

ECC Report:

Local Highways Panel (LHP) refresh

LHPs have suffered from over-demand, delayed delivery, and inappropriate requests, which have hindered their original goals. Consequently, a review of their purpose and operation has been launched with an outcome that refreshes the approach. The main change is that the 12 divisional LHPs will address lower cost schemes that have an immediate impact, and will refer larger long term schemes to a “Chairmans panel”. This will be enhanced by a commitment to undertake scheme validations within 4 weeks of submission. This validation process will prioritise schemes according to addressing known safety issues, improvements to safety, sustainable transport goals, local support, environmental improvements, affordability, and deliverability. It means that the limited LHP funds will be focussed on these priorities! Schemes currently in the funding queue will be re-assessed (validated and prioritised) according to these criteria.

Where PCs are able to fund schemes, they will still need to progress through the validation process first, but I hope that this will be quicker and enable PCs to fund such schemes in a shorter timeframe.

I am a member of the funding sub-group which recommend schemes for funding over the next year. We met on 3rd April and produced a number of recommendations which include some from my division. These were ratified at the full Chelmsford LHP meeting 10th April.

Broomfield and Writtle Completed schemes 23/24

- Writtle weight limit signing
- GW Littley Park signage
- LW traffic review
- GW Ford End kerbing

Broomfield and Writtle schemes agreed for funding in 24/25

- LCHE226001 – School Lane, Broomfield – SCP –addition of wig wags.
- LCHE212007 – Chignal Smealey – implementation of gateways and 40mph marking
- LCHE212015 – LW – 20mph past school + wig wags

Member Led Highway Defect Repairs

I stated previously that there will be a new scheme starting April 2024, but this will be expanded and include pavements and other defects. It is being funded by an £8M grant from Central Govt which has to be spread over 75 ECC divisions. Effectively, I get to direct the extra Chelmsford team for 6 weeks over the year. Having been selected as a Cllr to initiate the scheme, I have been collecting defects from my PCs and residents and have submitted the following for the first batch. As this is a new scheme, I do not know if all of these can be done in the first batch! For future batches, I need the location (What3words,) a Highways Track-It ref (they need to have been previously reported on Tell-Us/Track-It) and photo showing the current state of the defect. The scheme includes road potholes, pavement defects, missing signs, overgrown vegetation, etc.

Carriageway Defects

- 1 Writtle – junction of Lodge Road and St John’s Road
- 2 Writtle outside funeral directors, opposite Rose and Crown
- 3 Writtle St Johns Road

- 4 Writtle - Ongar Road (119) between Longmeads Close and Redwood Drive
- 5 Writtle – outside fish and chips shop – drain surround
- 6 Great Waltham Great Waltham Junction Bury Lane/Mashbury Road/Barrack Lane
- 7 Main Road, Broomfield - drain and island
- 8 Highwood The Street
- 9 Roxwell Vicarage Road and The Street
- 10 Howe Street Mill Cottage, which is next door to Mill House
- 11 Little Waltham On Cranham Road Opposite Domsey Lane turning
- 12 Great Waltham road to Brook Mead
- 13 Pleshey Road The entire length of Pleshey Road, from the junction near Dropshots to Waltham Farm,

Pavements

- 1 Broomfield Berwick Avenue in front of drive of 14 Berwick Avenue CM1 4AS
- 2 Great Waltham South Street
- 3 Great Waltham Chelmsford Road – on West side
- 4 Broomfield Erick Avenue, Chelmsford
- 5 Broomfield Erick Avenue, Chelmsford

Wig wags on Ford End 20mph signs

It took a bit of effort and string pulling to get the School flashing signs fixed (I know it shouldn't, but it did!). And then they failed again just before the Easter break! I have managed to get them out again and the report is:

- After restoring the operation of the two flashing signs on 20 March 2024, an engineer has investigated these signs again and found that the sign to south of the school was found to have a faulty battery due to water ingress into the pole. A new battery is on order but unfortunately at this time we cannot confirm when the replacement part will be available.
- The sign that is north of the school (and adjacent to the village sign) has unfortunately developed a secondary communications fault which the engineer is currently investigating.

I will keep pushing!

Traffic related issues:

Your Chairman raised a number of questions with me following your traffic committee. I gave detailed responses, but these are summarised below:

Q - Functional Route Hierarchy Review,

A - The only thing I have seen is a set of slides presented to the Place Scrutiny Board. As a District Cllr, I haven't seen anything. As County Cllr I haven't seen anything except the slides – which were generic and more about objectives.

