PARHAM PAVEMENT AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY REPORT

February 2018

Background:

We have been motivated to undertake a brief report on the condition and safety of pavements in Parham due to a large number of complaints we have received. Most of the complaints have come from residents of Willoughby Close and Blyth Row and largely concern a particularly narrow and dangerous section of pavement along the frontage of Willoughby House. This section of pavement is situated at a very narrow part of the B1116 at a bend in the road notorious as a "pinch point" where two large vehicles cannot pass each other. It also happens to be situated in the middle of the village, making it difficult for residents of Willoughby Close and Blyth Row to negotiate the pavement if they wish to walk to the Village Hall or the church. It is of particular concern to the elderly, disabled and those with young children attempting to use pushchairs.

It should also be noted that there are other sections of pavement in the village (such as that opposite Blyth Row) that are in a state of disrepair and are causing concern to residents and visitors: hence the need for the Parish Council to undertake a pavement and footpath report. Further areas of concern are related to junctions where cross-country footpaths adjoin the B1116- in one case directly onto the road in a concealed location with no protection for pedestrians.

The Parish Council has a responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of parishioners as well as for the safety of visitors to the village. Suffolk County Council also has a responsibility for highways and footpaths and for welcoming tourists and visitors to this area. We regret to say that, as a parish council, we

feel that the safety and quality of life of local people and visitors alike is being put in jeopardy by a combination of inadequate, unsafe pavements and a high volume of road traffic speeding through the village. The very serious threat to the life and limb of pedestrians has been particularly evident when open-air events such as Parham Open Gardens have been taking place and a higher than usual number of walkers have taken the opportunity to stroll around the village. A number of visitors expressed the view that they felt very vulnerable and unsafe when negotiating the very narrow section of dropped pavement near Willoughby House.

The volume of traffic has been increasing steadily over the years, but the increase has recently been exacerbated by the construction of three new housing estates in nearby Framlingham. The Parish Council made representations at the planning appeal held in Woodbridge voicing its concerns about additional traffic that would inevitably result if the developments at Mount Pleasant and Fairfield Road went ahead, but planning permission was granted in spite of our misgivings. Our concerns about traffic volume have proved to be well founded and, indeed, when the housing developments have been completed with, on average, two cars per household and the majority of the new occupiers likely to be commuting to the Woodbridge/Ipswich/Martlesham/Felixstowe areas will put even further pressure on the B1116 and the communities of Parham and Hacheston.

The high speed of traffic using the B1116 is another subject of serious concern to the Parish Council and to residents of the village. Monitoring of traffic speed by the local Community Speed Watch team has revealed high rates of motorists exceeding the statutory limit of 30mph. This has been the case at all times of day from 7.00am until sundown. Speed Watchers are unable to monitor traffic after dark but detection devices in other areas have consistently proven that average speed increases at night putting pedestrians at even greater risk. The risk to pedestrians after dark is also greater owing to the fact that there is no street lighting in the village.

Pavement survey:

The only pavements in the village are along the B1116 apart from a very short section on the north side of The Street where the road crosses a bridge over the River Ore. This short section of pavement ends just before Dial House.

Sections of the B1116 pavement will be looked at as follows:
That on the west side of the road as far as Blyth Row
From the Village Hall to just beyond Old School
The east side from the bus shelter to The Street
The east side from The Street to just beyond (and opposite) Blyth Row

The small section of The Street will be considered where it fits in between the two east side sections.

The west side of the B1116 from a point opposite Garnett's Garden Centre to a point just before Blyth Row.
Length: approx 265 m
Width (average) 134cm (including kerb)
Kerb height (average) 11cm
Surface condition: a few small, minor cracks but generally in good condition. It is consistently even and horizontal.
In some places, the surface is covered by small chippings that have been deposited as a result of road resurfacing.
The pavement surface is very slightly overgrown by grass etc in some places but this does not present a problem.
Some sections of this pavement have a height restriction owing to overhanging branches. We have been informed that a local resident cuts back the branches periodically in order to facilitate access. It is also the case that many residents also collect roadside refuse that is frequently a problem on this section of pavement and the grass verges.
There are two sections of dropped kerb for vehicle access along this section of pavement at the entrance to Parham Old Hall (where a public footpath joins the pavement) and opposite The Willows. Each of these dropped kerb sections is approximately 6 metres in length.

There is no pavement on the west side of the B1116 between Blyth Row and Willoughby Close. Pedestrians are obliged to cross at a bend in the road where visibility is restricted and where traffic tends to speed up, as this is where the 30mph limit comes to an end.

