

Girton Parish Council

LHI application

Joint application with Oakington & Westwick Parish Council – January 2023

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Introduction

This paper covers the rationale for a proposed joint application between Girton Parish Council (GPC) and Oakington & Westwick Parish Council (OWPC) to Cambridge County Council's (CCC) Local Highways Initiative (LHI) scheme for the round of funding that closes on the 6th of January 2023.

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/improving-the-local-highway/local-highway-improvement-funding>

The application is one to improve safety on the road linking Girton to Oakington, which is partly in one parish, partly in the other. This road is named Oakington Rd in Girton, changing name to Cambridge Rd in Oakington.

Whilst the application itself is a joint proposal, led by OWPC, this paper specifically focusses on the case for its support by GPC in the interests of those who live and work in Girton.

The proposal

The proposed method for improving road safety along Oakington Rd/Cambridge Rd is one of speed reduction for motor vehicles. It is proposed that for the entire stretch of this road currently with a speed limit of 40mph, the limit be reduced to 30mph.

It is likely that the introduction of a 30mph limit will be widely ignored without appropriate speed reduction measures. Therefore, the change in speed limit will be indicated by roundel signs on the roadside, painted roundel markings on the road, and effectuated by a series of speed cushions/road tables approximately every 100m.

Detailed plans are not made at this part of the process, and would not be drawn up until such point that an application to the LHI scheme has been successful. Should this be the case, CCC Highways will develop a more detailed proposal which must be approved by all relevant authorities, including the Parish Councils.

As this proposal is for a scheme spanning two parishes, it requires support from, and cooperation between, both parish councils.

The approximate span of road is highlighted below in red, with parish boundaries (for Girton, Oakington & Westwick, and Histon & Impington) shown in green.



Background

Oakington Rd/Cambridge Rd is the only road linking Oakington to Girton, and the most direct road link from either village to Histon & Impington. This road is used by a significant number of children of both villages who attend secondary school at Impington Village College. The road viewed by many residents as a dangerous one, with parents of IVC students particularly concerned.

A shared cycle and footway is in place along the entirety of one side of this stretch of road. While this was widened for an approximately 500m stretch in 2021, for the majority of the distance it is not wide enough for two bicycles, mobility scooters, large buggies, etc. which often results in non-motorised users having to temporarily use the main carriageway. This adds to a general feeling that the path is insufficiently safe.

The nature of the road, which links the two villages seems deceptively safe and encourages drivers to speed. The road is relatively straight, with reasonable visibility, and it has been posited that this encourages speeding. It is also observed that the change from 20mph to 30mph to 40mph on the blind bend south of Beck Brook bridge encourages excessive acceleration in the stretch leading to the 40mph zone with insufficient visibility. A similar situation occurs in Oakington where the speed limit changes from 20mph to 40mph.

There is good evidence to show that accidents and their severity are directly related to traffic speed. In the Department for Transport's (DfT) 2010 report "Tomorrow's roads: safer for everyone" states that "speed is a major contributory factor in about one-third of all road accidents." This includes driving within the set speed limit. It goes on to note that "If a pedestrian is hit by a moving car, the likelihood of being killed rises dramatically with a small increase in impact speed. We have also found that the risk of collisions increases significantly when some drivers go much faster than the majority of others on the same road" and that on rural roads in particular "the largest group [of speed casualties] overall is car passengers and drivers themselves".

The DfT report "National statistics Vehicle speed compliance statistics for Great Britain: 2021", stated that exceeding the speed limit was reported as a contributory factor for 6.9% of accidents in 2020, and 9.3% of fatal and serious accidents. A DfT report of 2010 (Road Safety Web Publication No. 16 Relationship between Speed and Risk of Fatal Injury: Pedestrians and Car Occupants) indicates the increase in risk of fatality to a pedestrian in accident increases by between 3.5 and 5.5 times from 30 mph to 40 mph.

