

Pedestrian Safety on West Street Narrows, Millbrook

Mini report created by residents of West Street

Introduction

This report looks at the issues local residents have with and have experienced, with regards to pedestrian safety on West Street, Millbrook. Overall, the local residents feel that using the virtual pavement in a shared capacity with motor vehicles is currently dangerous, and that this danger is increasing due to a rising level of road traffic to the area (Department for Transport annual traffic data for Cornwall excluding the Isles of Scilly <https://roadtraffic.dft.gov.uk/local-authorities/139> last accessed 07/09/2020). It is felt that there are a number of factors that affect driver awareness of the shared surface street, resulting in an increased frequency of incidents, with an increasing level of severity. The local residents of West Street now believe that it is only a matter of time before the first pedestrian fatality will occur in the area. This mini report sets out common experiences, observations of issues with the set-up of the virtual pavement within the shared surface area and key improvements that we, as residents, would like to be implemented to increase pedestrian safety.

Background

In the past 18 months, 14 number of incidents have occurred in the West Street narrows where vehicles passing through have made physical contact with residents (that we have been made aware of). To date, only 1 of these incidents have resulted in a prosecution. The low ratio of incidents to successful prosecution has resulted in a decrease in trust with residents regarding pedestrian safety within the West Street narrows due to the low level of prosecution. This increases the likelihood of incidents not being reported to the police, which is becoming the 'New Normal' for the residents of West Street.

It is felt that when there are high volumes of traffic, drivers have an increased likelihood of seizing the moment when trying to pass through the West Street narrows with a decreased sense of traffic safety, putting any pedestrian within the virtual pavement at an unnecessarily increased risk of injury. It is also felt that when traffic volumes are low, drivers will see that the road ahead is clear and then proceed to accelerate through the narrows and up West Street to Hounster Hill to get through this potentially problematic area. Often this is at speeds that are greater than the speed limit of 20mph. This too, puts any pedestrian within the area at an increased risk of injury. When it has been perceived that a vehicle is travelling too fast through the West Street narrows, residents have detailed that when they politely communicate with the driver of said vehicles to reduce their speed, it is most likely to result in verbal abuse and/ or threatening behaviour from the drivers.

During this tourist season (Summer 2020), particularly high volumes of vehicular traffic have been observed using the road network through the village. This, coupled with vehicles that are perceived as being too large for the village travelling through, have resulted in frequent traffic issues. Where the roads are blocked in both directions and are perceived to be gridlocked up Hounster Hill, past the village entrance and in the opposite direction, past the junction to Millpool Head. These issues tend to find resolution when either a driver caught up in the issue, or a local resident, attempt intervention and direct traffic. On many occasions this has resulted in the person attempting to direct traffic being verbally abused by multiple drivers. On one particular incident, a driver drove the vehicle directly at a resident, in a threatening manner. No contact was made, but the resident was visibly shaken by the incident and has detailed that they will not get involved in traffic management again.

Observed Issues with Suggested Solutions

The residents of West Street have observed issues that are detailed below with suggested solutions.

Virtual Pavement

While the installation of a virtual pavement through the narrows is very welcome, it is felt that when the street was re-surfaced, the re-installation of the virtual pavement was completed in a dissatisfactory manner. It was observed that when the virtual pavement was installed it had a positive impact initially. Drivers seemed to take extra care when entering the shared surface zone, until the installation of the double yellow lines directly over the virtual pavement occurred five days later. The residents of West Street believe that once these yellow lines were installed it had an instant effect on driver perception, where drivers seem to ignore the virtual pavement and drive to the consideration of the double yellow lines. Fig.1 below is a photo of the West Street narrows taken from the Rame Peninsula Traffic Management Feasibility

Study in 2014. This photo was taken before the re-surfacing works and shows that the double yellow lines were installed outside of the virtual pavement.



Fig.1 – Page 35 - Rame Peninsula Traffic Management Feasibility Study (EDG205/F1)

Fig.2 below, was taken on Monday 7th September 2020. The photo shows the double yellow lines installed within the virtual pavement. The residents of West Street would like to see the removal of the double yellow from the virtual pavement and to have them re-installed outside of the virtual pavement, as per pre re-surfacing works.



Fig.2 – West Street narrows with double yellow lines installed on the virtual pavement.

Other virtual pavements on the Rame Peninsula have a white painted stick person with a smaller stick person next to them, indicating parent and child. These can be observed at the beginning and end of other virtual pavements in the area. These were a feature of the virtual pavements on the West Street narrows, but after the resurfacing works, they appear to have been omitted from the re-installation. The residents of West Street would like to see the installation of these stick people onto the virtual pavement.

In other areas of the Rame Peninsula (Crafthole as an example), there are signs that have been installed to increase driver awareness of pedestrians for a virtual pavement, see Fig. 3 below. The local area of the

West Street narrows has no signage detailing to drivers for caution of pedestrians in the area. It is perceived that drivers new to the area have no indication of the conditions of the area ahead. By not having adequate signage detailing to drivers to take care, it is perceived that this increases the risk to pedestrians using the virtual pavements. As there are currently no signs in the area, then it is also perceived that there is potential for ambiguity to drivers as to the function of the virtual pavement, increasing the risk to pedestrians. The residents of West Street would like to have signage installed in the area to raise driver awareness to the virtual pavement and the likely presence of pedestrians.



