

Tuddenham St Martin's Parish Council

NOTES FROM the PUBLIC MEETING held on Thursday, 29th April 2021 at 7.30pm on the Zoom platform.

Present: Mr B Pipe, Mr D Lugo, Mr J Bird, Mrs H Hollier, Ms P Procter, Mrs J Ellinor, and Mrs C Frost (Clerk). There was 1 member of the public present at the start of the meeting and 2 additional members of the public joined later in the meeting.

1. Welcome, with introduction and outline of the meeting, and Apologies Mr Pipe welcomed everyone to the public meeting and gave an outline of the meeting ahead, inviting views in the public forum session later in the meeting. Everyone was reminded that the meeting was being recorded for Minute taking purposes only and that the recording would be deleted immediately after the Minutes were approved. Apologies were received from Mrs Weller (Parish Councillor), Mr Hedgley (District Councillor), Mr Fryatt (District Councillor) and Mr Hicks (County Councillor).

2. Presentation from the Parish Council on events to date, including the proposed designation of Westerfield Lane, Fynn Lane and Tuddenham Lane/Sandy Lane to Quiet Lane status. Ms Procter's report of 26th April 2021 had been emailed to Parish Councillors prior to the meeting. The report had additionally included the feedback from the consultation to date. The report from Ms Procter was as follows:

The consultation process we have engaged with in the village is following the process set up and developed by the quiet lane project team. It has become a much bigger project than originally anticipated and the submissions of potential QLS (quiet lane status) have been divided into 3 'waves'. Wave 1 has already been passed for the County Council decision making process and work will begin on establishing signage etc. The deadline for Wave 2 is April 30th which we will not meet now, and the deadline for Wave 3 is July 30th. The requirement is for each Parish to submit its recommendations after the public consultation and there is an on-line document 'Workbook' to be completed which will be followed by the formal press 'Notice of designation', that will be issued with relevant papers and displays on roadside notice boards. As part of this process anyone affected by the proposed QLS designation has the right to object to SCC Highways. All details about this are on the Quiet Lane site.

Westerfield Lane, as with a number of proposed lanes, is still awaiting a traffic survey which may influence the outcome of the designation but we have been advised to proceed with the consultation anyway at this stage.

Following distribution of the flyers I have received email replies from 10 households (11 individuals).

Of these, 8 are broadly in favour of QLS for the lanes we consulted on and 1 is against both lanes and 2 are against Fynn lane in particular. Below* I have copied the detail of each reply and as you will read a number of questions are raised as well.

I also received three responses from representatives of local cycling and walking groups making comments about quiet Lanes in principle not just for Tuddenham.

*For Parish Council viewing only.

Ms Procter gave an overview of the report and the Quiet Lane process so far. Swilland & Winesham grouped Parish Council had carried out a consultation on Tuddenham Lane/Sandy Lane and it was understood that following their consultation they had agreed to nominate Tuddenham Lane/Sandy Lane for Quiet Lane Status.

The next stage of the process for Tuddenham St Martin was to provide a report of this public meeting, a record of the feedback, and the decision from the Parish Council as to whether it wished to proceed with the proposed lanes. A decision about the proposed lanes was due to be considered at the 4th May 2021 Parish Council meeting and Ms Procter had been informed that the Tuddenham St Martin proposals would still be included in Wave 2 of the project if the formal decision is made and confirmed upon completion of the meeting of 4th May 2021. Going forward to the next stage, any residents on proposed Quiet Lanes would have a second consultation as they would be contacted by the Highways Dept. to hear if there were any objections before any posts and signs are put into position. A measure and location has been identified for possible signs and the signage plan has been put together. Signs would be at the beginning of a lane, if they receive Quiet Lane Status, but Westerfield Lane would have reminder signs, including a sign at the entrance of Keightley Way.