Speeding traffic increases the concerns of cyclists and pedestrians, limiting their use of such roads. Our overall aim is to decrease traffic speed and thereby lower the possibility of accidents. The introduction of a 30mph limit between the villages will effectively complete the speed limiting measures introduced by Highways. Failure to introduce the 30mph limit on this road will undermine the recent excellent work by the County Council.

Prior measures

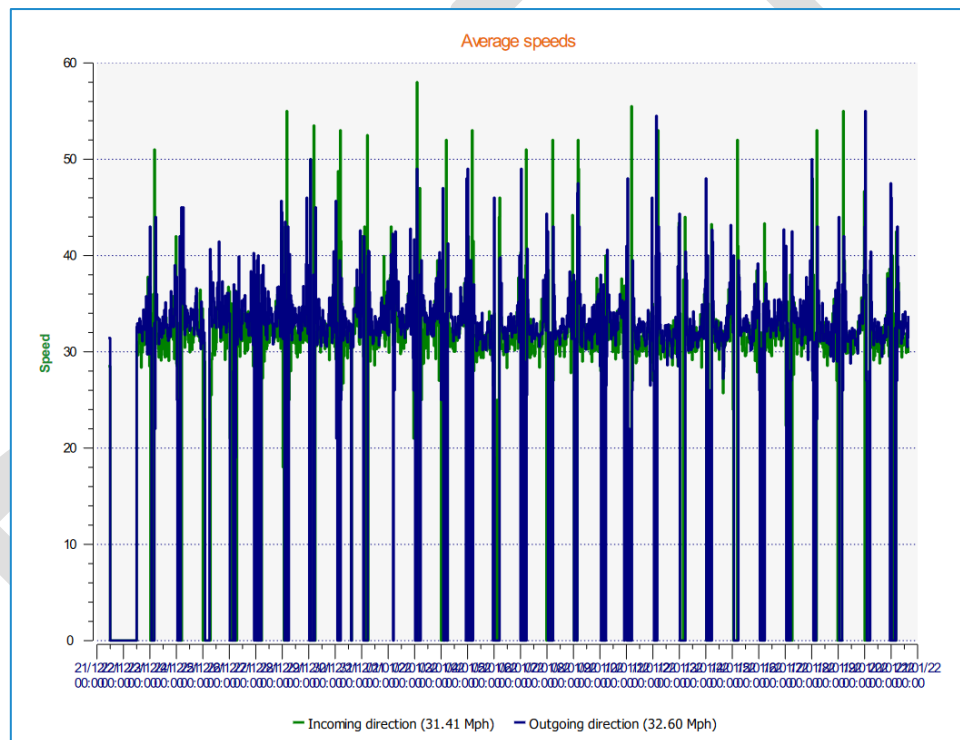
Prior to this application, OWPC made a successful LHI bid to reduce the speed limit at the northern end of this road (from Oakington Crossroads) to 20mph, and GPC made a similarly successful bid to reduce the speed limit on High Street, Cambridge Rd, and Girton Rd (a continuation of Oakington Rd) to 20mph all the way to the A14 bridge. This leaves a short stretch of 30mph by Manor Farm Road, before being 40mph from Beck Brook bridge to the 20mph zone in Oakington.

In 2019, speed restrictions on Oakington Rd were identified by GPC as high priority in a list of potential road safety projects. At that point the intention was to introduce a “countdown” along the 40mph stretch ahead of the speed limit change to 30mph at the Beck Brook bridge. At this time, the whole rest of the main road through the village (High Street-Cambridge Road-Girton Road) to Girton Corner had a 30mph speed limit. Extension of the 30mph zone in Girton was considered as an LHI application for 2021, but a different scheme was favoured at this time. Also identified in this list was the introduction of street lighting along Oakington Rd; this was implemented in 2021.

