

The local road network, congestion and well being of residents

Introduction

This short presentation by Phil Jenkins centred around the local road network, congestion and the well being of residents. It was presented at the Public meeting on 4th October 2013.

The A585 and Amounderness Way

Since the 1990's there have been numerous housing developments in Thornton We also know about the proposed build at Ashdell Nurseries, NPL land off Fleetwood Rd North and the proposed development at Norcross.

All of these have an impact on the network particularly as there will not be any significant increase in the supply of local jobs. So people will need to travel out of Thornton to go to work – and the vast majority will use their cars.

The Area Action Plan predicts an increase of 40% in traffic at certain junctions. This figure was before some of the above developments were conceived.

Amounderness Way is part of the A585 trunk road and is the responsibility of the Highways Agency.

Funding for any improvements would be based on need and the A585 has to compete against other Highways Authority roads including the motorways both regionally and nationally.

Amounderness Way was constructed to take container traffic out of Thornton Village. But guess what folks - it hasn't. There are still plenty of HGV's using Fleetwood Rd as a quick route to Hillhouse Business Park, the Waste Facilities and Fleetwood.

In December last year we did a survey of residents on Fleetwood Rd Nth and some of the nearby roads. We had about 150 leaflets returned with many expressing their concerns about HGV's using the road to access North Thornton and Fleetwood. Some reported damage to their properties and many felt it was unsafe to cross in order to get to local facilities such as the shops and doctors surgery. We had a meeting with Paul Maynard who has since supported us by writing to haulage companies to get them to use the trunk road and there has been some success. We have contacted haulage firms ourselves to ask them to change their routes and whilst some have co-operated, some haven't. We continually lobby for improvement – but it is slow and frustrating.

The Highways Agency have an improvement programme which they call a PINCH POINT scheme. This is presently looking to alter the West Drive and Bourne Way junctions to increase safety and hopefully ease any congestion.

Could it be that the worst hot spots such as Singleton Crossroads and the River Wyre Roundabout are being sidelined as too difficult to do. What do you think? It's obvious that some of the junctions would be very difficult to alter and local residents opinions would have to be taken into consideration as they were at the West Drive junction.



A Typical Weekday morning in Thornton.

Photograph showing traffic queueing at the Norcross roundabout backing up on Fleetwood Rd. This shot was taken at 0810am and is typical of most working days.

Section 106 and the Community Infrastructure Levy.

You'll hear the above terms quite a lot either during this presentation or you might read about it in the local press.

What is a Section 106 Agreement?

This is the description from the Wyre Council Website and I quote...

'As part of the consideration of a planning application, section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act of 1990 enables the local authorities to negotiate with developers certain works, restrictions, or contributions towards a range of infrastructure and services, such as community facilities, public open space, transport improvements and or affordable housing.'

All existing planning agreements fall under Section 106 and it will continue to operate until April 2014 although it may be extended to April 2015.

Section 106 agreements are now unlikely to provide sufficient funding to meet the aims of the Area Action Plan.

The Community Infrastructure Levy is intended to take over from 106 agreements.

Again this is what it says on the Wyre Council website,

'The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a new charge that local authorities have the power to levy on most types of new development to fund infrastructure required to support new growth such as transport, education, health and open space facilities. (CIL charges are based on the size and types of development proposed and are calculated as a charge per square metre.)'

We are also informed that the Community Infrastructure Levy will not generate huge amounts of money. For example, Lancaster Council have not adopted the CIL in order to hopefully improve inward investment. In other words they believe the CIL puts people off investing in Lancaster because of the add on costs.

I understand that this issue will have to be taken into account by Wyre council in deciding whether to formally pursue or adopt CIL. A council can pool the money received from this levy to fund projects considered a priority, For example funding raised in Thornton could be spent in Garstang or vice versa if that is where the priority lies.

Funds Raised to date.. How much is in the pot?

