



Newbold Astbury cum Moreton Parish Council

Astbury Village Traffic Calming: Survey Results

Issue No: 1
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Pages: 13

Abstract: The results of the traffic calming survey, carried out between 6 October and 31 December 2015.

Document History

Revision	Description of change
1	Initial issue

Forecast Changes

No changes forecast.

Introduction

Background

Astbury village is the most densely populated part of the Newbold Astbury and Moreton cum Alcumlow parishes, and a conservation area. However, it suffers a high degree of road traffic, especially at peak times on weekday mornings and evenings, when it is used as a 'rat run' for commuters living in Congleton's High Town and Mossley districts and increasingly from Biddulph.

Although, under the conservation area designation, Cheshire East Council has a responsibility to mitigate the impact of traffic on the village, neither Cheshire East, or before it Congleton Borough Council, have initiated any attempts at mitigation. The only concrete actions have been the installation of bollards outside the Egerton Arms and at the A34 junction by Royal Oak Cottage, and the placing of rocks at the apex of the village green (to prevent vehicles damaging the green). Both of these actions were initiated and partly paid for by the Parish Council.

With the increase in traffic, there has come an increase in accidents, safety risks to residents and damage to kerbs and the village green.

Following some suggestions from village residents, we prepared a report that outlined a number of proposals that we believe could at least calm the flow of traffic through the village, reducing risk and severity of injury and damage. However, none of these proposals would directly reduce the amount of traffic: far more radical measures would be needed to achieve that.

The survey

To gauge public opinion, the council conducted an opinion survey based on the published proposals between 6 October and 31 December 2015. The survey was made available online via the parish website and via paper forms distributed by post to all households in the parish.

We received a total of 59 completed responses, comprising 21 online, 37 by paper and one by email.

Three of the respondents by paper only returned the first sheet of the survey, perhaps because they didn't realise the second sheet (containing the aerial view of the village on one side) also contained questions. Their responses to the other questions have been included in this report.

Some of the paper responses arrived some days after the official closure date: nonetheless, they have been included.

While online respondents could only complete the boxes supplied, some respondents by paper also wrote marginal notes next to questions asking tick-the-box answers. Where possible, we have included these notes in this report.

Two respondents by paper spotted that some questions asked "Do you agree or disagree?" but expected the ambiguous answers *Yes / No / Don't Know*, and suggested that *Agree / Disagree / Don't Know* would be better. We agree with them, and will try do better next time! However, they both assumed *Yes* meant *Agree*. We've assumed that other respondents assumed likewise in this report.

Some respondents included their names or addresses in comments: we've removed them in this report. We've also made corrected some spelling errors, but otherwise have included comments as supplied.

In the original survey, proposals referenced locations marked A, B, C and D on an aerial view of the village: this view is also included as an appendix to this report.

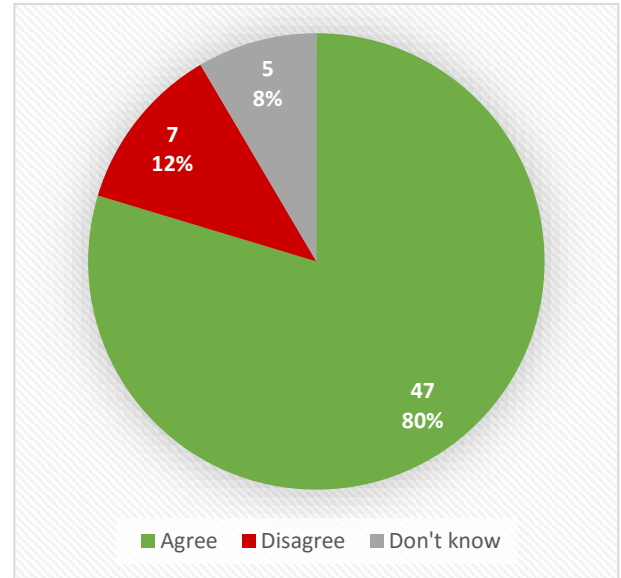
The survey results

Road alignment proposals

Splay of southern roadway at (A)

Proposal: 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.

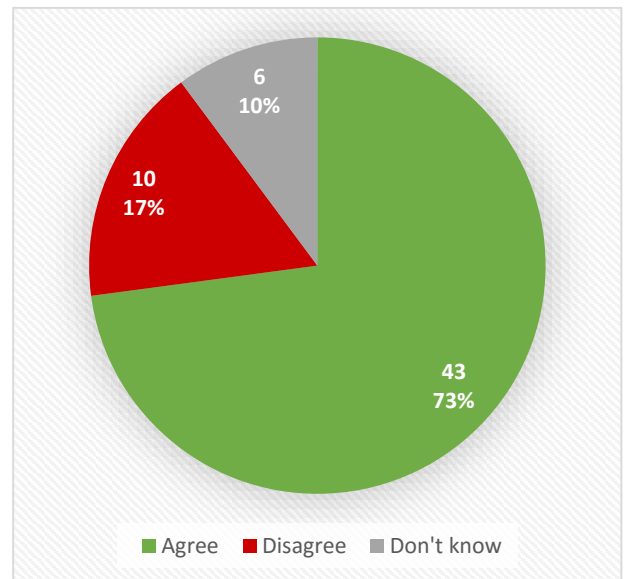
Altering the alignment as suggested at (A) on the photograph above would slow the traffic down and reduce this risk. Furthermore, the roadway is wide enough that none of the village green would need to be lost in compensation.