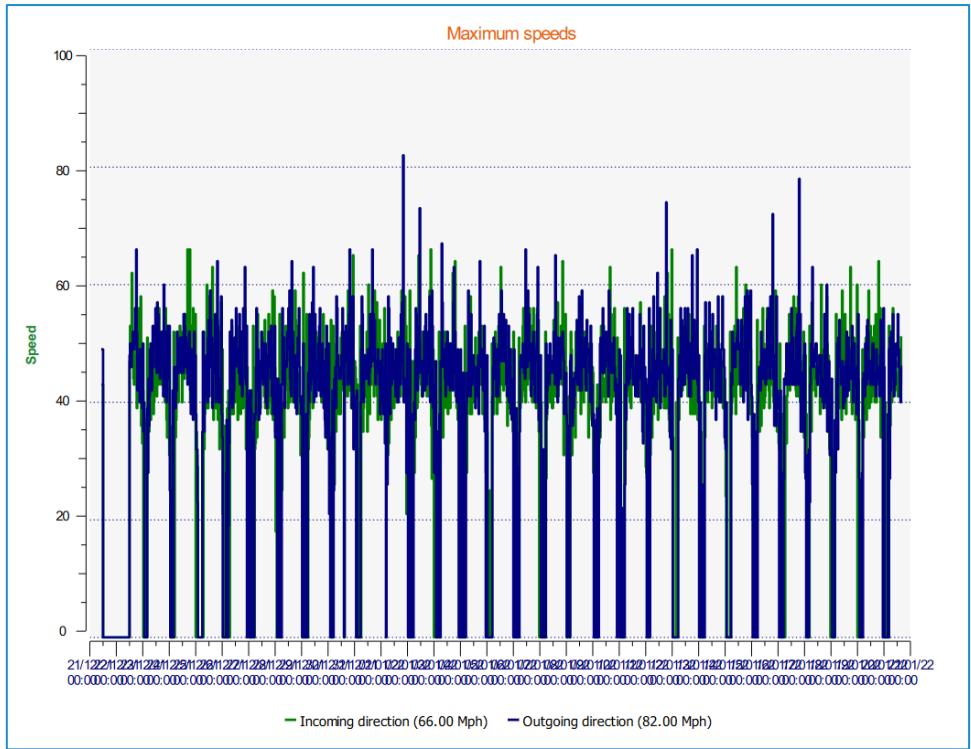
As noted above, the cycle path south of Gatehouse Rd has been widened to ca. 3m, with a series of flex posts at its edge installed in December 2022.

Speed

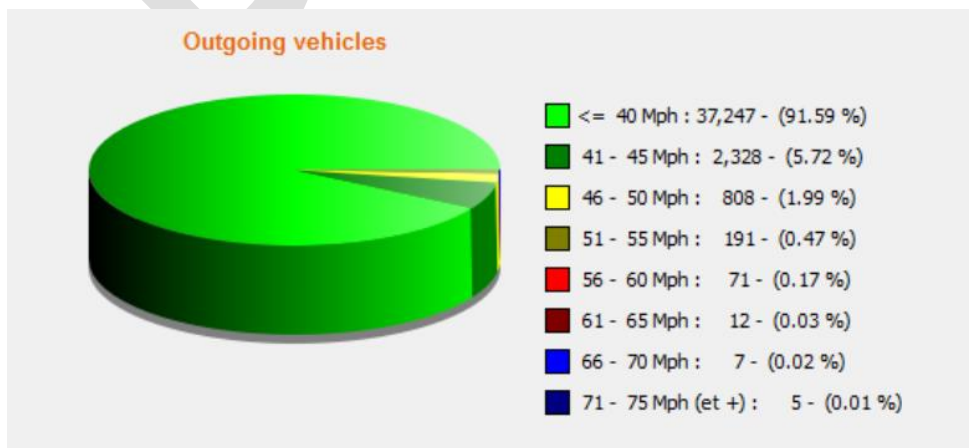
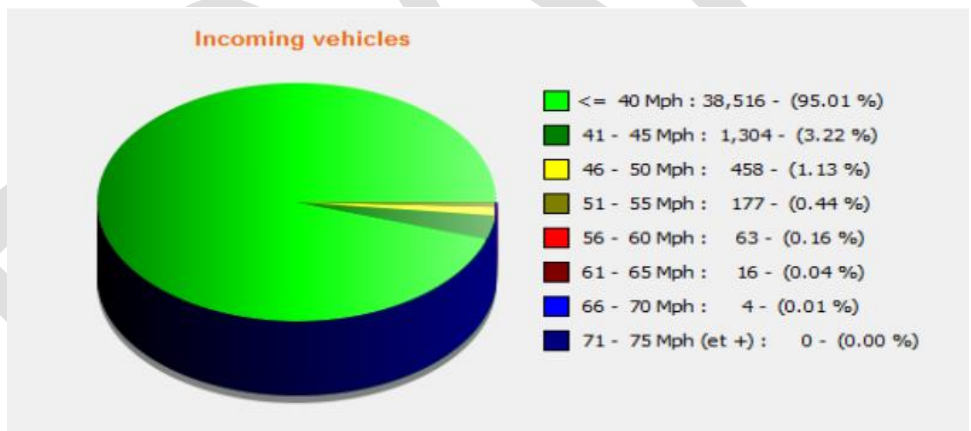
Speed measurements were taken on Oakington Rd over the course of approximately one month from 21st December 2021 to 20th January 2022. These measurements show that whilst the majority of traffic was in obedience of the 40mph speed limit, on most days the average speed was exceeded in both directions.