In view of the Suffolk County Council budget allocation and the additional funding from East Suffolk Council, at the present time there would be not be a cost element for the Parish Council if the decision was to proceed with the 2 lanes being proposed (Westerfield Lane and Fynn Lane). Villages proposing more than 2 lanes are being asked for voluntary contributions.

Written replies to the consultation had been circulated to Parish Councillors prior to the meeting, including additional replies received after the 26th April 2021 report and up to 29th April 2021. Verbal feedback received by Ms Procter had continued to be positive about the scheme in general.

3. Public Forum

Mrs Hollier had been made aware of additional feedback that had been submitted earlier that evening by a member of the public not able to attend this meeting. It was agreed this latest feedback would be circulated to Parish Councillors during the meeting for consideration.

The Clerk had received verbal feedback earlier in the day from a resident and gave a brief summary as follows:

The resident wanted to be positive and thought that perhaps a bonus could be that Quiet Lane Status could be used as a consideration factor in the event of any nearby possible development in the village, but the overall feeling was not to support the proposals and one of the reasons was that QLS signs would not alter the driving consideration of motorists. The signs may not have a negative effect if put in place, but were unlikely to have a positive impact.

A member of the public at the meeting wished to get across why he had objected to QLS proposals, which on the face of it seemed like a positive scheme to address road safety issues, but he felt it would not do this, that it was a waste of money and would actually be detrimental to the village. Proliferation of road signs was given as a reason, with the following information:

A 2017 Dept. of Transport Task Force on road signs found that the vast majority of warning signs were totally superfluous and risked inflicting 'information overload' on drivers and would have a detrimental impact on road safety. Guidelines were issued to encourage councils to reduce the number of road signs especially in rural locations. Now however, it was understood that Suffolk County Council has earmarked £235,000 for the Quiet Lane Status project and East Suffolk Council were contributing additional funds for East Suffolk parish councils.

Two Quiet Lane pilot schemes were carried out in Norfolk and Kent in 2003 and found that there was;

Little change in vehicle speeds, and

Little change in observed numbers of pedestrians in Norfolk (small increase in Kent).

The Norfolk scheme was better received than the Kent scheme when surveyed before and after the pilot, but taken together:

33% of people thought the scheme would work before the pilot, and that dropped to 30% after the pilot.

36% thought the scheme would not work before the pilot compared with 43% afterwards.

Part of the poor reception may have been down to the fact that the people in Kent noticed a problem with littering during the pilot, which may have been coincidental, but it is worth considering whether encouraging more pedestrians will lead to more litter.

The resident thought that QLS was well intentioned, but he was concerned that it would not lead to any improvement and that money should not be wasted on it.

The additional written feedback, referred to at the start of the public forum and emailed to Parish Councillors during the meeting, was read out loud to Parish Councillors.

2 members of the public joined the meeting. They were welcomed and advised that it was being recorded for Minute taking purposes only and that the recording would be deleted when the Minutes were approved. They did not wish to make any comments at the moment but were interested to see how the meeting was proceeding as they were keen to support the proposals.

There was a discussion about whether the lanes should be considered on their own individual merits, or as a whole, especially if they had similar or shared particular features, or provided a joined up Quiet Lane route. It was also clarified, and there was no objection, that the decision about QLS for the Tuddenham lanes would not be made at this public meeting. It would be made at the 4th May 2021 Parish Council meeting and any discussion and consideration this evening would be in preparation for the 4th May meeting.

In reply to a question about a recent email from the QLS Team about funding, Ms Procter reported that it was understood, following a discussion with someone from the QLS Team, that the Parish Council would only be asked for a voluntary contribution if more than 2 lanes (in addition to Westerfield Lane and Fynn Lane) were put forward for designation.

Other comments and questions were as follows:

Perhaps useful to consider the Tuddenham lanes separately.

This meeting is to analyse views that have been put forward in order to give guidance on how the Parish Council should proceed, rather than an opportunity for Parish Councillor views.

