



This newsletter is intended to inform all residents of what has been achieved since the Village Plan Action Group (VPAG) supported by the Parish Council, successfully bid to the National Lottery Awards for All programme to secure expert advice on how best to improve and protect the safety of pedestrians and traffic travelling through the village.

DHA Transport Ltd were engaged to develop proposals for addressing these problems, while CSC Regeneration organised and led a community consultation exercise, where villagers and others with an interest in the village could see and comment upon those proposals. The consultation event was held over the weekend of 1 – 2 December 2012, and a total of 133 people¹ attended and left their comments.

VPAG members met on 16 January to discuss DHA's Traffic Management Feasibility Study and CSC's report on the conclusions of the consultation exercise. The meeting agreed that both documents were of a high standard, and that these should be made available in full on the village and Parish Council web sites. Hard copies of both will be circulated to Parish Councillors for their next meeting on 12 February, but this document will summarise the proposals for each site surveyed and residents' comments on them.

Station Road Junction: DHA suggested that the congestion at this junction could be addressed in any of three ways: removing the traffic island to create a simple junction; establishing a "shared space" outside and around the Church where motor vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians had equal priority; and reconfiguring the whole junction so that traffic travelling along Lower Road would be diverted into Vicarage Lane.

Visitors to the consultation event were able to vote for their preferred option from that list or to simply leave the junction as it currently is. The development of a simple junction received the most votes (32%) while the realignment received least (24%), so none of the options were clearly preferred over the others. When the views of East Farleigh residents were considered alone, the shared space option came top of the poll with 36% of the votes but, as before, that option was not significantly more popular than the others, and it is not yet possible to move forward with a firm recommendation for change at this time.

Traffic calming in Lower Road: DHA advised that no single option was likely to be successful in reducing the speed of traffic travelling along Lower Road, and therefore suggested that a mix of measures be taken. They suggested that speed limits should be lowered at the edges of the village, that chicanes be installed at the village perimeter and that speed humps might also be situated at regular intervals throughout the residential areas of Lower Road.

There was widespread support for reductions in the speed limit, but people at the event were less enthusiastic about the chicanes and speed humps. However, many acknowledged that the suggestion of installing chicanes on the village perimeter was preferable to having them at regular intervals.

Forge Lane and Dean Street Junction: DHA proposed that the give way lines in Forge Lane should be brought forward to improve visibility for drivers wishing to turn into Dean Street, and that the width of the junction could be narrowed by installing over-run strips. This would reduce the speed of traffic entering Forge Lane and take the vehicles away from the houses on the corner.

¹ 105 described themselves as residents of East Farleigh, 24 are non-resident parents of children at local schools, one works in the village and one has another relationship with the village

These proposals were very strongly endorsed by people attending the event, with over 90% in favour. A number of additional suggestions were made for further improvements to this junction, but DHA advised that the use of coloured asphalt to further encourage drivers to slow down was the only one that might be accepted by the Highways Authority.

Forge Lane and Vicarage Lane junction: DHA similarly suggested that the give way lines be brought forward to improve the visibility of drivers turning into Vicarage Lane. This proposal was also supported by 90% of those offering an opinion. It was also suggested that drivers turning into Vicarage Lane would benefit from improved visibility if the hedges to the south of the junction were better maintained.

Pedestrian walkways in Forge Lane: Two methods of improving the safety of pedestrians in Forge Lane were proposed: one involved negotiating with the relevant landowner over the establishment of a pathway behind the hedge, as has been achieved elsewhere in Forge Lane. The other involved the introduction of coloured asphalt to designate a walkway, which has been successfully implemented in the Yorkshire Dales.

Of the two, there was much more support for the proposal to seek the development of an entirely separate walkway: this idea received 86 votes whereas the coloured asphalt walkway on the road edge received fewer than 30 votes.

Entrance to St Helen's Montessori School: This entrance would be included in the traffic calming measures described earlier, but DHA also suggested that the safety of vehicles entering and leaving the school could be improved by bringing forward the give way lines, and also by establishing new edge of carriage way lines, which might encourage lower speeds through the psychological effect of making the road seem narrower.

These proposals were equally endorsed by local residents and by the parents of children attending the School who live elsewhere, with around 80% of people in both categories saying that they supported the ideas.

Priority actions: People attending the consultation event were invited to say which of the proposed actions was most important to them, and 40% voted for the Lower Road traffic calming, followed by 30% voting for the Station Road junction and 24% for the Forge Lane/Dean Street junction; the other proposals received 6% of the votes between them. However, when the views of East Farleigh residents were considered separately, the Station Road junction received most votes but, as has been mentioned already, there was no clear consensus on what should be done at this site.

Next steps: The Chairman of VPAG will now send a report to the Parish Council for their meeting on 12 February and propose that Councillors should engage with the KCC Highways Department in order to achieve a uniform 30 mph speed limit throughout the whole village, and to change the junctions at either end of Forge Lane. There was widespread support for all of these proposals, and we feel that these will greatly improve pedestrian and driver safety in the village.

VPAG, meanwhile, will further investigate the feasibility of other options put forward at the consultation event, such as speed cameras, cushions, chicanes and other methods of speed control. Residents clearly want something to be done to improve safety in all of the sites studied, especially Lower Road. To help with this, VPAG will ask County Councillor Paulina Stockell if she and Ben Hilden from Kent Highways could meet us as soon as possible to discuss the survey outcomes.

We hope to have completed these investigations by the next Parish Council meeting on 12 March (7.15 at The Old School Hall) so that we can present the findings to Councillors. All Parish Council meetings are open to the public and there is a time set aside at the start of each meeting for the public to be heard.

VPAG would like to invite all residents/interested parties to join them at the beginning of this meeting when Councillors will be glad to hear everyone's views and help us to move forward these issues affecting the safety of all road users and pedestrians. VPAG is a relatively small group, and would like to encourage all residents to contribute.

Please Note: Councillors will wish to discuss the issues separately under a specific agenda item - usually "Village Plan": the public would not be involved in this discussion, though they are entitled to stay and listen to the discussions, if they wish.