower than average incidence of road traffic accidents. The accident data provided by the police to IPC and Hertfordshire Highways shows that of the 8 accidents in the*

*past three years, only one could remotely be linked to speed – and that link is dubious. We await further information to clarify how IPC justified their decision to link this incident with excessive speed.*

I hope that the detail above demonstrates that the proposals put forward have been carefully considered and that speed cushions/road humps provide the most appropriate layout in these circumstances.

*Far from demonstrating careful consideration, Mr Murphy's letter has repeated the flaws and misinformation used to justify the unnecessary implementation of an urban speed reduction scheme in a rural village where other measures would have been infinitely more appropriate.*

*The Department of Transport's Traffic Advisory leaflet 1/04 on Village Speed Limits mentions many traffic calming measures suitable for villages, but excludes speed humps altogether.*

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/roads/tpm/tal/trafficmanagement/villagespeedlimits.pdf>

*This further emphasises the inappropriate decision to use speed humps or cushions in a village.*