Maximum speeds on this road regularly exceeded 50mph, and on over half the days surveyed exceeded 60 mph.



Approximately 40,000 vehicles were registered in each direction in this period. Just under 5% of vehicles were speeding in the inbound direction, and just over 8.4% of vehicles were speeding in the outbound direction.



Accidents and safety

According to CCC's latest map, 3 accidents have been recorded on this stretch of road. However the slight bend to the South of Gatehouse Rd has seen a number of drivers coming off the road, but these are rarely recorded as accidents, as the vehicles are towed back on the road by commercial rescue companies. A fatal accident involving a child on a bicycle occurred in this stretch of road in September 2022. It is not yet known exactly the cause of the accident, but the location is at our main area of concern.

Anecdotally, a number of near-misses are noted on this stretch of road. This has been particularly highlighted by the village's equestrian community who note that they need to ride on this stretch of road to travel by horse between stables and bridleways.

It is also noted that at busy periods this road can feel unsafe to cross in order to access houses and businesses which are mostly on the opposite side of the road to the continuous foot/cycleway and no crossings exist.

Alternative measures

A number of other options are possible to make this stretch of road safer.

An alternative speed reduction method is to introduce narrowings. These can either be road narrowings, where build-ups are introduced to both sides of the road to reduce the effective carriageway width, or priority narrowings, where a larger build-up is introduced on one side and a traffic priority put in place so that traffic can only flow in one direction at a time.

A priority narrowing was previously proposed at Beck Brook bridge. GPC was divided on this, and the public consultation suggested that there was more opposition than support for such a scheme. Whilst this may be an effective method for lowering speed, concern was raised that queueing traffic idling would be disruptive and add to pollution for residents of Oakington Rd.

Speed humps are an effective alternative to speed cushions and tables. These would impact the speed of all vehicles, whereas speed cushions can be straddled by vehicles with wide wheelbases. As this road forms part of the Citi bus network linking Cambridge with the "necklace villages" it is unlikely that CCC Highways would approve such a scheme due to the impact on bus passengers.

Mobile Vehicle Activated Signs are electronic signs with attached sensors that illuminate when the speed limit is exceeded. These are far cheaper than speed bumps but their effectiveness is known to be limited. A similar system was used to record speeds reported in this paper, with the sign displaying the vehicle speed. As shown, this did not prevent speeding occurring, indicating that physical measures are necessary to ensure limits are adhered to. However, their deployment in conjunction with physical measures could be beneficial.

The lack of crossings for this road is noted. It is proposed that lowering the speed limit will make road crossings safer, but installation of such measures in the future should be considered.

As it is the site of two recorded accidents in the last 4 years, the junction between Oakington Rd and Gatehouse Rd could be a location for either a mini-roundabout or traffic lights to further control the junction and possibly reduce speed on this road. This was not considered at this time.