I requested an update and got the following:

“The classification has been discussed with district officers for the purpose of helping to get the classification refined before it can be formally adopted, hopefully in a few months from now. We are still in the process of engaging with Districts on this so are not yet at the stage where this can be shared. We have asked the District Officers

not to share this any more widely with Councillors, as ideally we will want to await the final version and its adoption and do this more formally at the right time. We really want to await a bit more formal engagement once we are slightly further ahead.”

Q - Playground signage for the GW Recreation Ground entrances

A - We looked at a car park sign on South Street many years ago – on the verge opposite. It was not allowed as signage, including the overhang, has to be 45cm from the edge of the road, which would put it in the ditch. There isn't a problem if you want to put something on your bit (the car park) as long as it is 45cm from the road. Parish Councils have planning permission dispensation for signs on their property which can be seen from the road. Likewise at the Hatchfields entrance.

Q - Reinstatement of signage at Sheepcotes roundabout any further updates?

A - In May 2023 I said “Some of the LHP Sheepscote signs were removed because they did not meet policy. I will not be able to get LHP to re-instate them as it is now clear they are against policy – so it wouldn't get through validation. Anyway, there are still signs at Sheepscote and the other end at the Dunmow turning. And, vehicles tend to follow their sat nav.

Q - Quiet Lane through Ringtail Green through direct funding

A - As said previously, the LHP have archived the scheme. I did ask for an update on validation, which includes a new costing. I didn't get anything in writing, but did get a verbal quote of £13,000, which is outrageous. I have just asked for a written answer, including status on validation. It can't go down the EHC route, unless it has been validated. I can't see any problem with it being validated.

National Grid Norwich to Tilbury

I attended the Writtle APM where Rosie Pearson spoke. Summary as follows: She only spoke for 15 mins - as it was part of the Annual Parish Meeting. There were 80+ people there.

I don't know where Rosie lives, but it is probably a bit of a drive for 30 mins – but would get parishioners there.

She talked about the 3 routes of challenge:

1. The consultation
2. Judicial Review (JR) and legal challenge – to DCO, planning appeal etc
3. Through the MPs

Encouraged responding to consultation. I queried the low response of the previous 2 (0.1% of the population) and she said that NG consultation was flawed as it didn't offer options and was difficult to fill in. Talked about the new consultation still being Norwich to tilbury rather than an offshore total grid. Accepted that off shore N to T, would be more expensive, and seemed to be promoting full HVDC underground as this has narrower channels and is only £1Bn more expensive than pylons (lifetime cost).

Wants the devaluation of house prices and loss of tourism added to the cost of the pylons option!

Challenged the Ofgem concept of cheapest and best for consumer – saying they had verbally told her it was about the best.

Was asked about the politics of the situation and said that the Conservatives were great, Labour were the enemy (her words), Greens were against pylons locally but for them nationally, Lib-Dems were supportive of her cause. Recognition that the 3rd route of challenge will likely disappear at the next election (with a Labour Govt), and that only the JR legal route left.

She said they have a petition of 28,000 people. I queried that – but she confirmed. Given there are 4M people in the 3 counties, and 50,000 living within 1km of the route, 28,000 looks a poor response!

I also attended the EELGA round table forum on 18th April 2024, which included around 20 County and District Cllrs along the route. EELGA will be responding to the consultation.

A have also submitted a consultation reminder for the May Parish News.

Casualty Reduction Initiatives:

The ECC Highways Casualty Reduction Team react to reports of serious injuries and fatalities on the roads.

In my division, there have been 2 investigations:

- A131 Braintree Rd Rabout - Gt Leighs / Goodmans Ln
- B1008 Braintree Rd / The Street - Little Waltham

B1008 Blasford Hill/The Street, Little Waltham

Intervention works:

Vegetation clearance to restore visibility splays at junction.

Review and enhance existing 'Junction ahead' warning signs on B1008.

Review and refresh/enhance road markings on B1008.

Principle:

There have been 3 injury collisions recorded at this junction in the review period; each collision involved a car turning right out from The Street across the path of a Chelmsford-bound vehicle. These three collisions resulted in 1x serious injury and 4x slight injury casualties.

Visibility for road users turning right from the side road is somewhat impeded by vegetation/encroachment

I also raised the issue of turning right towards Great Waltham when the vegetation isn't cut back and received a commitment to get involved if I had any issues with keeping the grass to a reasonable height so vehicles can see the oncoming traffic.

A131 Deres Bridge roundabout, Great Leighs

Intervention works:

Review and refresh/enhance existing road markings on northbound approach/transit and around the roundabout circulatory, including lane arrows (ahead) on both exit lanes to A131 northbound.

Review lane destination signs on northbound approach to roundabout.

