

Fen Road: Problems & Solutions

Cllr Ian Manning (East Chesterton member for Cambridgeshire County Council)
& Clare Blair (resident, East Chesterton)

Executive summary

This document explains the problems around a particular road in the East Chesterton ward of Cambridge. It discusses several possible solutions to the problem and it is expected these could be worked up by officers into formal proposals to go out to consultation.

1. The problem(s)

1.1 Introduction

Fen Road is a long narrow road which runs from near the A14 in South Cambridgeshire into East Chesterton up to Water Street.

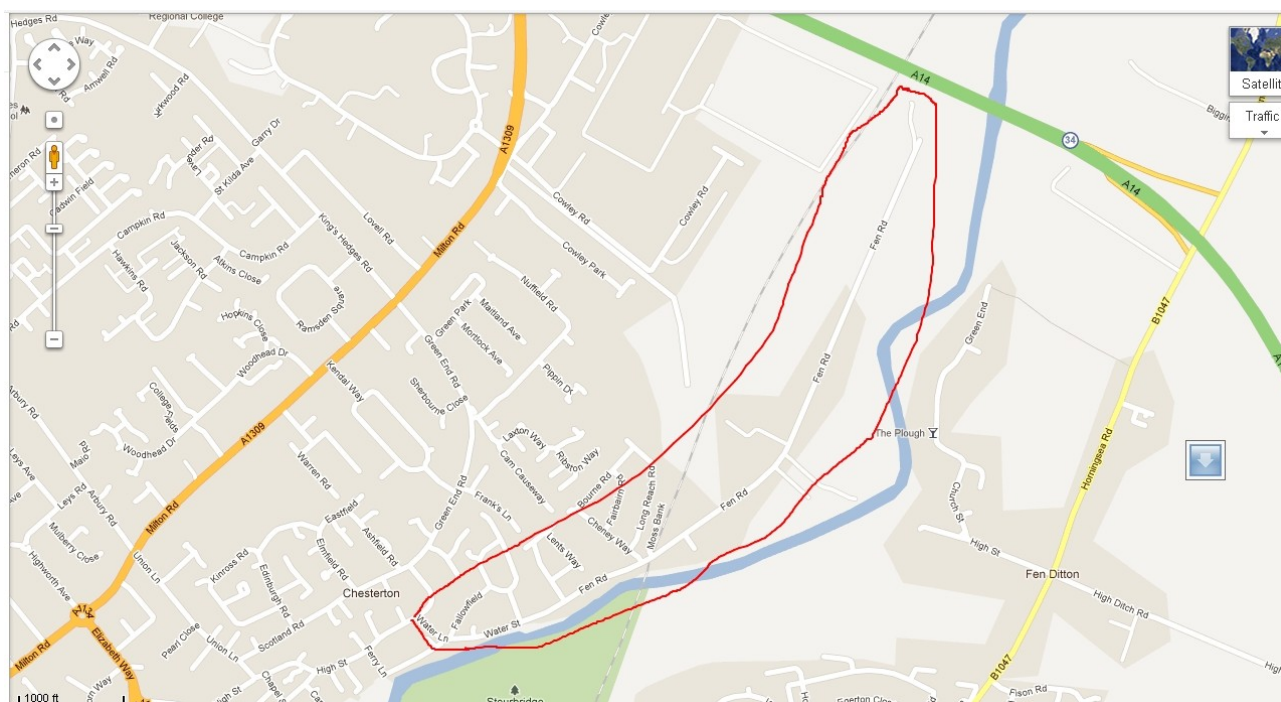


Fig 1 : google map screenshot showing the location of Fen road – ringed crudely in red

1.2 Context

At the South Cambridgeshire end of Fen Road (the rightmost point in figure 1) there are a number of business and traveller properties and the only road route available is out for them is to go down Fen Road, into East Chesterton and onwards.

1.3 Speeding, Traffic and Speed humps

There is a constant problem with speeding vehicles down the road: given the nature of it being long straight road, it isn't hard to see why.

