

GETTING AROUND

Bury Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
June 2016

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This document explores local issues associated with our highways and seeks to identify suitable approaches that could be adopted in the Neighbourhood Plan to resolve those issues through the introduction of planning policy.
- 1.2. In doing so this document will pay close attention to the objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan. Using the results of consultation exercises, seven objectives have been identified by the Steering Group; those particularly relevant to this topic are:
 3. *Reduce the dominance of the A29 and its severance effect upon the parish community. Seek to minimise traffic movement within the communities of the Parish.*
 4. *Make our roads safer for non-vehicular road users.*
 6. *Improve sense of community cohesion within the Parish incorporating Bury Village, West Burton, Bury Common, Bury Gate and the rural population.*

Background

- 1.3. In evolving the objectives of our Neighbourhood Plan (NP) from the Survey Questionnaire, we are conscious that what we value and the problems and challenges which we face are at once common to other rural parishes and yet distinct in several respects from others. Central to the thrust of our Vision Statement is the Parish's tranquil and agricultural character, its sense of community cohesion and its contribution to the 'dark skies' policy. In terms of Bury's contribution to the South Downs National Park, we think most about the green and open spaces and the magnificent open downland views, but from the questionnaire replies, it was obvious that there are serious concerns which derive from highways and public rights of way.
- 1.4. The highways in the parish are an essential part of the infrastructure and should be properly maintained and managed for the benefit of residents and visitors. Above all, it is a question of balancing concerns and impacts between categories of rural road users. This balance will vary with different types of road. By way of illustration, there was strong support among those who responded to the survey, for the SDNPA policy for dark skies. It might be expected that street lighting would improve safety on rural roads. In a RoSPA analysis of data on rural road safety for 2014, lack of lighting may have been an important contributory factor in increasing the likelihood of severe child injury in rural areas; 12% of child casualties occur in areas of darkness on rural roads compared with just 1% on urban roads. There are less likely to be street lights in rural areas. However, where a dark skies policy applies, the two policies would work in counter-directions. Ways have to be found for reconciling conflicting interests. For example in rural roads in residential areas of villages, thought has to be given to understanding driver and pedestrian behaviour in what is effectively 'shared space'.
- 1.5. Thus matters that were raised in the Survey included issues around the A29, the unsatisfactory condition of some roads, access to schools, vehicle parking, and street lighting.

- 1.6. The South Downs Local Plan (Preferred Options) paper (SDLP(PO)) of September 2015 defines 'Public Realm' as:

"Places where people can gain unrestricted access (at least during daylight hours) for the purpose of passing through, meeting, leisure and any other public activities."

- 1.7. The expression therefore embraces principal highways and verges, rural highways, public footpaths and bridleways in addition to public spaces. "Realm" necessarily envisages a recognised hierarchy of order and administration and this is evident in distinguishing between types of road. The A29 road dissects the Parish and also serves as the major thoroughfare. Significant rural roads include The Street (and the linked Bury Village roads), Houghton lane, West Burton Lane, West Burton Road and Tripp Hill (B2138).

2. THE IMPACT OF THE A29 UPON THE PARISH COMMUNITY

2.1. The A29 impacts on the Parish in ways that concern the Parish community. As a major traffic route, our Parish and other local authority areas along the route are dominated by it. The normal and legitimate use of the route necessarily dominates some aspects of life in our Parish, but the importance of the A29 brings compensating advantages in accessibility and connectivity to parts of the SDNP. So for commercial traffic, bus routes and public and private transport, it fulfils normal A-route functions. For the National Park it additionally fulfils important leisure and tourism related functions.

Concerns

2.2. Consultation for the neighbourhood plan has shown that a large proportion of the local community considers the route to be a concern. Particular issues include:

- Lack of decent crossing points (only one island)
- Vehicles breaking the speed limit.
- The road forms a 'barrier' through the parish that can be hard to traverse; many children who need to get to the Bury Church of Enlgand Primary School must cross the road.
- There have also been several accidents on the road with a number of fatalities.

2.3. The A29 is a major road running from Dorking to Bognor Regis. It is important to note that the part of the A29 within the Parish is only a fragment of the whole route, but this includes the lower part of Bury Hill where it ascends from the north.

2.4. At weekends Bury Hill also becomes a focal point for leisure uses with a popular meeting point at the summit of Bury Hill at Whiteways roundabout car park where there are also refreshments available (just south of the parish boundary).