Principle:

There have been 3x serious injury collisions in the review period, all involving motorcyclists travelling north across the roundabout to the A131 dual carriageway. Two of these incidents involved 'side swipe' or poor lane discipline/lane-change conflict with other vehicles negotiating the roundabout.

Police Presence

I have been in contact with Chelmsford Chief Inspector in relation to the recent spat of ASB and burglaries. As a result, the community police have been patrolling the village during the day. I also requested some night time attendance.

£100,000 announced for community safety projects in Essex

Essex County Council has announced £100,000 funding to improve public safety across the county.

From 10am on 25 March local groups will be able to apply for a grant from the council's new Community Safety Initiatives Fund. The fund aims to improve the safety of residents and address violence and vulnerability.

Grants will be awarded to local groups for projects or initiatives within their own communities. The benefit of allocating the fund this way is that these groups have the community links and local knowledge. This means the funding will be used in the best way to benefit communities. Grants from £500 up to £2,000 will be available.

The fund will be open to:

- voluntary and community organisations
- registered charities
- charitable incorporated organisations (CIO)
- not-for-profit companies limited by guarantee
- community interest companies (CIC)
- town, parish, or community councils

Groups will need to demonstrate that their projects will improve or promote public safety in their local community. The full criteria is available on application but projects will be considered that:

- prevent crime or reduce anti-social behaviour. For example, improving home or personal safety or tackling crime in rural areas
- physically improve anti-social behaviour hotspots
- help improve safety in the night-time economy
- prevent people becoming involved with criminal behaviour or anti-social behaviour
- support local communities and encourage volunteering
- support community events for over 250 people

City Council issues

The Local Plan refresh – ref item 24/1823

As stated in my last report - Growth Area 2 – North Chelmsford – includes the addition of 2 sites of 20 dwellings each in Ford End – 1 near Back Lane, 1 south of the school. The latter is one that we were aware of via the developer Dandara, but the Back Lane one comes as a surprise. It seems that the Back Lane one was **not** suggested by Dandara, and it is suspected not by the landowner, but is some sort of legacy previous consideration put in by City Council.

I have had a short discussion with Spatial Planning, stating that Dandara were originally looking for a larger single site south of the school.

I also discussed the desire for any S106/CIL to be used for traffic calming and Average Speed Cameras (ASC). I recognise that it will need a reasonable number of dwellings to generate the required S106. It was suggested that if residents and/or PC make it part of their comments, then the requirement for an ASC could be included in the Local Plan, Master Plan and therefore future planning application. I believe that it would need the PC to be in support of the site in order to get such a provision.

The selection of Ford End as a potential growth area comes on the basis that the area is sustainable – school, pre-school, Church, VH, a good bus service, etc

Ford End Village Green – ref item 24/1821

The outstanding question to ECC Highways was whether the fence/hedge complied with policy. If the PC are considering leaving it in place, they need to read the following response I have just received :

Cllr Steel has checked and they are able to erect a fence on common land if “recreation is enhanced” but he is wanting to check if it contravenes any ECC policy etc.

I can't think another that would apply here, the planting and the fence are entirely on land that is private.

It will only be overhanging the highway when the planting extends to the carriageway edge.

The fence appears to be over 1m high, so may need planning, but that's for CCC to advise on, they may then approach Highways for a view and a decision can be taken re visibility splays (it's a 30mph, so a vis splay won't be too bad)

I can't quite see where the hedging has been placed – in front of the fencing? From a common sense approach I would say this is likely to cause visibility problems for people turning out of Church Lane in the future, so if the PC wanted to keep the fencing / hedging then it would probably make sense to set them back round this junction. But in terms of policy / requirements there aren't any that I can think of. And if the fence were under 1m they wouldn't require planning and so we would never be consulted in any case.

There is a piece of legislation that is quite draconian, that ultimately could be considered by Highways as the planting matured and presented an issue – Section 79 Highways Act 1980, but I could only see that this would be able to be served once the hedge was established – not prior to that danger presenting itself? ECC has not served one of these notices that I know of before, so I will check with ELS.

But presumably it may well be the PC complaining about the veg, and we would then approach them to cut it back.....

In the meantime, I can visit site to look what impact the fence and hedge have on visibility when pulling out of the junction.

Section 79

Prevention of obstruction to view at corners.

(1) Where, in the case of a highway maintainable at the public expense, the highway authority for the highway deem it necessary for the prevention of danger arising from obstruction to the view of persons using the highway to impose restrictions with respect to any land at or near any corner or bend in the highway or any junction of the highway with a road to which the public has access, the authority may, subject to the provisions of this section, serve a notice, together with a plan showing the land to which the notice relates,--

(a) on the owner or occupier of the land, directing him to alter any wall (other than a wall forming part of the structure of a permanent edifice), fence, hoarding, paling, tree, shrub or other vegetation on the land so as to cause it to conform with any requirements specified in the notice; or

(b) on every owner, lessee and occupier of the land, restraining them either absolutely or subject to such conditions as may be specified in the notice from causing or permitting any building, wall, fence, hoarding, paling, tree, shrub or other vegetation to be erected or planted on the land.