In addition, this road may benefit from the addition of cats eyes along the centre of the carriageway, but this does not appear to fall under the type of measure that the LHI scheme is intended for. Residents have also suggested the installation of speed cameras, but again this does not fall under this scheme.

Alternative LHI schemes

GPC's Environment Committee has been putting together a list of possible Highways improvements, building on a previous list of possible actions drawn up (and partly enacted) in 2019.

For the last round of LHI funding, GPC had put forward a proposal for adding double yellow lines (DYL) at a number of junctions in the parish. This application was to implement DYL at the following junctions:

- Thornton Rd & Huntingdon Rd
- Thornton Rd & Girton Rd
- St Margaret's Rd & Girton Rd
- Weavers Field & Girton Rd

This application was not successful, though only just fell short on the scoring system used by CCC Highways. A similar application was considered for this round of LHI, but it was suggested that this should form the basis of the next LHI application, due later in 2023.

The 20mph zone encompassing most of Girton to the north of the A14 bridge has generally been well-received, it is widely felt that this zone should be extended to cover the remainder of the main road through to Huntingdon Rd, as well as the side streets coming off it (Wellbrook Way, The Thorntons, etc.). CCC now has a separate scheme for 20mph zones, and they are not eligible for LHI applications. We are told that the next 20mph zone application window will be later in 2023, and it is GPC's intention to put an application together for that once all details, criteria, etc. are known.

The lack of pedestrian crossing at the southern end of Girton Rd, at Girton Corner, is a known problem. We have been informed by Cllr Murphy that a project to improve safety at this junction, including the addition of such a crossing, is one that CCC Highways are already working on.

A related issue is crossings for Huntingdon Rd, particularly as a significant number of children in the Thorntons area of the village attend the University of Cambridge Primary School in Eddington, travel to which involves crossing Huntingdon Rd. Whilst there is a pelican crossing opposite the end of Whitehouse Lane, this is a deviation from the desire line from Thornton Rd to the school. There is a widely-held feeling that the island crossing at the end of Thornton Rd is not sufficiently safe for primary school aged children. The proximity to the petrol station, bus stops and junction means that locating such a crossing has significant complexity and requires further assistance from, and consultation with, CCC Highways before an application with likelihood of success can be made.

It is noted that residents have expressed concerns about safety on the connected Gatehouse Rd. This road is partly in Oakington & Westwick and partly in Histon & Impington, so GPC have no remit here.

Cambridgeshire County Council

Support from CCC

Any LHI application must have the approval of the local representative (County Councillor) in order to be successful. This application is split between the Bar Hill and Longstanton, Northstowe & Over wards. It is supported by both Cllr Edna Murphy (Bar Hill) and Cllr Firouz Thompson (Longstanton, Northstowe & Over).

Approval of the application will fall under the responsibility of CCC Highways. OWPC have discussed the proposal and report that Highways support this proposal, which indicates that it would most likely be approved as an LHI scheme. Highways have also indicated that CCC are particularly keen to support cross-community projects such as this.

Alignment with corporate priorities

CCC's Local Highway Improvement Member Working Group Report of 04 October 2022 indicated the council's priorities that LHI schemes should align with:

- **Environment and Sustainability**
LHI schemes improve connectivity and safety on the network and introduce green features where possible, using recycled products such as rubberized traffic calming products.
- **Health and Care**
Many of the schemes that are brought forward have outcomes that improve road safety, particularly for vulnerable users, for example the young, elderly, or particular user types, such as pedestrians and cyclists.
- **Places and Communities**
Investing in local communities, particularly the issues that are often of greatest local concern, promotes community development and provides benefits to residents, at a localised level.
- **Children and Young People**
Investing in local communities, particularly the issues that are often of greatest local concern, promotes community development and provides benefits to residents, (of all demographics), at a localised level.
- **Transport**
Investing more in road, footway and cycleway maintenance enables safer and sustainable travel around the county, benefiting and assisting local communities with developing their highway infrastructure.