Realignment at green apex (B)

Proposal: 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.

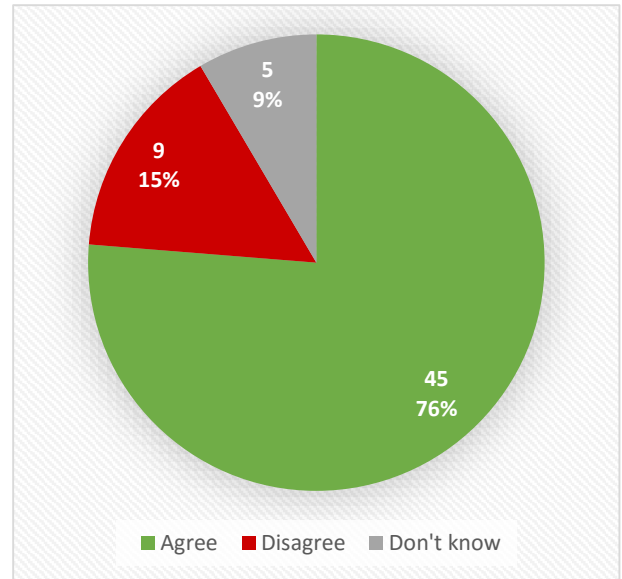
Unfortunately, it requires the loss of a small part of the green at its eastern apex. In compensation, the reclaimed roadway to the north should be landscaped as a distinct 'hump' and grassed over.



Chicane at church steps (C)

Proposal: 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.



Other suggestions

“Support closure of Northern roadway.

However, consideration needs to be given to surface water and sewer drainage if the run off is closed.”

“Agree with road calming at this point [church steps to Peel Lane]. However, there would have to be repositioning of current exit from Village Hall car park.”

“Make it 40mph from Magpie Bank to beyond Pecks Restaurant as it's impossible to turn right out of Watery Lane due to speeders coming out of the existing 40mph zone, derestricted traffic racing towards Congleton, coupled with traffic going in and out of the garden centre opposite.”

“Fit a zebra crossing.”

“[Realignment at B] may cause a congestion problem backing back to the A34 with people trying to exit the A34 especially at busy times would be blocked by A. I would wait for A & D changes first. [Steps at C] could cause a congestion problem at busy times. Make changes at A & D first as one-way system. See how this works before affecting B as I feel at busy periods a lot of traffic joined the A34 and there will be two lanes put into one lane. This could cause a block at B and prevent entrance at D from A34 causing back-up on A34 and people overtaking.”

“I think priority should go to eastbound traffic at this chicane to help traffic leave village at peak times”

“The steps [at C] are often slippery so why not close this set of steps and have all those attending church enter by the lych-gate, crossing the road just west of the Egerton Arms where traffic can be seen both ways. The Rectory is no longer a church property occupied by the rector so the rector no longer wants a "short cut" entry to the parish church. Money will be saved and safety improved with only one crossing.”

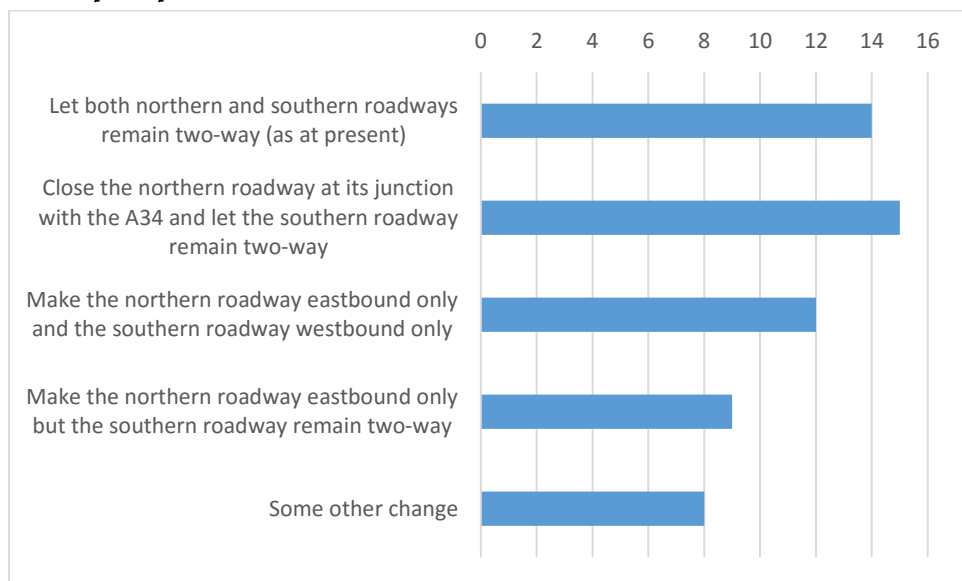
“Close the steps from the churchyard”

“[Realignment at A] would cause congestion that would back up to the chicane by Rose Cottage, preventing traffic from travelling north. We support the pedestrian refuge [at C] but are concerned about the effect this will have on traffic flow. Something needs to be done to establish the priority for vehicles travelling one way or the other.”

