

Committee: Scrutiny

Agenda Item

Date: 5 July 2016

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Title: Quiet Lanes

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Item for information

Summary

1. This report provides an overview of the Quiet Lanes initiative, the criteria for designating a road as a Quiet Lane and the role of the county, district and parish councils.

Recommendations

2. The report is for information.

Financial Implications

3. None directly relating to this report, although adoption of a Quiet Lane in the district does have funding implications for the purchase and maintenance of street furniture, potential traffic calming measures and any impact analysis work that may be required.

Background Papers

4. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

CPRE's Guide to Quiet Lanes – Campaign to Protect Rural England

The Quiet Lanes and Home Zones (England) Regulations 2006

Highways Practice Note 027 Essex Quiet Lanes

Impact

- 5.

Communication/Consultation	
Community Safety	Quiet Lanes can lead to improved community safety
Equalities	
Health and Safety	Minor roads designated as a Quiet Lanes can improve safety of road users
Human Rights/Legal Implications	
Sustainability	

Ward-specific impacts	There is currently a network of Quiet Lanes in Felsted
Workforce/Workplace	

General Overview of Quiet Lanes

6. Quiet Lanes are minor rural roads, typically designated “C” class or “unclassified” road appropriate for shared use by walkers, cyclists, horse riders and other vehicles. They can form part of a network of minor rural roads.
7. The aim of Quiet Lanes is to maintain the character of minor rural roads by seeking to contain rising traffic growth that is widespread in rural areas. They are designated by the local highways authority under the Transport Act 2000 – in the case of Uttlesford this designation would come from Essex Highways.
8. Cars are not banned from Quiet Lanes; however vehicle speeds should be kept to low levels, below 35mph. Traffic calming and traffic management measures may be required to achieve these conditions and these should be designed in keeping with the local environment whilst still being effective.
9. Quiet Lanes should be designed to protect and enhance the local character and distinctiveness of the countryside. Signs should, therefore, be discrete whilst indicating clearly to road users that they are in a Quiet Lane. Signs should neither detract from, nor clutter, the countryside.
10. A national Quiet Lane sign has been developed to identify entry into and exit from a Quiet Lane. See Appendix A for examples of these.
11. Designation as a Quiet Lane neither provides the road with any additional legal protection, nor does it alter local authorities’ other powers and responsibilities, for example when implementing traffic calming measures.
12. Appropriate designation enables the local traffic authority to make “use orders” and “speed orders” which will set out authorised uses for the road, a specified speed and the measures to be implemented to control vehicle speed.

Criteria for proposing a route as a Quiet Lane:

13. The following criteria exists for proposing a Quiet Lane:
 - Less than 1,000 motor vehicles per day
 - Vehicle speeds should be kept to levels appropriate to the mix of uses and activities expected to take place, usually below 35 mph.
 - “C” class road
 - Narrow – single-track is preferred
 - Be rural in character, though they do not necessarily have to be in a rural area
 - Single roads can be designated under the Act, the aim of creating a coherent network of routes for non-motorised users should remain.
 - Traffic calming and traffic management measures may be required to achieve these conditions; these should be designed to be in keeping with the local environment but must still be effective.

Essex County Council's current position

14. Essex Highways facilitates the designation of certain roads as Quiet Lanes. The purpose of the designation is:
- to produce a network of lanes designed to protect and enhance the local character and distinctiveness of the countryside;
 - to protect the amenity of such local rural routes;
 - to enhance/encourage recreational use of those routes;
 - to ensure that the maintenance of the route is appropriate and does not widen/urbanise the route; and
 - to dissuade HGVs and other unsuitable vehicles from using the route.

Previous experience in Essex

15. Essex County Council commenced a Quiet Lanes pilot scheme in Essex during 2004 to 2005. At the time, three key elements were defined for a scheme:
- a. Community involvement to encourage a change in user behaviour.
 - b. Area-wide direction signing to discourage through traffic (this was to be replacement of existing signage rather than additional signage).
 - c. Entry signing to those entering the area to highlight that they may encounter a variety of road users.
16. It was also stated that Quiet Lanes would not be designated in order to:
- a. Calm traffic on busy roads;
 - b. Reduce the number or speed of heavy vehicles;
 - c. Solve traffic problems on individual isolated roads;
 - d. Use urban traffic calming measures;
 - e. Attempt to deny access to motorised users or hinder residents, visitors and business from going about their daily lives; or
 - f. Manage development and diversification in the rural environment.
17. Two groups of pilot schemes were proposed:
Scheme one – Felsted & Farnham, Manuden and Ugley
Scheme two - Paglesham, Barling, Hawkwell and Crays Hill
18. At the time of the pilot, the Department for Transport approval was required for such schemes and approval for the Felsted scheme was given in 2007.