The west side of the B1116 from the Village Hall to just beyond Old School.
Length: approx 30m
Width: 130cm outside Teachers' House narrows to 110cm outside Old School.
Kerb height (average) 11cm.
Surface condition: generally good, few cracks, even and horizontal.
Slightly overgrown outside Teachers' House but not presenting a problem.
There is a severe crack to the kerb near the entrance to the Village Hall.

The east side of the B1116 from the bus shelter to the junction with The Street.
Length: approx 18m
Width: 110 cm widening to 155cm at letterbox.
Kerb height (average) 11cm
Surface condition: some minor cracks and patching, generally fair.
There is damage to the kerb (probably caused by an HGV) at the start of the corner at the junction with The Street.

There are small sections of dropped kerb to facilitate pushchair/wheelchair access at the junction where the B1116 meets The Street.

The Street.
Length: approx 16m
Width: ranging between 179cm and 118cm where the pavement crosses the bridge.

Kerb height: 15cm on bridge tapering down to dropped kerb just before the entrance to Dial House.
Surface condition: generally good, flat and even.

Beyond this section of The Street and, indeed, beyond the bus shelter on the B1116, there is no further pavement provision in Parham. The road safety implications of this absence of pavement will be considered in the General Conclusion section of the pavement survey.

The east side of the B1116 from The Street to just beyond (and opposite) Blyth Row.
Length: approx 270m
Width: variable- will be considered in separate sections.
Kerb height (average) 11cm
This section of pavement includes a dropped kerb at the entrance of Brook Cottage; a shared dropped kerb at the entrances to Riverside and May-bell; a shared dropped kerb at the entrances to Church Meadow and Swallowfields; three dropped kerbs at Willoughby House and one dropped kerb opposite Blyth Row.
The first section of pavement, from the junction with The Street to the dropped kerb at the entrance to Brook Cottage is generally in good condition: there is one minor crack and the surface is partially covered with chippings from road resurfacing. The surface is even and horizontal.
Width: 1m where there is a grassed area on either side, 120cm beyond grassed area. (The grass here and in the area between the bus shelter and the embankment of the River Ore is maintained by the Parish Council.)

The second section between Brook Cottage and Riverside has clearly defined edges and an even, horizontal surface. Surface condition: generally good.
Width: 1m.

The section of pavement from May-bell to the junction with the public footpath leading to the church is slightly sloping downwards away from the road- although the surface is even and free from cracks. The width varies between 98 and 90cm. It is partially overgrown by the lawn of May-bell.

The section alongside Church Meadow is even and horizontal. It is encroached by a shrub at one point.
Width: 113cm
Kerb height: 10cm.

The section alongside Swallowfields is also even and horizontal. The edges are slightly overgrown.
Width: 104cm.

The section from the dropped kerb between Swallowfields and Willoughby House to the dropped kerb directly outside Willoughby House is even and horizontal.
Width: drops from 102 to 85cm.

The section of dropped kerb outside Willoughby House is an area of great concern. It is approximately 16 metres long. The width drops from 85 cm to just 52cm at its narrowest and then back to 80cm. Much of it is covered with gravel and chippings from road resurfacing and is therefore almost indistinguishable from the road itself. The narrowest point is bounded by the high wall of one of the outbuildings of Willoughby House, giving no space whatsoever for pedestrians to retreat from traffic mounting the dropped kerb. This area of 16 metres in length poses a SERIOUS DANGER to any pedestrians walking along it.
Residents have reported being hit by wing mirrors and a pet dog has been seriously injured having been hit by a trailer in this area. We believe that it is highly likely that someone will be seriously injured or killed if urgent steps are not taken to create a safe walkway along this section of the B1116.

The final section of pavement, from the dropped kerb at the entrance to Willoughby House to just beyond (and opposite) Blyth Row, is also an area of concern. This section is uneven, patched in places, and slopes down away from the road for much of its length. The most serious problem, however, is caused by a number of very long, wide and deep cracks that appear to have been the result of subsidence. These cracks, which are up to 4cm wide, have resulted in much of the pavement being at two different levels: the level furthest from the road apparently sinking into the lower ground of the adjoining field. Much of this stretch of pavement is also seriously overgrown. This means that, although the original width of the pavement would have been just over a metre (102cm) almost half of it is overgrown in places. Opposite Willoughby Villa there is a raised cast iron fire hydrant cover and a Telecom inspection cover, which cause yet more unevenness. Alongside the Telecom inspection cover is a steep drop of over a metre into the adjoining field- this drop, combined with the step up from the pavement to the cover, is a hazard to pedestrians. This hazard, together with the severe cracking along this section of pavement makes it very difficult to negotiate with a pushchair or wheelchair and poses a serious RISK OF INJURY to pedestrians.