Fig. 3 – An example of signage that would assist in raising driver awareness.

The solid white lines on the virtual pavement in Craffhole has been installed as a rumble strip. This raises the driver awareness that they are driving within the virtual pavement. The residents of West Street would like to have this feature installed to assist drivers in identifying when they are crossing into the virtual pavement.

This report has set out consistent issues with the current set up with regards to pedestrian safety. The residents of West Street would like the Parish/ Cornwall Council to strongly consider whether the virtual pavement should be overhauled with the installation of a kerbed pavement through the narrows. The recommendations set out in the Rame Peninsula Traffic Management Plan Feasibility Study also detail the installation of a kerbed pavement, although, the feasibility study that is available for public viewing (available here: <https://ramepeninsulaneighbourhoodplan.com/draft-plan/highway-infrastructure-evidence/rame-peninsula-traffic-management/> last accessed 07/09/2020) does not have any of the appendices attached, so it is difficult to identify the exact location of this. The residents of West Street request a copy of these omitted appendices, so that the recommendations made can be properly examined.

Speed

The speed of vehicles travelling through the West Street narrows is often too fast. The residents of West Street believe that the village wide speed limit of 20mph is regularly ignored. This is particularly concerning when it is considered with a virtual pavement. Using the virtual pavement when a vehicle passes at a speed of 20mph within 50cm has the potential to be very unsettling, but with a vehicle travelling at a speed in excess of the speed limit, the dangers are increased exponentially, especially if the person using the virtual pavement has any degree of vulnerability or is a child. The residents of West Street would like the Parish/ Cornwall Council to consider better speed management for the area as the current system is not working. The residents of West Street would like the Parish/ Cornwall Council to consider the implementation of a speed limit of 10mph through the narrows, speed tables (preferred over speed humps, as there is more evidence to show consistently reduced speeds between installed tables as well as low noise, <https://www.trafficchoices.co.uk/traffic-schemes/speed-table.shtml> last accessed 07/09/2020), chevrons or alternative road markings to help drivers easily identify that they are entering a stretch of road that is in need of heightened driver awareness and caution. The residents of West Street believe that these measures will reduce the speed of vehicles and increase driver accountability when travelling through the area and increasing pedestrian safety.

Traffic Management

It has long been established that the current traffic management plan for West Street has times when it is inadequate. Idle traffic brings with it increased exhaust fumes into the area. Drivers do not turn off their engines when they are idle, therefore the fumes build up, making breathing conditions potentially harmful for pedestrians and residents. This increase in exhaust fumes also makes it difficult for the residents of West Street to open street windows to their properties, particularly on hot days. It has been well established through research that pollution caused by exhaust fumes has long-term, damaging effects on human health. The residents of West Street would like the Parish/ Cornwall Council to revisit the

recommendations set out in the Rame Peninsula Traffic Management Feasibility Study, to establish and implement measures to improve traffic flow, therefore reducing idle traffic in the area. The residents of West Street understand that the recommendations set out in the Feasibility Study had an initial estimated cost of £160,000 for the entire scheme, at the time of writing. It is understood that funding for the entire scheme was not available at the time (circa 2014) for the recommendations to be installed. While the whole scheme may have been financially unviable (we would like this to be confirmed as the feasibility study was conducted in 2014), it is believed that within the recommendations there are minor elements that could be implemented which would improve the current situation. i.e. "A further yellow box marking is proposed outside of numbers 53-55 because the road is not wide enough for two vehicles to pass." (Page 36 Rame Peninsula Traffic Management Feasibility Study 2014). It is observed that often when the traffic builds up in the area, this particular point if occupied by vehicles, is the position that inhibits traffic movement through the area. If the yellow box were to be implemented as per the recommendations, this would have a positive impact on traffic flow through the area at a relatively low cost.

The Rame Peninsula Traffic Management Feasibility Study details that a major issue with traffic flow through the area is 3 or 4 axle vehicles, particularly when 2 vehicles of this size meet. Domestic and commercial properties on West Street are subjected to regular damage by oversized vehicles attempting to negotiate the narrows, see Fig.4 below (The driver of the vehicle that caused the damage fled the scene of the incident without acknowledging the damage or leaving any details, this is a typical reaction that residents endure). Dodbrook house is a residential property that has historically been subjected to regular damage caused by oversized vehicles. The residents of West Street would like to see the implementation of either a size and/ or weight limit to the road, to reduce the likelihood of damage to properties. This would also assist in the likely reduction in idle traffic in the area caused by road blockages.



Fig.4 – Damage to a commercial property on West Street caused by an oversized vehicle attempting to navigate the area on 3rd September 2020.

Final Comments

The residents of West Street would like to invite representatives of the Parish/ Cornwall Council to have an onsite meeting with us. The aim would be to discuss the elements that have been raised in this report and for the Council representatives to gain a first-hand experience of the West Street narrows as a pedestrian.

The residents of West Street would like the Parish/ Cornwall Council to revisit the Rame Peninsula Traffic Management Feasibility Study, and to establish if the recommendations set out would still be viable solutions.

The residents of West Street would like to thank the Parish Council for taking the time to read and listen to our concerns regarding pedestrian safety on West Street. This is a matter that is important to us all.