How Quiet Lanes can be introduced and the role of the district and town/parish councils

19. All proposals for Quiet Lane designation need to be made via the Local Highways Panel.
20. District, town or parish councils are welcome to submit their requests for roads to become Quiet Lanes via the Local Highways Panel scheme request process, whereby they complete a form and send it on to the relevant Essex County Council Highway Liaison Officer. The current Uttlesford Local Highways Panel Liaison Officer is Rissa Long.
21. Once requested sites are validated and meet the criteria, they are added to the potential schemes list for the Local Highways Panel to consider for funding. It is suggested that as any scheme needs to be developed with the full support of the community. Upon receipt of the request, the local highway authority may need to carry out public consultation for setting up a Quiet Lane.

22. It is generally preferred that requests are made directly by town or parish councils. This indicates that a collective and real need has been identified by the local community.

Analysis of its current application in Uttlesford

23. The Quiet Lanes originally designated in Felsted as part of the 2007 Pilot Scheme One are still in place today. At present, this remains the only designation of Quiet Lanes in Uttlesford.

24. In February 2015, Essex County Council launched a county-wide initiative that aimed to encourage a greater number of Quiet Lane designations on existing country lanes which met the Quiet Lane criteria. As part of this initiative, the County Council asked each of the county's 12 Local Highways Panels to identify and propose two roads to be considered Quiet Lanes. The Uttlesford Highways Panel met on 23 March 2015 and this was raised by the Highways Liaison Officer for Uttlesford. Members agreed at the meeting that identifying two roads and proposing the Quiet Lanes was a complex issue and that careful consideration was needed to decide where the lanes would be, if any. The Panel concluded that more information was needed although it is not clear from the minutes that anyone was tasked with preparing a proposal.

25. The meeting minutes from 22 June 2015 show no mention of the Quiet Lanes initiative, and the issue appears not to have been discussed further.

26. In the meeting minutes from 21 September 2015, it was noted that Littlebury Parish Council had put forward two sites to be considered as designated Quiet Lanes and that ECC was evaluating the proposals.

27. The Quiet Lanes proposals for Littlebury were not subsequently included on the list for funding and no reasons as to their exclusion were evident. In preparing this report, the Highways Liaison Officer for Uttlesford was spoken to, who confirmed that the Uttlesford Highways Panel had agreed not to proceed with the initiative and the Littlebury Parish Council proposals were taken off the scheme list for funding. It was decided that alternative local highways projects in the district were more of a priority at the time.

28. The Highways Liaison Officer for Uttlesford also provided a brief analysis as to why the scheme was not fully supported by other parish councils at the time explaining that despite the aims and benefits of Quiet Lanes, parishes were dissuaded by additional street signage and felt that this was not in keeping with either the character or appearance of the area. Parishes lost interest in pursuing the concept as it would mean installing street furniture in areas which are currently rural in nature.

29. There was also the consideration that anything installed on the highway becomes a maintenance liability. Since there is no legal stature for Quiet Lanes signage, it was considered likely that the replacement of damaged or stolen street furniture would not be considered a high priority.

30. The Highways Liaison Officer concluded that she was not aware if ECC reached a conclusion on the success of the original trial. In addition, analysis on a national level is inconclusive as to whether it is an effective concept for further application.

31. Quiet Lanes pilot schemes established in Norfolk and Kent were fully monitored. The main results, as listed in Highways Practice Note 027 Essex Quiet Lanes, show that:

- There had been no change or a small decrease in measured traffic on Quiet Lanes
- Little change had been measured vehicle speed on Quiet Lanes
- Support had existed for the scheme locally, but a third of respondents in Norfolk and half of respondents in Kent said the schemes were not working.

32. The document also included the following further observations:

- *“Overall the quiet lanes pilot schemes should be viewed as a partial success. They have achieved some of their aims, but not the expectations of stakeholders.”*
- *“Quiet lanes are not intended as a traffic calming device and should not be used where traffic flow and/or speeds are already a problem”*
- *“The concept is now intended to preserve the status quo on these lanes rather than to be a means of controlling speeds or traffic flows”*

Risk Analysis

There are no risks associated with this report.