It is suggested that the proposed scheme aligns with all of these priorities.

Costs

The indicative cost, given by CCC Highways, is approximately £90,000. Under the current LHI scheme this is considered a complex scheme and, as such, CCC Highways will contribute

£25,000 per parish i.e., £50,000 in total. The remaining £40,000 will be funded by GPC and O&WPC, splitting the cost 50:50 i.e., £20,000 per parish.

This cost includes materials, planning, installation, and associated highways management. If successful, GPC's contribution to this scheme would be £20,000

Section 106 funds

As part of the Section 106 agreement for the construction of Phase 1 of the Northstowe development, a fund of £45,125 has been made available to GPC.

A stipulation of this fund is that it may only be spent on traffic calming measures. Whilst at this point these funds are not formally being committed to this scheme, it is the intention that these monies will be used here.

If these monies are used for this scheme, it will have no financial impact on the normal GPC budget. There would also still be approximately £25,000 left to fund further traffic calming measures.

Other indicative costs

For comparative purposes, and to assess value for money, some indicative costs for highways works are provided here. The values are those provided by CCC Highways website: <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/improving-the-local-highway>

Speed reduction measures on road

- Speed cushions = £29k
 - Cost for 4 pairs
 - Includes installation with 2-way traffic lights
- Speed humps = £23k
 - Cost for pair of humps
 - Includes installation with road closure
- Speed table = £35k
 - Cost for single 6m x 7.3m table
 - Includes installation with road closure

Alternative speed reduction measures

- Road narrowing = £14k
 - Cost for one pair of narrowings
 - Includes installation with 2-way traffic lights
- Priority narrowing = £25k
 - Cost for 2 chicanes
 - Includes installation with 2-way traffic lights

Other LHI activities

- Double Yellow Lines = £3.7k
 - Cost for 1 junction
 - Includes installation with 3-way traffic lights
- Bollards = £1.7k

- Cost for 1 bollard
- Includes installation with basic traffic management
- Cycleway (next to road) = £55k
 - Cost for 20m of cycleway
 - Includes installation with 2-way traffic lights

Public consultation

In November 2021 a community consultation was put forward by Girton Parish Council on widening the cycle path on Beck Brook bridge in Girton, creating a single lane “pinch point” on the main carriageway. This consultation received 43 items of feedback, 39 from Girton residents. 12 were in favour of the scheme, 20 against, and 11 unsure. Consequent to the consultation this scheme was not approved by GPC and hence not implemented. Across a number of responses both for and against the scheme there was a desire for a reduction in traffic speed along Oakington Rd, including specific requests from Oakington Road residents.

In December 2022 a joint community consultation was put forward, this time by both Girton and Oakington & Westwick Parish Councils, on the scheme in this proposal. This consultation received 148 items of feedback, with 97 from Girton residents. Overall, (109) were in favour of the scheme and 39 against (74% in favour). A star rating was part of the survey, and a mean value of 3.66/5 was reported.

In addition there were 20 responses to the Girton Community website, 19 comments on the Community Facebook page, and 6 emails sent to the Clerk.

In the comments section of the survey, and from other comments and emails, those in favour of the proposal were fairly broadly aligned on common themes of what they envisaged the positive outcomes to be:

- Improved driver safety
- Improved cyclist safety
- Improved pedestrian safety
- Improved horse rider safety
- Traffic speed will be lowered
- More time to see and react to hazards
- Emission reduction
- Noise reduction
- Removing confusion from multiple speed limits on this road

Those against the scheme (and also some in favour) stated a number of objections and shortcomings of the scheme as proposed. Whilst the positive opinions were fairly broadly aligned, the negative ones spanned a number of points, with only a few areas where several individuals concurred. Negative opinions expressed were as follows:

- Current speed limit is suitable or could/should be higher
- Not a dangerous road – little traffic and few houses
- Insufficient detail provided
- Insufficient evidence provided – should wait for outcome of investigation into recent fatality
- Speed limit alone not sufficient – requires calming measures
- Reduction in speed limit causes frustration and leads to speeding

