

In terms of responding to the Speed Survey, it is vitally important that all potential users of entries to the village are considered, be they pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders, disabled/less physically abled using electric buggies (of which there are a few), as well as vehicles. The Disability and Equality Acts require councils to attend to the needs of disabled users in particular. It is critical to ensure the safety of disabled people who may choose to enter or leave the village on foot, or a disabled vehicle or by wheelchair, for example.

Layer de la Haye is unusual in that most of the entries to the village involve crossing a narrow bridge. This is especially so at the bottom of High Road as it becomes Layer Road. The bridge is narrow and presents challenges even to vehicular access if sufficient care is not taken. This is evidenced by the number of times the Kingsford Bridge has had to be rebuilt after vehicles struck the parapets. Two lorries cannot pass at the same time and there is no footway, yet the speed limit remains at 40mph. In reality, a substantial proportion of vehicles enter and leave the village at much higher speeds than this and many treat the bridge as a test of their driving skills, entering the village on all roads at a woeful speed (as the results of the village speed watch constantly confirms).

It is surprising that no recent safety audit of bridges has been undertaken to our knowledge, nor is planned, with special consideration being given to non-vehicular users and the disabled. This despite the building already under way (70 dwellings) with a further 115 cited in the draft Local Plan.

It would be foolhardy for a disabled person to cross bridges in a wheelchair given the incredible vulnerability to fast moving cars and lorries. This vulnerability is a psychological incumbrance (i.e. fear of use) as well as an ever present physical one. The same applies to able bodied pedestrians and horse riders. Currently, the needs of all members of society have not been catered for, and it is vitally important that the utility for all be considered and appropriate adjustments made. At the moment the Council is failing in its duty under the EA, and this becomes even more serious in the context of the expectation that the village is expected to increase housing provision in the future. It is incredible that the only way to walk from the village towards Colchester is over a narrow bridge with no walkway with a 40mph speed limit that is frequently exceeded. This is a matter that should and will be brought to the attention of the next Inspector in the examination of the forthcoming local plan review and it is a matter that will be notified to Colchester City Council.

It is imperative that the village is made sustainable in transportation terms. The government wishes to promote sustainability including more walking and cycling. That can only be achieved for all members of society if safety issues are addressed.

It is worth noting that other responsible authorities are incorporating the reduction of car usage by promoting safer spaces for pedestrians and cyclists. We expect no less from Essex County Council. Such a solution would involve the staged reduction in speed on approach to the entries/exits of the village. In order to provide utility for all, we would like the speed limit reduced to 30mph across all bridges. This would allow safer transit for pedestrians, cyclists and disabled users and horse riders. This alongside improved signage to warn drivers about pedestrians etc. in the road.

The disadvantages of imposing such restrictions such as increased journey times are minute in comparison to the environmental and societal benefits that will accrue at modest public expense. Any short inconvenience to drivers is without question outweighed by the advantages conferred to other users, including the disabled, and the interests of sustainable transport.

ECC is not performing its duties in this regard by simply applying existing and outdated policy thresholds in either setting traffic speeds, incorporating safety measures or introducing speed cameras.

Failure to address these issues sufficiently will result in a Regulation 19 representation seeking to bar further development until these issues are resolved.