

# **PARISH COUNCIL UPDATE**

## **Bus & traffic issues in Ashton under Hill**

The problem of traffic and buses in the village is unfortunately a problem without a solution! We are a village with two schools at either end of Elmley Road and only one narrow road. Parking for villagers and visitors is mainly on this road. There will always be congestion. Present and previous Parish Councils have been trying for many years to find a solution to this problem. We have regularly lobbied our District and County Councillors. We have repeatedly written to the bus companies, both school and local bus services. We have talked to both schools. However, Parish Councils do have limited powers and always need the support of their parishioners. Here are some of the issues or solutions that have been suggested over the years, followed by what we can all do to help the situation.

### **Discourteous driving**

The main issue that we see and receive complaints about, is aggressive and discourteous driving by both buses and cars. We send a reminder most years to all parents via school newsletters, reminding them of the issues and requesting that they are more patient and considerate in their driving. The same message is sent to the bus companies. We also regularly ask car drivers to be more considerate and careful in their parking in the village. Parking a few extra metres away from the school can help make the roads safer.

### **Traffic calming measures**

In order to have any measures involving changes to the road, i.e. speed bumps or chicanes (road narrowing sections with priority given to traffic in one direction); the road in which the calming measure is installed would need to have street lighting. We are a village in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Villages and areas within the AONB are protected against light pollution by maintaining 'dark skies' (i.e. no street lighting). It is therefore extremely unlikely that this would be allowed to happen (you can read more about this by going to this link: [www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/planning/cotswoldsaonb-management-plan/](http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/planning/cotswoldsaonb-management-plan/)).

### **20mph speed limit**

Two years ago we requested a 20mph limit in the village. Worcestershire were then piloting this in a few villages. However the results of the pilot indicated that this was not successful in reducing speeds unless the average speed was already close to 20mph. At the time, in Ashton, this was not the case; average speeds were then recorded at 24-29mph in the village and 32mph on The Groaten and Beckford Road. We can revisit this to see if the policy has changed since then.

Note: this may not be the answer anyway as far as the school buses issue is concerned as speeds rarely reach even 10mph during school times!

### **Lollipop crossing**

A school crossing patrol officer (aka lollipop man/lady) could be considered if it was thought this would increase pupil safety. Again there would be a cost implication and in this time of cuts we think that this would be considered a low priority. We will make enquiries on your behalf.

### **Off road parking**

Is there anywhere for off road parking for school drop off and pick up? This is another area we have looked at without success so far as there seems to be no land or space available for this.

### **School finishing times**

We have, on more than one occasion, tried to persuade the schools to stagger their finishing times so that either BHA buses have passed by the First School before this school finishes or vice versa. However, the buses are on a tight schedule to get to schools such as Prince Henry's on time, so the schools feel unable to do this. We have raised this again with Worcestershire County Council in the last few months.

### **Yellow lines**

Back in 2015, Highways proposed this as a solution to the parking issues in Elmley Rd, which in the past have caused buses to mount pavements and verges and sometimes put pedestrians in danger. The main opposition to the yellow lines was that without the obstacles of parked cars; all vehicles, including buses, would be able to travel faster through the village. This can be evidenced to some degree when we see cars speeding though the village in evenings and weekends when the roads are quieter. Residents also protested against this measure as it would impact their own parking if they don't have a drive or garage to park in. It would have also affected other parking as the yellow lines would be in effect all the time. The proposal was dropped in May 2015.

### **Bus Collection Area**

Another proposal that has been made in the past is to have a bus park on the Groaten with children transported on foot from the Middle School to the bus park. This raised many issues regarding the school's responsibility for the children and their safety, as well as logistical issues in moving the children without adding to congestion. The solution was not therefore considered workable.

### **Road from BHA to A46**

This was apparently proposed when the school was built in 1963 but never took place. It has been re-raised over the years but the cost of compulsory land purchase and road construction would run into many hundreds of thousands of pounds and therefore has never gone any further than discussion.

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## **Our successes so far**

- \* Negotiated with the bus companies for staggered departure times for the buses from BHA (we note this may have slipped and will remind them of this).
- \* Installation of the Vehicle Activation Sign (VAS) and recent relocation of the 30mph sign on the Groaten to try to reduce speeding vehicles entering the village. We are planning to purchase another 'countdown' style speed sign in next year's budget.
- \* Negotiated the installation of posts on some grass verges where cars are parking and further adding to congestion on Elmley Rd.
- \* After incidents of gridlock in the village due to both schools accidentally having similar event times, we negotiated agreement from the schools that they would notify us and each other and indeed try to avoid calendar clashes for future events.

## **What the Parish Council can do**

- \* We can revisit the 20mph situation in case policy has changed
- \* We can enquire about costs of employing a school crossing patrol officer
- \* We will once again contact the bus companies. However, we will achieve more impact if you all do this too as detailed below. This is because without evidence that there have been reported incidents, neither the bus companies nor the County Council will take any action. We have regularly been faced with "But there are no issues reported" when we make complaints to the bus companies, or indeed the schools.

## **What you can do**

- \* Report any dangerous or discourteous driving immediately, either to one of the schools or direct to the bus companies, details on following page.
- \* Try to get a photo of the incident and the bus number (on boards in the front and back of the buses).
- \* If you telephone, email or write as follow up (and to provide written evidence for you and for the companies) and ask for a response. Copy the school/s and the PC into your emails.
- \* Please encourage your children to tell you of issues that they see (if they are older and walk alone), and report these too if appropriate.
- \* For parents living in the village, please try to walk your child to the First School at least. We understand you may be going to work after dropping your child, but if you could allow a little extra time for this, you will be helping to reduce the parking bottleneck. It is congestion that causes the issues.
- \* Talk to us! Any suggestions or ideas on how we can reduce the problems we are encountering with traffic and buses will be welcome. Thank you.

## Contact details

Astons Coaches (also for 540 buses) **Email:** [info@astons-coaches.co.uk](mailto:info@astons-coaches.co.uk) **Phone:** 01905 820201

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