Speed humps were installed by county but are largely ineffective, partly because of the type

installed – for example at the Water Street end (the leftmost point above where the road curves) it is possible to drive between them.

Traffic includes residential and light commercial together with large numbers of skip lorries.

These heavy goods/large vehicles have to exit via Fen Road: the speed humps mean these vehicles bounce on the road causing discomfort to surrounding properties and seriously affecting quality of life for residents.

The speedhumps were installed some years ago to address speeding and traffic issues but following a decision by a planning appeal inspector in regard to the skip lorry traffic these were changed to speed cushions. The spacing of the cushions has given rise to concerns about the accuracy of their installation and their effectiveness in addressing vehicle speed along the route.

1.4 So has it not been fixed?

This is a County Council responsibility and County claim there is no money available to fix the incorrect spacing or do any wider traffic management scheme.

There have been numerous questions raised to officers and at Cabinet level about this serious issue which has blighted residential amenity along Fen Road and adjacent streets for many years now.

Issues to consider:

- ◆ Road is too narrow for chicanes?
- ◆ Width restrictions would have to be wide enough for lorries therefore being ineffective for cars?
- ◆ 'Better' speed humps would potentially cause more problems for surrounding properties?
- ◆ The lack of a safe footpath over the railway crossing for residents down Fen Road, including a safe route to school for children and families, leading to increased reliance on cars
- ◆ The views of residents are paramount in arriving at any solution.

It isn't a simple issue and any solution has to consider the wider impact.

The rest of this document discusses several ideas for either fixing the issue and/or ameliorating it.

2. Potential solutions

2.1 Solution #1: An Alternative Route out of Fen Road

This would remove skip lorry traffic from the East Chesterton side of Fen Road, addressing at least part of the problem.

County officers should investigate options for another route through to Fen Rd avoiding East Chesterton and using the opportunity provided by Chesterton Station as the context in which to effect this change. The current situation as explained by officers is that it is explicitly not going to be delivered by the Station project, but the design of the project won't preclude it happening in the future.

This is not good enough given the problems on Fen Road and Cllr Manning, as County Councillor, is pressing for further work to be done to include the new road

Cllr Manning as County Councillor for the area is pressing for this.

2.2 Solution #2: better traffic calming measures

At the request of Clare Blair, a year ago County Highways drew up a scheme to improve traffic calming, including measures to prevent the calming being bypassed (by eg cars mounting verges).

The approximate cost of this scheme is c. £150k - £200k. Clare and Cllr Manning are pressing to get this funded by monies from the Northern Area Corridor transport plan.

The County Council should:

- clarify monies currently unallocated or allocated to schemes which are unlikely to progress in the Northern Area Corridor Transport Plan (NACPT) in a full report on the NACTP to North Area Committee,
- fund any Fen Road scheme from monies currently available from the NACTP, or
- add any Fen Road scheme into the long overdue updating required for the NACTP.

2.3 Solution #3: Minor environmental improvements

An alternative to the above, and possibly cheaper is to make small landscaping improvements to the East Chesterton end of the road, funded from the City Council's Environmental Improvements Scheme or other external grants. County Officers should clarify as above what funds are available and not rely upon City or other organisations picking up the bill.

2.4 Solution #4: Footpath over the railway crossing

The County Council should consider how to work with Network Rail on safety issues for pedestrians crossing over the railway crossing on Fen Road, including the creation of a footpath up to and down from the crossings. The current situation is unsafe and leads to many parents using their cars to take children from the traveller community to school in East Chesterton solely by car.

3. Summary and conclusions

The issues affecting residential amenity for all residents along Water St and Fen Road are long standing and complex. They are undoubtedly the most serious Highways issue affecting the East Chesterton ward.

They have been raised to the County up to and including at Cabinet level for many years and it is vital that the County Council now address them in full and allow East Chesterton residents to fully consider all options.

North Area Committee is the best option for beginning this process and asks for the endorsement of this document in order to press County for a solution(s) to these problems including asking Cabinet Members and Senior Officers to attend North Area and the site with ward councillors.