2.5. Bury Parish Councillors have been actively engaged in researching and encouraging effective safety measures with the local highway authority for some time. It should be remembered that the Neighbourhood Plan only has a statutory purpose in relation to development proposals and not, for instance, the power to impose speed limits. This document will however explore the various methods that could be utilised to address this issue and where appropriate policies in the neighbourhood plan could be utilised to improve the current situation.

2.6. Moreover, to the extent that safe use of the A29 is improved, any perceived Parish severance will be lessened.

- 2.7. One obvious example of severance derives from the location of the Bury C of E Primary School in West Burton Lane on the west side of the A29, whilst the larger more densely populated part of the School's catchment area within the Parish lies on the east side. Although the proposal to replace the current southbound 50 mph limit with an extended 40 mph limit was not unique to those who responded to the questionnaire, it certainly demonstrated Bury parishioners' concerns. The last part of the southbound route to the end of the current 50 mph limit, is beyond our Parish boundary. It is clear that associated improvements to the pedestrian crossing of the A29 by West Burton Lane would also command support from those who responded to the questionnaire raising the interests of pupils and parents/carers.
- 2.8. Looking to the future use of the A29, there have been concerns about the heavy commercial traffic that would be generated by the extraction of sand and gravel reserves from the proposed Horncroft site that is within the Parish. Although this too is outside the jurisdiction of the BPC in promoting the Neighbourhood Plan, there is considerable relief that this risk seems to have eased with the publication of the draft West Sussex Joint Minerals Local Plan proposing protection for the area of the SDNP.

Addressing the concerns

- 2.9. It is reasonable for the Parish Council to seek to respond to such 'planning concerns'. It is also reasonable for the Parish Council to be concerned that there have been several serious and some fatal accidents on this road within the Parish boundaries.
- 2.10. However, many of the measures that residents might seek to introduce or change to mitigate dangers, such as speed limits, highway markings, pedestrian crossings etc are within the jurisdiction of the West Sussex County Council as the local highway authority and therefore beyond that of the Parish Council. Possible solutions include improving the existing crossing point and perhaps constructing a new crossing point linking the 'coffin trail' public footpath (PRW No.751) where it crosses the A29.

3. MAKE OUR ROADS SAFER FOR NON-VEHICULAR ROAD USERS.

- 3.1. Although all types of road user are at risk of being injured or killed in a road traffic crash, there are notable differences in fatality rates between different road user groups. In particular, “vulnerable” road users such as pedestrians and cyclists are at greater risk than vehicle occupants and usually bear the greater burden of injury. The Highway Code carries rules specifically for pedestrians, powered wheelchairs and mobility scooters, rules about animals (horses, dogs), cyclists and motor cyclists.
- 3.2. Whilst the safety of all users is important and increased safety for all users is promoted, the Plan’s primary objective is to make our roads safer for non-vehicular traffic. The safety of this group of road users was flagged by the community during consultation and may in part be caused by the type of roads we have, which can broadly be split into two groups:
 - The A29 which draws vehicular traffic in and leads it to exit after a relatively short distance (ie 'through traffic'). It also services the village of Bury and other communities in the Parish. For the vast majority of vehicles, as with most other A routes, the parish 'context' is of little relevance. To a lesser extent the B2138, which links the A29 to the A283, functions mainly for 'through traffic'.
 - Rural roads and lanes that serve residents and businesses around the Parish and neighbouring areas.
- 3.3. This section will explore ways to make all roads safer although it is noted that the A29 has been discussed above already. The local highway authority (West Sussex County Council) is responsible for our highways and necessarily applies 'physical' (eg street signs and marking) and 'external' (eg speed limits) measures to improve road safety. The Parish Council through the Neighbourhood Plan does not benefit from the same powers as those of the local highway authority, but there are ways that it can have an impact and improve safety on our roads.
- 3.4. Given our NP Vision emphasising rural character, suitable planning for our roads calls for a fundamentally different approach to the “standard” highway authority approach. Rural life and character depend on a 'balanced' use of the roads for getting around and communicating. No two parishes share the same mix of needs; nor the same range of vehicular and non-vehicular traffic. Moreover, needs are ever-changing and the whole situation is dynamic calling for sensitive responses.
- 3.5. Such a new approach is advocated by Hamilton-Baillie (H-B) in their publication *Traffic in Villages - Safety and Civility for Rural Roads - A toolkit for communities produced by the Dorset AONB Partnership in conjunction with Hamilton-Baillie Associates*. This emphasises community engagement for successful sharing of road space, looking at the relationship between people, places and traffic in a more holistic way than was possible with earlier policies and their rigid division of responsibilities for traffic and transport. Interestingly, this new approach is based more on perception and behaviour of users than on imposed solutions and criticises the standardised approach that may produce solutions which are damaging in the context of rural villages.