Footpaths:

Two cross-country footpaths joining the B1116 at Parham are also of concern to residents and to the Parish Council. The footpath opposite the junction with the bridge over the River Ore at the junction with The Street is a very popular route with ramblers and dog-walkers. This point is the start of a long distance route that links Parham with Easton, Letheringham and the villages beyond. Where the path joins the B1116 the entrance is concealed to motorists by thick foliage. Walkers have to descend some steep steps that lead directly to the road at a

point where there is no pavement. This is also a point in the road where many drivers start to accelerate, as they perceive that they are leaving the "built up" part of the village. Anyone approaching the road at this point needs to be extremely vigilant and a number of local residents have reported near misses as a result of vehicles speeding when they have been attempting to cross the road here.

The other footpath causing concern is the route that has recently been redirected, crossing the River Ore via a footbridge and linking the church with Willoughby Close, Blyth Row and the community west of the river. This footpath (Parham Public Footpath No. 19) also links residents on the east side of the river with the village hall. It has long been an extremely popular footpath both with Parham residents and also with Hacheston residents using the circular route via Moat Hall.

The main concern here is the muddiness that has made the route impassable for many since it has been redirected. In its former configuration the route from the B1116 to the footbridge could be negotiated in a fairly flexible way. The route crosses a meadow which is slow to drain but, prior to the redirection, it was possible to avoid the wetter places and choose a relatively dry, firm route. Since the construction of Church Meadow and Swallowfields has taken place, walkers have been forced to use a narrow, fixed path that has concentrated footfall and resulted in the lower stretches in particular becoming a quagmire. The very poor

condition of this footpath is now deterring people who were formerly in the habit of using it from doing so, forcing them to take the much longer route over the road bridge via The Street. This situation has been very upsetting for people wishing to visit the church graveyard.

It should be pointed out that the footpath leading to the church links joins the road opposite a pedestrian entrance to the village hall that is also situated in a very dangerous position. Anyone leaving the village hall at this point steps directly onto the B1116 at a bend in the road where motorists have little chance to see them until they are almost upon them. There have been numerous reports of near misses and of drivers having to brake suddenly and swerve in order to avoid hitting pedestrians at this point.

Possible solutions:

Parham is a growing residential community that seeks to welcome young families with children. As a parish council we must try to find ways to make it possible for children and their parents to move safely around the village without fear of been seriously injured or even killed by speeding traffic. It is sad to report that many older residents have virtually given up attempting to walk around the village for fear of being hit by irresponsibly driven vehicles. The Community Speed Watch team continue to do an excellent job in encouraging motorists to observe speed limits and to drive responsibly. While Speed Watch sessions are taking place residents report a marked improvement in driver attitude and in road safety generally. It is very evident, however, that as soon as a Speed Watch session has finished, some drivers quickly revert to their customary bad habits and road safety is sacrificed once again. Since the Community Speed Watch team is operated by volunteers only occasional sessions at limited times can be organised. This means that the rest of the time speed limits are being flaunted and that pedestrians having to deal with inadequate pavements are being put at risk. This is an intolerable situation and ways must be found to find solutions.

A solution to the problem of the seriously cracked pavement between Willoughby House and Blyth Row could be found if the proposed housing development in the adjoining field goes ahead. Planning permission could and should be withheld unless the developer is willing to reinstate and improve the pavement. The disadvantage with this solution is the long time scale and, indeed there is no certainty that this development will ever go ahead- in the meantime residents must continue to negotiate a very uneven and potentially dangerous stretch of pavement.

The very narrow stretch of dropped kerb at the "pinch point" alongside Willoughby House is a major challenge but one which can no longer be ignored. Simply raising the level to the normal requisite height of 11cm whilst keeping the current width of just 52cm would be a large (and expensive) undertaking and whilst deterring motorists from mounting the pavement it would do little to help pedestrians who would still be unable to use a pushchair or wheelchair.
It has been noted that when it has been necessary to operate temporary traffic lights here, life for pedestrians immediately becomes much easier: they can cross the road in safety and negotiate the dropped kerb near Willoughby House without fear of being run over or hit by wing mirrors. The temporary traffic light experience and the Speed Watch experience prove that the B1116 can be made safe in Parham. The most effective way to achieve acceptable standards of road safety permanently is through traffic calming.