The Area Action Plan suggested funds of £10 million will be needed for Sustainable Transport and £10 million pounds for improvements to junctions on the A585.

Funding under the existing Section 106 agreement should raise £700k for Sustainable Transport and £920k for Highways Improvements on the A585.

If the new Sainsbury's store is implemented then a further £572k should be raised for sustainable measures.

This falls far short of the required funding needed as quoted in the Area Action Plan. To give you some idea of suggested costs - proposed changes to Norcross roundabout would cost £1.3 million (at 2008 prices), £2.5 million at Bourne way, £642k at Skippool, £1.3million at Singleton Crossroads. The pot is obviously going to be very short of funds.

The government indicates that building is the priority. Raising money from section 106 agreements is secondary. Building generates employment and a much needed improvement in house supply.

I am told that the view of Wyre Council is that this is a some what simplistic view but none the less correct. Apparently, Wyre council could not reasonably refuse a development which would have positive economic benefits, for example investment and job creation, simply on the grounds that the developer could not viably meet the requisite highways contributions as set out in the Area Action Plan.

My concern is that we get the houses without the infrastructure that goes with it because there



isn't enough money in the pot. And that could make life worse for existing residents.

Fleetwood RD South.

Photograph looking south towards Norcross Roundabout at 0820 on a typical weekday morning. You can see how far back the queue of traffic extends. Sometimes this queue is as far back as the traffic lights at the junction with Victoria Rd.

I didn't get chance to take a photograph at Morrison's roundabout but on the way to a meeting with the Highways Agency last Thursday it was announced on Radio Lancashire that there was severe congestion at this spot – in fact the A585 / Amounderness Way is now part of their daily traffic bulletin.



Little Thornton 7.45 am Typical Weekday queue.

**Photograph of Skippool Road approaching the River Wyre roundabout
This road is far busier since the developments at Hillylaid Rd and Stannah.
It is also a nightmare for pedestrians because of the very narrow footpaths, especially on the sharp bend when approaching Thornton Hall.**

Congestion

I always believed that Thornton was severely congested during the rush hour BUT apparently the daily congestion in Thornton is not regarded as severe when compared to regional or national levels. Obviously there are places much worse than here, for example the A6 at Broughton and areas of East Lancashire. Knowing that doesn't help us when we are stuck in a queue with a plane to catch! But actually money has been found for improvements at

Broughton Junction which are presently ongoing and for a Broughton bypass. So is there light at the end of the tunnel for us.

What about the Blue Route? Well, this corridor of land will apparently be protected from development. BUT the road in its entirety will probably never be built because of the cost at £120m. However the best we can hope for is that certain sections of it might be developed in the future.

THERE IS A Highways and Transport Masterplan being developed for Fylde and Wyre. Blackpool are contributing even though they have responsibility for their own highways. As part of this plan, Congestion issues will be tackled and hopefully solutions will be identified in the plan when it is published.

With regard to Travel Plans. Lancashire County Council do require Travel Plans to be submitted and implemented for larger scale developments. What this means is that developers will need to look at how their particular development impacts on the existing road network. By reducing car travel, travel plans can improve health and well being, free up car parking space and make a positive contribution to the community and environment.

A week ago my wife and I attended a workshop at Leyland organised by the Highways Agency. This was part of a national consultation exercise gathering information from local users and organisations about the motorway and trunk road network. Large posters of the Lancashire Area with the road network highlighted in different colours were on display. Each poster was looking at different aspects such as CONGESTION, DELAYS, SAFETY, INCIDENT DURATION, SURFACE CONDITION ETC., The A585 was highlighted in RED as being SEVERE for most of these topics. We got the chance, through discussion to highlight issues that we face – queueing at junctions, housebuilding therefore more traffic, pedestrian and cycling issues etc., The draft report from the meeting will be out in Spring 2014. - it will be interesting to see what it says

Pedestrians and Cyclists

As I said previously, both LCC and The Highways Agency have a responsibility to manage safety on their networks.

