



# Traffic Calming Measures in Astbury Village

Draft 2



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# 1 Introduction

Astbury is a small village in the parish of Newbold Astbury near the southern fringe of Congleton. As well as hosting its own population, a well-used pub, a popular village school and a thriving parish church (these three each serving a wider catchment area than the village), it welcomes many walkers enjoying the rich network of footpaths leading from the village.

The heart of the village is a conservation area containing a small green and several listed buildings (including the Grade 1 medieval church and Queen Anne rectory) and is a popular destination for painters and photographers. This area is shown in the aerial photograph (© Google Maps) shown below

However, it suffers from a high and increasing level of through traffic, mainly originating in Congleton's eastern suburbs and increasingly from Biddulph, travelling to and from the M6 and Stoke-on-Trent, Newcastle and points south on the A34.

This high level of traffic, especially at the morning and evening peak hours, results in high levels of road traffic collisions, some very serious, particularly at the southern exit from the village onto the A34 and at the narrow 'throat' of the village green between the Egerton Arms pub to the north and the high churchyard wall to the south.

The narrowness of the roadway and pavement, coupled with vehicle speed and the increasing bulk of commercial and agricultural vehicles, also poses a danger to pedestrians and damages the road's kerbing and the village green.

In addition, the village green is frequently used as a turning circle. Because the eastern apex is sharp, vehicles often perform three- (or more) point turns. Recently, the boundary wall of Westcroft, the cottage immediately to the north, has been severely damaged by such manoeuvres.

Finally, although traffic on the southern roadway have priority at the apex over traffic on the northern roadway, there are frequent 'races' as cars on both lanes hurry to reach the apex first. This increases the risk of collision at the junction or pedestrian injury on the northern pavement.



## 2 Proposals

### 2.1 Alignments and Traffic Flow

This section outlines a number of possible changes to roadway alignment and traffic flow that might be applied, separately or together (though the final two or mutually exclusive). Where relevant, these changes are shown in red on the aerial view of the village (above). The layouts shown are indicative and not intended to be definitive: we would expect Cheshire East Highways to advise,

#### 2.1.1 Realignment of southern exit to A34

The splay of the southern roadway's exit to the south encourages motorists to join the A34 at speed, increasing the risk of collision with southbound traffic on the A34 and vehicles leaving the lane to the immediate south of Astbury Garage.

Altering the alignment as suggested at (A) on the photograph above would slow the traffic down and reduce this risk. Furthermore, the roadway is wide enough that none of the village green would need to be lost in compensation.

#### 2.1.2 Realignment of eastern apex of village green

To make it more apparent that the southern roadway has priority over the northern, we suggest the realignment shown at (B) on the photograph. This forces eastbound traffic on the northern roadway to slow down on approach and makes the subordinate role of the northern roadway more apparent. It would also make easier turning west along the southern roadway, since drivers insist on making this manoeuvre.

Unfortunately, it requires the loss of a small part of the green at its eastern apex. In compensation, the reclaimed roadway to the north should be landscaped as a distinct 'hump' and grassed over.

#### 2.1.3 Chicane and refuge at northern church steps

There is a set of steps leading from the eastern end northern churchyard wall directly down on to Peel Lane. There is no footpath at this point, and the view from the steps up and down Peel Lane is very limited. This increases the risk of accident and injury to pedestrians and property.

We propose a chicane and pedestrian refuge, protected by bollards, as shown at (C) on the photograph, with the narrowed roadway at the chicane raised and resurfaced to indicate a foot crossing. This has the additional advantage of slowing traffic entering the village from the east.

#### 2.1.4 Closure of northern exit to A34

Many of the problems associated with the northern roadway – dangers due to roadway width, 'races' to reach the eastern apex, and drivers using the green as a

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turning circle – can be eliminated by closing its exit onto the A34, as shown at (D) on the photograph, restricting its use to access to adjoining properties.

Unfortunately, this would require additional ‘no through road’ signage at the apex of the green. It might also increase peak-time congestion in the village as westbound traffic backed up along the single through road. This option would also require realignment at the apex (2.1.2), to give residents of the northern roadway access to the A34.

### **2.1.5 Conversion of roads around green to one-way working**

Finally, as alternatives to the above, the northern roadway could be restricted to eastbound traffic and with the southern roadway either left as two-way or restricted to westbound traffic. (Drivers have been known to assume this is the case already, leading them to driver west on the southern roadway’s eastbound lane.)

This would also require signage, ‘no entry’ signs at the southern exit to the A34 and a ‘one way’ arrow at the apex. As with option 2.1.4, this option would also require realignment at the apex (2.1.2), to give residents of the northern roadway access to the A34.

## **2.2 Road Surfaces**

We believe a change of road surface can be useful in raising drivers’ awareness of the village setting. This should certainly happen at the exits to the A34 (A and D on the map), the chicane at the church steps, and the eastern speed restriction signs on Peel Lane to the east of the village (not shown in photograph). At the eastern speed restriction signs, ‘rumble strips’ and/or red tarmac might be valid, but at the A34 exits these would be visually obtrusive and possibly cause damaging vibrations in nearby properties. Here, and at the chicane, we suggest stone setts. Extending stone setts throughout the conservation area should also be considered.

## **2.3 Speed Limits**

Currently, the A34 is subject to a 40mph limit from a point south of Fol Hollow in Congleton to the crest of Magpie Bank, and village roads to a 30mph limit. These limits, especially on the A34, are frequently flouted.

We recommend that the 40mph limit on the A34 be reduced to 30mph, extending Congleton’s existing 30mph area southwards, and that consideration be given to reducing some or all of the A34 south to Scholar Green from the national speed limit (60mph) to 50mph, and that speed cameras (rather than just SIDs) are installed between Astbury and Congleton.

We further recommend that the 30mph zone be extended further east along Peel Lane and into Dodds Lane past Styeh Heath, and that the limit in the current 30mph zone be reduced to 20mph.