(2) A notice under subsection (1) above may at any time be withdrawn by the authority by whom it was given.

(3) A notice restraining the erection of any building on land shall not be served by a highway authority except with the consent of the council of the [non-metropolitan] district in which the land is situated or if the land is situated in a London borough or the City and the highway authority concerned is . . . the Minister, with the consent of the council of that London borough or the Common Council, as the case may require.

[(3A) In relation to any land in Wales--

(a) subsection (3) above does not apply; but

(b) if the Minister is the highway authority, he shall not serve a notice restraining the erection of any building on the land except with the consent of the Welsh council in whose area the land is situated.]

(4) A copy of a notice under subsection (1)(a) above shall be served on the owner or on the occupier of any land according as the notice was served on the occupier or on the owner of it.

(5) A notice under subsection (1)(b) above does not prevent any owner, lessee or occupier of any land from executing or permitting the reconstruction or repair, in such manner as not to create any new obstruction to the view of persons using the adjacent highways, of any building which was on the land before the service of the notice.

(6) A restriction imposed by a notice under subsection (1) above comes into force on the service of the notice and, while in force, is binding on the successor in title to every owner, and on every lessee and every occupier, of the land to which it relates.

(7) A person on whom a notice has been served under subsection (1) above may, within 14 days from the date of the receipt of the notice by him, give notice to the authority

by whom the notice was given objecting to any requirement specified in it, or to any restriction imposed by it, and stating reasons for his objections.

(8) Where notice is given under subsection (7) above the question whether the notice under subsection (1) above is to be withdrawn as respects any requirement or restriction objected to shall be determined, if the parties so agree, by a single arbitrator appointed by them and, in default of agreement, shall be determined by [the county court], and in determining a question under this subsection the arbitrator or court shall have power to order that the requirement or restriction objected to shall have effect subject to such modifications, if any, as the arbitrator or court may direct.

(9) A person on whom a notice is served under subsection (1) above may, notwithstanding anything in any conveyance, or in any lease or other agreement, do all such things as may be necessary for complying with the requirements of the notice.

(10) Subject to the provisions of this section, if a person on whom a notice is served under subsection (1) above contravenes the provisions of the notice, he is, without prejudice to any other proceedings which may be available against him, guilty of an offence and liable to a fine not exceeding [level 1 on the standard scale]; and if the offence is continued after conviction, he is guilty of a further offence and liable to a fine not exceeding £2 for each day on which the offence is so continued.

(11) Any person sustaining loss in direct consequence of any requirement of a notice served under subsection (1) above, and any person who proves that his property is injuriously affected by restrictions imposed by a notice served under that subsection, is entitled, if he makes a claim within 6 months from the date of service of the notice, to recover from the authority by whom the notice was served compensation for the injury sustained.

(12) A person on whom a notice is served under subsection (1) above is entitled to recover from the authority by whom the notice was served any expenses reasonably incurred by him in carrying out any directions contained in the notice.

(13) If any question arises under subsection (12) above whether any expenses were reasonably incurred by any person as there provided, it shall be determined, if the parties so agree, by a single arbitrator appointed by them and, in default of agreement, shall be determined by [the county court].

(14) Any two or more authorities on whom powers are conferred by this section may by agreement exercise those powers jointly, and the agreement may provide for the apportionment of any expenses incurred under it.

(15) Nothing in this section--

(a) authorises the service by a local highway authority of a notice under this section with respect to any wall forming part of an ancient monument or other object of archaeological interest, except with the consent of the Secretary of State; or

(b) applies with respect to a wall belonging to any of the following undertakers, that is to say, railway undertakers, canal undertakers, inland navigation undertakers, dock undertakers, or harbour undertakers, where the wall forms part of or is necessary for the maintenance of a railway comprised in the railway undertaking, a canal comprised in the canal undertaking, a navigation comprised in the inland navigation undertaking, a dock comprised in the dock undertaking, or a harbour comprised in the harbour undertaking.

(16) In relation to any prohibition or restriction on the use of land or buildings imposed by the Minister by a notice served by him under this section, section 1(1)(c) of the Local

Land Charges Act 1975 has effect as if the references to the date of the commencement of that Act were omitted.

(17) In this section--

"building" includes any erection however, and with whatever material, it is constructed, and any part of a building;

"wall" includes any partition, with whatever material it is constructed, and any bank.