- 3.6. It is also interesting to note, when thinking of some of the most pleasing 'streetscapes' in our Parish, that historically, highways professions would not have been major contributors to the best aspects of our rural roads and lanes.
- 3.7. The issues affecting the safety of our roads, particularly for non-vehicular users, are discussed below.

Street lighting

- 3.8. There is minimal street lighting on our roads around the parish which can lead to roads being regarded as less safe for non-vehicular road users. (see paragraph 1.4 above). Increasing street lighting can have the effect of improving road safety for all users.
- 3.9. There were very few supporters for more street lighting in the responses to the survey questionnaire; the majority expressed support for the Dark Skies policies of the SDNPA and this view was supported by the Steering Group.
- 3.10. It is generally accepted that increasing street lighting can improve road safety, however the Steering Group must weigh this consideration, among others, when preparing the Plan and the policies within it.

On-Street Car Parking

- 3.11. Due to our narrow streets within the village, on-street parking of vehicles can cause obstructions. Whilst parked vehicles help to slow traffic on narrow roads they can also worsen road safety by introducing blind spots and hazards for all road users – especially when vehicles fail to slow down.
- 3.12. Again a balancing act must be taken forward between the positive and negative effects of on-street parking and the Steering Group must formulate an opinion on this matter. It should be noted that existing levels of on-street parking appear to provide a balance between these effects and therefore the neighbourhood plan could be utilised to ensure that additional on-street parking is minimised.

Education

- 3.13. There is little clear evidence of a direct beneficial link between the education of road users and outcomes in terms of measured road safety. However, as road use is a vital life skill, the increase in knowledge and practice is considered worthwhile in itself.
- 3.14. Road safety education is not a normal function required of a Parish Council and is not strictly within scope of the Plan, but there is no reason why the Council could not cooperate with our schools. It should be seen as promoting attempts to reconcile conflicting interests and thus assisting the safe sharing of road space among all road users.

- 3.15. Whilst education of all road users in the parish may lead to improved safety, it is recognised that this could not affect through traffic on the A29. As regards The Street, Church Lane and West Burton Lane, a dialogue could be opened with Bury Primary School and Dorset House Preparatory School seeking appropriate education of affected road users. As far as pupils are concerned, any course could be seen as an important part of promoting road safety awareness for children as part of their general formation. West Sussex County Council as the education authority, has projects, schemes and courses that are developed in partnership with schools, communities, local councillors and the emergency services. There is nothing comparable for the private sector and for a preparatory school drawing its pupils from places frequently less local to the school, other specifically adapted measures may be required.

Vehicle speeds

- 3.16. When presented with a challenge of enabling all road users to use shared road space safely, there is an instinctive reaction to propose a reduction in vehicle speeds.
- 3.17. However, it is not the case that the slowest possible speed should be the target. The ideal in a rural village context is the speed which allows vehicles to flow smoothly without excessive braking and accelerating - perhaps speeds around 15-20 mph.
- 3.18. Whilst speed limits are imposed by the Highway Authority and outside the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan, other ways to influence vehicle speeds can be utilised and are discussed throughout this document.

Identifying a village centre

- 3.19. The H-B publication suggests that traffic speeds tend to be lower where vehicle drivers can easily identify the centre of the village or settlement.
- 3.20. This would apply more readily where one or two shops or services are available. There is an identifiable 'centre' in Bury Village, locally known as 'the Square', which is the cross roads in the heart of the village where The Street, Church Lane and Houghton Lane intersect. At this point there is a post box, a bench and the preferred location for signage for forthcoming village events, although the official village notice boards are beside the Village Hall in The Street.
- 3.21. This centre appears to operate contrary to the H-B publication as traffic here may slow but quite often does not. It is a road junction where little other activity occurs on a daily basis. The junction is also prone to a lot of traffic, particularly at school drop off and collection times with parents collecting their children from Dorset House School. Commuting traffic also compounds use of this location.
- 3.22. It is not considered that Bury lends itself well to the concept of having a village centre.

4. IMPROVING COHESION WITHIN THE PARISH

- 4.1. A key objective of the Neighbourhood Plan is to improve the sense of community cohesion within the Parish with particular reference to connecting the areas of Bury, West Burton, Bury Common, Bury Gate and the rural population. This section will explore ways that this can be achieved and whether the Neighbourhood Plan can play an active role in achieving this objective.

