

Most of you will be aware that 20 months ago, Dedham Parish Council (DPC) submitted a Traffic Management Plan to Essex Highways (EH) outlining how we would like to see the traffic issues in Dedham addressed. We waited over a year for automatic traffic counters to be put down to gather the information that EH said it needed to take action. The results from that, backed up by Speed Watch data show that Dedham does indeed have an issue with a high proportion of vehicles passing through the village at very high speeds.

Last week we finally received the report (available via this link: <https://heyzine.com/flip-book/96e3372442.html>). EH have refused just about every suggestion made other than replacing a couple of village gateways. What is most alarming is that many of the decisions appear to contravene their own Speed Management Policy. Most certainly the views of residents were ignored, and there was even a suggestion that we set up a Speed Watch group. Clearly this is unacceptable and below you can see DPCs response in red in relation to the Executive Summary of the report. So the fight continues please make sure you complain about everything from potholes, speeding, lack of or missing signs, accidents etc to Essex Highways, and where applicable the police. Copy in Lewis Barber cllr.lewis.barber@essex.gov.uk. The taxpayers of Dedham deserve to have their views listened to, Dedham residents deserve better.

The purpose of the ECC/Ringway Jacobs report was to investigate the feasibility of several possible solutions in response to Traffic Management concerns in Dedham Parish. The drivers behind the issues were traffic volumes and speed concerns. The main findings of the report are as follows.

Blanket 30-mph restriction request throughout the Parish.

This will not be possible. Essex County Council defines the area as Rural rather than Urban – Essex Policy is to implement a 30mph restrictions in urban areas. Page 14 of Speed Management Strategy(2006) first sentence states. “The County is moving towards a standard speed limit of 30mph in villages”.

- According to EH Speed Management Strategy 2006. Page 1 states “it recognises the importance of taking into account the views of local citizens in determining an appropriate limit for their community”. Appendix C of the DPC Traffic Management Plan itemises the emails and letters received by DPC and our former EC councillor Ann Brown outlining concerns about speeding in Dedham. Many more representations have been received since we first submitted the plan nearly two years ago. This appears to have been ignored thus contravening EH's own Speed Management policy.
- The presence of more than 11 residences within a distance of 350 metres on Long Rd West does indeed mean it qualifies as an urban zone according to 4.1 on page 14 of the Speed Management Policy. Furthermore the eastern end of Long Rd with a similar number of residences is a 30 mph zone, this lack of consistency in relation to speed and number of residences is confusing for both drivers and pedestrians and does not conform to the EH Speed Management Strategy 2006.
- Grove Hill although with less housing has recorded three accidents where the police have been involved within the last year. The report inaccurately states that there are no accident black spots in Dedham, when Essex Highways own criteria states that 3 accidents in a rural area does indeed qualify a black spot. This in itself justifies a reduction in the speed limit to 30 mph.

20-mph Zone/Order in Dedham Village.

Neither can be pursued. Average traffic speeds exceed that whereby a speed limit could be introduced. Highways here are on a PR2 route – policy does not permit Zones on PR2 routes.

- The Speed Management Strategy 2006 Page 7, second bullet point states that PR2 routes will be considered for in consultation with the Traffic Manager and the Cabinet Member. There appears to be no blanket ban on PR2. DPC will vigorously seek approval from the Cabinet Member
- Bullet point 3 refers to proximity to a school and Appendix C refers to concerns about speeding around our primary school. The proposed area also includes a shopping area and significant narrowing of the road demanding a reduction in speed. The two accidents that have taken place in the same area of the High Street in the last four months both involving speeding drivers and required the presence of Essex Police would indicate that traffic calming is needed.
- The report did not reference these accidents.
- Bullet point 4 refers to support of the local community (Appendix C), the Parish Council gives its full support for a 20-mph zone, and we will be seeking specific support from the Cabinet Member. This does not reflect the spirit of the 2021 revised Highway code that emphasises the protection of the most vulnerable road users.

Changes in junction priority.

No suitable changes were identified for the three sites covered

- Once again, the report ignores accidents at the Dedham Heath crossroads.

Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS).

No sites were identified as suitable for further investigation. Mean speeds show compliance with speed limits and there is no obvious trend with accidents at each accident site to support warning signs.

- With further research we would agree that VAS are not appropriate for Dedham but not for the reason above.
- Vehicles driven at mean speeds are not the issue in Dedham, nor indeed anywhere as they are far less likely to kill vulnerable road users. If the author of the report had read the data provided by our Speed Watch team (verified by Essex Police) and Essex Highways own data on speeding levels gained from the ATCs Dedham which states “A high proportion of larger dots may indicate a potential speeding issue”. This indicates that Dedham suffers from a significant proportion of drivers who consistently drive at speeds way above the mean speed level, it is they who are likely to kill vulnerable road users, who should be protected under the ethos of the revised Highway code
- Therefore as VAS signs are proven to lower speed levels by only three to four miles per hour they would have minimal impact on the truly dangerous levels of speeding and therefore the cost simply does not justify the potential results. The revised Highway code clearly states that the most vulnerable road users should be protected.

Average speed cameras along Long Road.

This will not be possible. The accident rate, using National Guidelines, does not support the introduction of average speed cameras along Long Road.

- Why is the introduction of TruCam never clearly addressed?

Rumble strips.

It is recommended not to pursue these. Although traffic speed is low enough not to require other calming measures ahead of installing them, the maintenance aspect as well as possible vibration and noise issues generated by rumble strips have the potential to cause inconvenience to nearby residents.

- The report states that rumblewave/ strips should be at least 30m away from housing to avoid noise and vibration nuisance to existing properties. The geographical nature of Dedham as a collection of hamlets means that this is easily achievable at or close to village gateways and on many of the roads linking the hamlets.
- The question of maintenance is one that we as a Parish would welcome the opportunity to discuss with EH

Village gateways.

It is recommended, to consider installing gateways at the locations listed below.

1. Ardleigh Road. 2. Birchwood Road.

The cost is estimated to be £16,000. A licence from ECC would be required prior to installation.

Protected Rural Lane Status.

Assessment and designation of highways as Protected Rural Status is a Planning Authority function rather than a Highway Authority function. It is recommended that any pursuit of this designation for various roads is made through Colchester City Council.

- DPC will pursue this

Community Speed watch signs.

It is recommended that the Parish Council approach the Safer Essex Road Partnership (SERP) to generate a Community Speed watch group.

- Unfortunately, the author of this report failed to note that Dedham does in fact have an extremely active Community Speed Watch group. Please see Appendix B which provides detailed data from our Speed Watch group on speeding in Dedham. Three of the approved sites are consistently in the top 5 sites in Essex for speeding offences.
- It is most dispiriting that the work of and data provided by such a proactive voluntary group has been completely overlooked.

We would also like to make these additional points

- Nowhere does this report reflect the spirit of the revised Highways Code that promotes protection of the most vulnerable road users i.e. pedestrians and cyclists rather than motorists
- We realise that EH has financial constraints, however this report effectively prohibits the Parish Council from using its own funds to introduce safety measures. Measures that are clearly demanded by the voting public.
- The report only responds negatively to suggestions made by unpaid laymen. Nowhere have the experts made any constructive suggestions as to solving speeding issues in Dedham.
- What exactly does the phrase "no obvious benefit to the Highway Authority mean" and what are the implications for the tax paying residents of Dedham?

Gill Neville, Dedham Parish Council