SIDs (speed indicator devices) have been used with some limited success in Framlingham and Hacheston but speeding is still a problem in Hacheston which shares the Community Speed Watch equipment with Parham. It would be highly desirable to introduce some form of physical traffic calming infrastructure in order to permanently reduce the danger currently facing pedestrians. Ideally, this should be combined with a 20mph maximum speed limit at least in the central part of the village near the Willoughby House width restriction. A 20mph speed limit has already been introduced in Little Bealings near Woodbridge, a village faced with similar traffic problems caused by motorists hurrying to get to and from Ipswich.

Speed humps or speed cushions at the entrances to the village would be effective and a courtesy crossing (an elevated portion of road) would be highly desirable.
A very effective means of slowing down traffic and making it easier for pedestrians to cross the road safely would be a kerb extension incorporated into a chicane at the Willoughby House pinch point. The B1116 here is already too narrow for HGVs to pass each other here. Narrowing the road a little further whilst giving priority to vehicles travelling towards Framlingham would force motorists to slow down and drive in a manner appropriate in a residential area.
It would also enable pedestrians to traverse the route to the church and the village hall in safety.

The cost of any such calming measures would be considerable but, in view of the huge increase in the volume of traffic coming and going through the village to and from Framlingham, it would be a price worth paying. The parish council

might be prepared to make some contribution towards the cost to Suffolk Highways and, indeed could also consider a fundraising campaign in order to get something effective done to make the B1116 safer, not only for pedestrians but for motorists too. (A number of cars have left the road and crashed through hedges as a result of having been driven too fast.) It might also be worth considering a joint appeal for traffic calming together with Hacheston Parish Council since both communities face very similar problems and already work together in the Community Speed Watch scheme.

The solution to the problem affecting the footpath leading to the church could be overcome by spreading gravel or chippings over the surface, although the most low-lying part that is prone to waterlogging would require a base of hard-core initially. This footpath, between May-bell and Church Meadow, was moved from its original position next to Willoughby House after a Public Path Diversion Order was granted on 30 September 2015. (SCDC File Ref. 31.1.290). The owners of the land should be notified of the condition of the path and a request made for them to contribute towards the cost of essential maintenance.

There are parts of Parham where there are no pavements whatsoever. These stretches of road tend to be in the quieter parts of the village where there are usually grass verges where pedestrians can retreat for safety if necessary. The section of the roadside along the B1116 after the pavement ends at The Watering, however, is quite dangerous owing to an uneven, overgrown verge and is obviously unsuitable for pushchairs or wheelchairs. Further along, between Friars Piece and Meadowside there is no verge at all and here pedestrians are particularly vulnerable. After Meadowside the 30mph signs and the "Welcome to PARHAM Please drive slowly" sign are situated at a place where the road opens out again and a verge is present on the east side. It is regrettable that few drivers pay much attention to the sign.

Speed limits in the village should be reviewed, particularly if any traffic calming measures are to be introduced. From the 30mph sign just before Meadowside, this limit could still apply until the motorist arrives at a 20mph sign near the bridge. This would mark the start of a 20mph zone for the central part of the village as far as Blyth Row. The relatively short 40mph stretch of the B1116 between Parham and Hacheston is unnecessary and, for traffic calming purposes would be far better if this short gap between the villages had a limit of 30mph. The Street, certainly as far as the church and The Old Rectory should be included in the 20mph zone, and separate measures could be considered for North Green, Mill Green and Silverlace Green.

This report has concluded that conditions for pedestrians in Parham are impaired largely as a result the poor condition of the pavements along the B1116. Conditions are further impeded by the high speed of many vehicles travelling through the village as well as by some vehicles mounting the pavements in order to pass each other near Willoughby House. Walking and outdoor exercise generally have been proven to improve physical and mental health and wellbeing. These activities should be promoted rather than restricted. We need to reduce the speed of traffic and make it easier for villagers to cross

the road and walk to and from the village hall, the hub of the community. Enabling people to walk around the village in safety will greatly improve community cohesion. Reducing vehicle speeds will also improve conditions for cyclists and equestrians, making these activities more attractive and popular. The community of Parham has suffered recently as result of cuts to public transport. We have also lost the community playground: one of the major factors in its underuse and neglect was the difficulty reported by parents of physically getting to and from the playground, particularly with pushchairs. The time has come to put something back into the community. What better place to start than with the pavements and footpaths?

Compiled February 2018.

Post script. The pedestrian entrance to the village hall has been closed as a result of a decision by the Village Hall Committee taken on the grounds of it being a public danger.