Quick analysis of feedback is that it seems to be 50% support and 50% object. There seemed to be strong opposition to designation of Fynn Lane from the majority of feedback from Fynn Lane residents. Their opposition should be taken into account. The majority of feedback from Westerfield Lane residents however that had responded, is support of QLS status for Westerfield Lane.

To give an overview of the numbers for the replies, the Clerk gave the following figures (this had been compiled prior to the telephone reply and latest email reply received, and so the adjusted number to include the latest replies is in brackets):

There have been 17 (19) replies.

Re Westerfield Lane:

Support (specifically to Westerfield Lane): 11, of which 7 were from residents of Westerfield Lane.

Object (specifically to Westerfield Lane): 3

Object (scheme in general, not specifically Westerfield Lane): 3 (5).

Re Fynn Lane:

Support (specifically to the proposals in the consultation flyer and some specifically to Fynn Lane): 7, of which 0 were from residents of Fynn Lane.

Object (specifically to Fynn Lane): 6 (7), of which 5 were from residents of Fynn Lane.

No strong view about Fynn Lane: 1

No comment: 3

Object (scheme in general, not specifically Fynn Lane): 0 (1).

The following comments were made:

It would be statistically unsound to make the decision based on such a small number of replies, and for a variety of other reasons. It is instead most important to use the content of what has been written and to note all of the points that have been raised against and for the project and consider if they are valid or not for the purpose of the whole village.

It is still useful to know the ratio of numbers and gives a feel of what residents are thinking.

It is important to be mindful of the feedback of residents on a proposed lane when considering the decision.

It was noted that some replies in support of the scheme still questioned if the action would make any difference.

Important to consider if the points made in the replies are valid or not, and Parish Councillors will need to make a decision which will benefit the whole village, but bear in mind the replies from residents on the proposed lanes.

Disappointed that some of the feedback has been that QLS will make no difference. Exploring this route is a way of seeking some solution to historical road safety and traffic calming issues that have been raised over a number of years with the Highways Dept. without success.

It is important that the Parish Council explore this route.

The QLS scheme is not a traffic slowing measure and not an enforceable scheme.

It is important to look at roads proposed individually, as well as the scheme as a whole, as the nature of each road is different.

It is important to look at the purpose of QLS. It is not intending to tackle speed issues but to make activities, such as walking, riding, etc, safer. Enforcement is not a major issue for the scheme but QLS is about education of speed management.

Communities nearby have been making more use of the quieter roads recently and have been commenting on how much more pleasant it is and feel less threatened by traffic. Whilst enforcement is not part and parcel of the scheme, it is inevitable that traffic will slow if the scheme is introduced. This has been acknowledged by David Chenery and the Parish Council should be looking at the bigger picture about the relationship with neighbouring communities in the terms of there being access routes to support non motorists.

Part of what underpins the health of the nation is the fact that not enough exercise is being taken and non-motorists are being driven off the road by speeding traffic and feeling unsafe.

Some replies had suggested that the money would be better spent on other traffic management schemes such as a slow sign painted on the highway of Westerfield Lane, or painted white lines at the edges of the highway to narrow the carriageway at different stretches of the road. Also, a suggestion of white lines at the edge of the carriageway on The Hill, where there is no footpath, to create a safer area for pedestrians.

If the funds allocated for QLS is not used for QLS, it will not be allocated for other schemes as suggested above. Many of these have already been discussed, and some even agreed with the Highways Dept, with no result.

QLS may be considered as a first step to more traffic calming measures.

QLS funds are only available for this project and no other traffic calming measure, whether we like it or not, and so the suggestion of alternative traffic calming measures is irrelevant. The Parish Council need to decide whether it is worth bidding for some of this pot of money to make the lives of people in our village better. Discussion followed about whether the suggestion that this money is being badly spent, or suggestions of how it should be spent better, should be ignored as it was already allocated specifically to the QLS project and nothing else, although frustrations about this were appreciated.

We have people in the village who say it's a good idea and they would like us to support it.