Public Right of Way Network and Accessibility

- 4.2. Our Public Rights of Way (PRoW) Network consists of the highways around the parish, Footpaths, Bridleways, and one restricted Byway to the north of the Parish.
- 4.3. Generally our PRoW's provide good access throughout the Parish, linking our settlements to the South Downs and other villages in surrounding parishes. Most notably:
- PRoW No. 757 & 751 (The Coffin Trail) – footpath that links Bury and West Burton.
 - PRoW No. 767 – footpath that links West Burton with Bignor.
 - PRoW No. 753 - footpath that links Bury with Houghton and Amberley (via the bridge near Amberley Railway Station).
 - PRoW No. 2968 & 2856 – Bridleways that link West Burton with the South Downs.
- 4.4. In addition to the above, a direct footpath links Bury with Amberley. However use of this route as a direct route relies on the use of the old ferry crossing at Bury Wharf which no longer operates and as a result the direct route cannot currently be taken.
- 4.5. There are several areas/routes in the parish that lack public access. Most noticeably is the lack of a non-highway route to Watersfield to the northeast and the western bank of the River Arun that forms the eastern boundary of the Parish. The creation of a right of way up-river from the Wharf was raised in the resident's survey and so there is a local desire for such a route.
- 4.6. There are also limitations with the existing network, for example PRW 2968; this runs from its junction with West Burton Road up Bury Hill to the southern boundary of the Parish very close to where it joins the South Downs Way. The lowest (northern) stretch is often flooded, particularly in winter. This route is a key one for those wishing to travel up Bury Hill given the absence of a footpath to the summit of Bury Hill along the A29.
- 4.7. It is considered that whilst we have a relatively good PRoW network, there is room for expansion to provide better links with surrounding communities and improvements to ensure that the routes are passable all year round.

- 4.8. Whilst the network is relatively well distributed, it is considered that they may be better used if the community were more aware of the network. Providing better information on routes, including signage to key community facilities / events may help to lessen the perceived divide between the distinct settlements in Bury.

5. APPLYING OUR FINDINGS

- 5.1. Whilst we have discussed methods that could be adopted in the parish to ensure our Plan objectives are met, it is important that they relate to the parish and are relevant. To this end we discuss various streets below and how the above principles could be applied.
- 5.2. In doing so we will look at the "key streets" within the parish. Key streets have multiple uses - residential, agricultural, community buildings (Village Hall - including, until recently, an infants' nursery, community activities), schools, Church (visitors, worshippers, guests at weddings etc, mourners, school pupils and staff), home-based businesses, etc. Key streets would include:
 - The Street (including The Hollow)
 - Church Lane
 - Houghton Lane, West Burton Lane and Road and Tripp Hill (B2138)

The Street (including the Hollow)

- 5.3. Some parts of The Street (between the A29 and the junction with Houghton Lane), Houghton Lane - from the junction of The Street to Coombe Crescent have single footways.,
- 5.4. The junction of Church Lane with The Street and Houghton Lane is potentially hazardous and may require traffic priorities to be even more clearly marked to avoid incidents. Additional signage may be required at this junction and this could be considered in line with a possible policy of reducing or removing extraneous signage, allowing road-users to focus upon specifically 'highway safety signs'.

Church Lane

- 5.5. Church Lane has no footway, although there is an approach path to the lych-gate from road surface level parallel with the cemetery. Signage at the junction with the Street announces the absence of footways and bears a warning sign of the presence of adult and infant pedestrians. Church Lane from the Street to the River Arun is a classic example of the challenge of sharing highway space between a wide mix of potentially conflicting interests and uses. Bury is fortunate in having two **schools** - one a C of E primary school (St John's) in West Burton Lane and the other a private fee-paying preparatory school (Dorset House) next to the 12th century Church and the River Arun at the end of Church Lane. Each school gives rise to distinct and important traffic challenges calling for its own range of potential solutions.
- 5.6. One approach to reconciling those interests for Church Lane might be to attempt to separate pedestrians from the carriageway. Given the present situation, this would prove very challenging. Even if a scheme of widening and the addition of a footway could be successfully designed, it is feared that it would do serious and irreparable damage to the pleasing rural

character and distinctiveness of Church Lane, which, with other 'key streets,' contribute much to the Bury Parish part of the SDNP. Moreover, such a solution could lead to vehicle speeds increasing. Good village street design has to be considered holistically in context.