Wyre council inform us that they are not aware of any current proposals to provide pedestrian crossings, traffic calming or cycle ways on Thornton's roads.

Earlier this year, in March, after lots of discussions with Paul Maynard and County Cllrs, we thought that we had finally got the go ahead for two new pedestrian crossings in Thornton, one on Bourne Way and one on Fleetwood Rd Nth. Unfortunately this was not the case as we found out in a letter from C.Cllr Tim Ashton who at that time was responsible for highways.

So we have to continue our campaign to improve pedestrian safety. As part of that campaign I surveyed traffic, from 7.30 to 0915 am. on Fleetwood Rd North outside the gates at Sacred Heart school and also on Bourne Way.

As you would expect Fleetwood Rd Nth was much busier with 1650 vehicles, passing the school gates, mostly going south.

We need more pedestrian crossings in Thornton and will continue to campaign to get them.

Pedestrian crossings can only be constructed following the approval of a Traffic Regulation Order which has to be made and approved by LCC.

A Section 106 agreement may be able to require a developer to finance the construction of a

crossing but only where LCC officers recommend the need for one.

As a pedestrian, have you ever tried to cross Amounderness Way at Morrison's or Norcross or River Wyre Roundabout? It is a nightmare. TAG has had meetings with the Highways Agency to try to address these issues. We are currently waiting for them to get back to us.

However, in the meantime we have had some success. When the roundabout at Norcross was upgraded, signs, directing HGVs away from Thornton Village were removed. After discussion with the Highways agency we have now been informed that some signs are to be reinstated and updated on the A585. This will be done as part of the West Drive / A585 improvements. Hopefully this will divert many HGV's from Thornton Village. TAG have also had good co operation from NPL and individual businesses on Hillhouse Business Park to get their suppliers to use the trunk road.



CYCLING

Twenty three years ago our son used to cycle from Thornton to Hodgson school at Poulton. There is no way the same journey could be considered safe today either travelling through little Thornton or along Amounderness Way. Today he would either be on the bus or in mums taxi.

When we were at the Highways Agency workshop last week we pointed out that some of the cycleways on Mains Lane were in need of resurfacing and that there was no cycleway between Norcross and the Wyre roundabout.

The Highways Agency were also asked by my wife , why, when a trunk road such as the A585 was being built or improved, they didn't make sure that cycle ways were constructed at the same time. The response from another delegate in her group was "She's got a point !!" Well actually on Tuesday this week we received an email from the Highways Agency and I quote

"I can confirm that next year we will be looking at cycling facilities between Skippool and Norcross Roundabouts and what measures might be provided to assist these vulnerable road

users"

Well we have plenty more ideas the hard part is in getting people to listen and understand.

Consultation.

Will there be further consultation prior to the local plan being published?

Wyre Council officers told us that the publication or pre submission version of the local plan will be subject to full public consultation.

BUT the purpose of this is not for the public to provide further input into the content or policies of the plan, but only to comment on its soundness.

Given that there may be a number of matters for example housing numbers, which may be materially different from the Preferred Option Document, Wyre Council might choose to include an additional consultation on such matters, prior to the formal publication version being consulted on.

With regard to Well Being. How does development affect the lives of existing residents. There needs to be a safe road network for our children, our older members of the community, our residents with disabilities and the general public. We need clean air and green spaces where we live, not just out of town green spaces that certain people can't get to. We also need Good local amenities including schools, doctors surgeries and shops which are easy to access and where necessary is backed up with reliable public transport links.

When I was doing my homework for this meeting, on the internet, in fact it was when I was looking up Community Infrastructure Levy, I came across this foreword from the Right Honourable Greg Clark MP Minister for Planning. He wrote:-

"Sustainable Development is about change for the better and not only in our built environment.." He also wrote

"Sustainable means ensuring better lives for ourselves and doesn't mean worse lives for future generations"

Phil Jenkins

October 2013