In relation to the wider community, some feedback had highlighted that Fynn Lane is already a well-established route for walkers, cyclists, etc that would not benefit from additional signage. Could the QLS funds be put to better use for other lanes in the wider community in the East Suffolk District Council area, that would benefit from QLS status?

A resident at the meeting felt it was a good initiative and could not see disadvantages to it. Need to respect views of Fynn Lane residents but it is a public thoroughfare and what is deemed best for the village should be taken account of.

Another resident felt that QLS signage sends out the right signals to slow traffic down, to be aware of other road users, pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders, etc, and that it a good thing.

It was understood that any surplus QLS funds from one village would be used by other villages seeking QLS status and that the total allocated budget would be used for the QLS project. The total cost and cost allocation for each village was discussed again.

Support was reiterated from a resident as it is good to experience a QLS route as a cyclist.

In reply to a question, the main objections that had been raised, and about Fynn Lane in particular, were reported. These included:

- Traffic already slows for pedestrians and more vulnerable users
- Designating it as Quiet Lane will exacerbate the existing problems with dogs off leads.
- Once advertised as a QLS route, it will attract more visitors.
- Driving down the lane to find somewhere to park to use QLS route will cause more traffic problems
- The extra road signage is unnecessary as it is felt there will not be any improvement.
- There are already parking issues in the village and the advertisement of the QLS routes will encourage even more traffic as the majority of visitors will most likely be via car. It would be better for SCC to invest in a better public transport system to reduce car use. What will the Parish Council do if there are more parking issues as a result?

In reply to a question, a resident replied that they did not actively seek QLS routes when cycling. They mostly cycled from home, or used trains and sometimes the car to transport their bikes, to seek quieter places on Ordnance Survey Maps for cycling.

Some Parish Councillors started to indicate how they would be considering their decisions for the 4th May 2021 Parish Council meeting. These included:

1 Councillor – Having read all information and feedback, not sure about Fynn Lane for QLS designation as at end of Fynn Lane there are only footpaths and not bridleways. It is a dead-end lane already enjoyed by walkers and does not seem to meet the fit for QLS status. Westerfield Lane however, is one of the designated cycle tracks around Suffolk and it seems logical to make motorists more aware of cyclists and other vulnerable road users on the highway.

1 Councillor - As a Parish Council we agreed to consult with all residents about QLS status for the lanes in question and it may exacerbate problems already highlighted by residents of Fynn Lane if it is decided to approve designation of this lane.

1 Councillor – is inclined to back both comments, with the intention of not supporting QLS status for Fynn Lane, but support QLS status for Westerfield Lane as it would benefit from the allocation. In particular, this relates to there being no footway and poor street night lighting for a lot of villagers accessing the village hall.

1 Councillor – feels that the lanes should be looked at individually because of their different natures. Recognises the situation of Westerfield Lane but still has reservations and still feels that Highways should be pressed for better highway management on this lane in spite of past experience resulting in no success.

Additional dimension added from one of these Councillors was that as a Parish Council, we have been very mindful of the Ipswich Northern Fringe Development and the concerns it has raised. At the same time, we should open our minds to linking Westerfield Lane with the environmental infrastructure of this development, such as the parkland, walking routes and cycling routes. This could be a mutual benefit for Tuddenham villagers as well as residents of the Ipswich Garden Suburb with the potential for villagers being able to walk in safety to the Ipswich Garden Suburb infrastructure, such as the high school and primary schools.

In answer to an additional question, it was reported that the traffic data used for Westerfield Lane met with the QLS criteria, although sometimes close to the 1000 vehicle per day limit. It was understood however, that Suffolk County Council would be carrying out its own traffic survey to ascertain that the proposed lanes meet the criteria.

4. Next steps

Parish Councillors would take time to reflect on the information provided by the consultation and at this public meeting so that a decision could be considered at the 4th May Parish Council meeting.

Everyone was thanked for joining the meeting and the meeting closed at 9.pm.