- 5.7. Paragraph 3.5 refers to a new approach for rural villages. We might call this approach - the application of 'H-B principles' after the Hamilton-Baillie publication referred to. This demands mutual acceptance and respect between all categories of road users and their learning and understanding about speed, safety and driver behaviour. Then H-B principles would depend on driver awareness influencing behaviour and thus keeping road markings, signs and barriers to a minimum and moving away from standardised solutions. It is claimed that the successful application of these principles can directly lead to positive outcomes including increasing awareness and consideration and reducing speeds of motor vehicles, without introducing lower speed limits.
- 5.8. During peak hours of arrival at and departure of pupils from Dorset House, if H-B principles are working well, there will be no assumption that vehicles take priority over children and parents/carers and dogs. Good responsive behaviour by all users (vehicles and pedestrians) can be encouraged. If it is possible to consider introducing a new sign at the junction of Church Lane and The Street, one possibility might be a sign announcing "This road is shared space - Please respect all other road users." Whilst it may need to be recognised that Church Lane will always be less comfortable for pedestrians than for vehicle users at these peak times, the growing mutual understanding should prove to be balanced by an awareness of the benefits of enhancing the road's rural characteristics. Ideally, over time, opportunities will be taken of making it easier for users to 'read' the highway, rather than to look for traffic signs on which to rely. These opportunities can include changing road surfaces, limited physical traffic calming measures or even simply securing timely tree pruning.
- 5.9. A dialogue could be opened with Dorset House School to look at current practice and to explore opportunities for improving conditions in Church Lane for all road-users. At present the School organises two mini-bus services to collect pupils from convenient points, which will contribute to reducing car movements. The current practice of staggering finishing times at certain ages will also help to spread and thus dilute the flow of traffic. As discussed in paragraphs 3.12 and 3.13, specifically organised traffic education courses for road users could make an important contribution and reduce the need for termly advisory messages to parents and guardians.

Houghton Lane, West Burton Lane and Road and Tripp Hill (B2138)

- 5.10. Rural lanes are characterised by having limited availability of footways. Houghton Lane has a footway on one side of the road leading from the junction with The Street. West Burton Lane has a footway between the A29 and the primary school. All of these and lanes in West Burton and close to the A29 have safety issues in reconciling the needs of vehicular and non-vehicular users. In the village of Bury, they also give rise to on-street car parking problems and related access problems for public emergency and commercial delivery services. Each area and lane is distinct. It is recommended that where there are built-up areas, H-B principles are applied,

along the lines described under the heading 'Church Lane', only recognising, that in other roads, the issues are likely to be less complex.

6. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1. This report demonstrates that there are a number of ways that getting around our parish can be made safer and easier for all road users and particularly for those not in motor vehicles.
- 6.2. This report provides the following recommendations as to matters the Neighbourhood Plan could seek to address:
 - (i) Do not allow future development to increase on-street car parking.
 - (ii) Ensure future development does not increase the need for pedestrians to cross the A29, unless crossing points are improved to ensure the safety of those crossing.
 - (iii) In exceptional circumstances consider street lighting only where Health & Safety is a clear issue. The style and type must not be to the detriment of the valued dark sky status of the Parish.
 - (iv) Ensure new development would not provide the environment for increased vehicle speeds.
- 6.3. In addition, a number of matters have been identified that must be taken forward outside of the Neighbourhood Plan process (such as by the Parish Council, Highways Authority / West Sussex County Council, etc.). These are:
 - (v) Introduce a formal pedestrian crossing point on the A29 linking the Coffin Trail public right of way (Route No's 751 and 757).
 - (vi) Take assertive action and liaise with landowners and other stakeholders to introduce the following new routes / public or permissive right of ways:
 - a) From the Wharf by Bury Church (along the River Arun) towards the car park by Greatham Bridge and PRW Route 2426.
 - b) The crossing at the Wharf over the river Arun to reconnect PRW Route 761 and 2667.
 - (vii) Maintain and improve public footpaths and bridleways to improve getting around the Parish. Introduce signage to public rights of way highlighting routes to key facilities or locations within the parish.
 - (viii) Remove extraneous signage, posts and bollards (street clutter) from our roads throughout the parish.

- (ix) Open a dialogue with our Schools to improve the safety of all road-users on the parish routes to the schools, specifically with the Bury Primary School to ensure that full advantage is taken of available education authority programmes and courses, and with Dorset House School to deal with the particular challenges of The Street and Church Lane and to promote the benefits of regarding these roads as 'shared space' to be used with increasing respect for all road-users.