- Increased travel time
- Added inconvenience
- Would cause congestion
- Demonisation of drivers
- Waste of money
- Existing speed limits are not policed
- Speed bumps don't affect wide wheelbase vehicles
- Other roads and surface treatment should be prioritised ahead of this

We note and accept the concerns about lack of detail provided. This is typical for this stage of the LHI process and it is intended that when further plans are drawn up they are subjected to public scrutiny. The comments on evidence are reasonable based on the information provided ahead of the consultation. It is hoped that the evidence presented earlier in this paper shows that excessive speeds are unsafe and that they are regularly reached on this stretch. There is evidence of recorded accidents on this road, including a recent fatality, and much anecdotal evidence included in response to this consultation.

We disagree with the points regarding this usage of money and that the road is appropriate in its current state, and the consultation suggests that the majority of residents who wished to respond disagree too.

The point raised about the requirement of calming measures has, it is hoped, been addressed in this proposal.

It is conceded that the duration and timing of the consultation period for Girton was not as long as would be desired, resulting in its publicity being restricted to online and noticeboards only. Typically GPC would wish to include an invitation to contribute via Girton Parish News, a printed publication delivered to all households in the parish. Despite this, participation was higher than that seen for the previous consultation. Since October 2021, GPC has put a focus on increasing the ability of individuals and groups to have the ability to feed their views directly the Council. GPC has prioritised the placement of information on their Community website, Girton Village Community Facebook Page, and Twitter. The Facebook page has grown by over 900 people in the last 14 months, since GPC joined. Over the last four months an average of over 97 people have joined the site per month.

Further improvements

As part of the consultation, residents were asked to suggest other improvements to this stretch of road. A range were suggested, categorised as:

- Formation of a community Speed Watch group
- Speed monitoring system
- Speed camera(s)
- Widening of cycle path at Beck Brook Bridge
- Widening of cycle path North of Gatehouse Rd
- Widening of cycle path by Manor Farm Road
- Cycle path on both sides of road
- Additional flex posts on cycle path
- Removal of flex posts on cycle path
- Make easier for cyclists to cross main carriageway to join cycle path
- Dropped kerbs on cycle path e.g. opposite Camboro Business Park
- Keep hedgerow on cycle paths trimmed back
- Forcing cycles to use cycle path

- Remove ground level lighting from some of cycle path
- Allow horse riders to use cycle path
- Pedestrian crossing at Oakington end of Girton
- Make junction with Gatehouse Rd junction easier to cross for pedestrians and cyclists
- Prevent pavement parking
- Prevent on-road parking
- Improved lighting
- Widen the road
- Narrow the road
- Address steep road camber
- Pothole repair
- Address drainage issues

These are noted and will be considered for future activities. Some suggestions were made for other roads in the parish. These are also recorded, but are not noted here. As noted earlier, a number of comments suggested safety measures for Gatehouse Rd, mostly reducing the speed limit, but none of this road is within Girton Parish.

Follow up

Should the scheme be implemented, traffic speed measurements should be recorded periodically to assess its success. It would also be prudent to gauge public perception of the safety of the road around 12 months afterwards. The setting up of a road safety group to focus on future requirements should be considered and/or a community speed watch group.

Summary

This stretch of road is considered dangerous by many residents and has been the site of a number of near misses and accidents, including a recent fatality. It is suggested that both speed and acceleration are key danger factors. The existing speed limit of 40mph is regularly exceeded.

Reducing the speed limit to 30mph is likely to be the most effective make this stretch of road less dangerous, but only if accompanied by measures to compel drivers to adhere to the limit. Speed cushions are the only method that is likely to be acceptable to both Highways and local residents.

Whilst the scheme is expensive, its larger scale and splitting between parishes makes it better value for money than some other schemes. It is possible to fund Girton's portion entirely from S106 monies available from Phase 1 of the Northstowe development.

The scheme is supported by the County Councillor, the Highways department, and a clear majority of residents who responded to public consultation.