“Response was 'no' to a reduction of splay as westbound-only on southern roadway needs stacking room for north- and south-bound traffic. Reducing to one lane at bottom will cause backing up.”

“Put a bypass in on the southern side of Peel Drive from the A34 west of the village to Peel Lane - Dodds Lane junction east of the village, thus avoiding the bottleneck.”

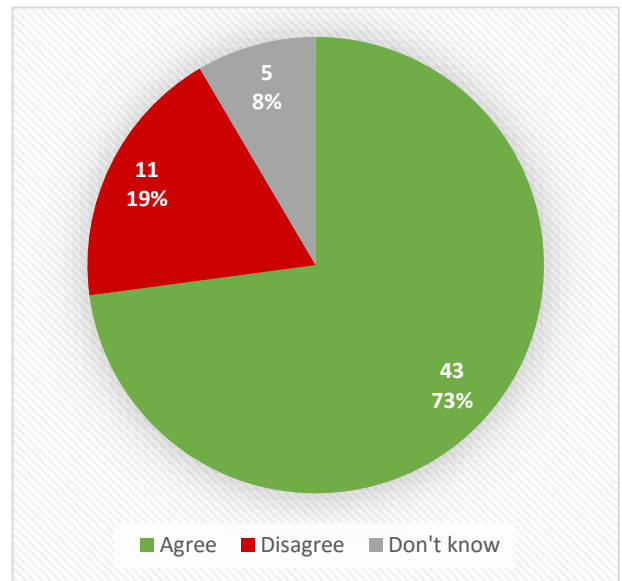
Traffic flow proposals



Speed limit recommendations

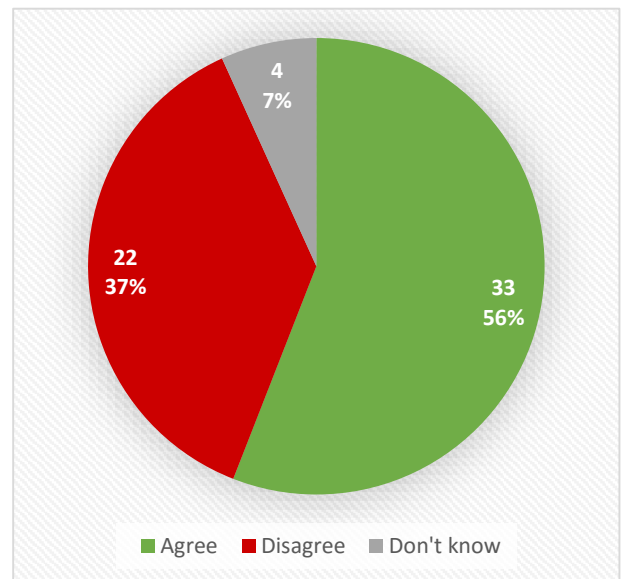
Speed limit on A34 through village

Proposal: We recommend that the current 40mph limit on the A34 be reduced to 30mph, extending Congleton's existing 30mph area southwards to Magpie Bank. Do you agree or disagree with this recommendation?



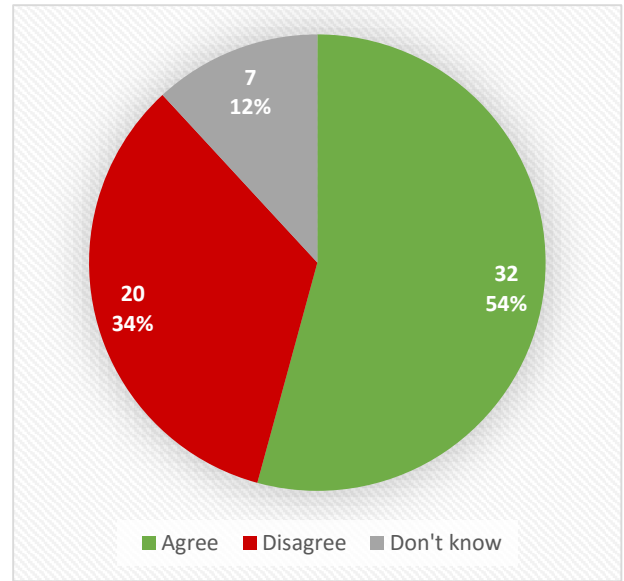
Speed limit on A34 south of village

Proposal: We recommend that that consideration be given to reducing some or all of the A34 south to Scholar Green from the national speed limit (60mph) to 50mph. Do you agree or disagree with this suggestion?



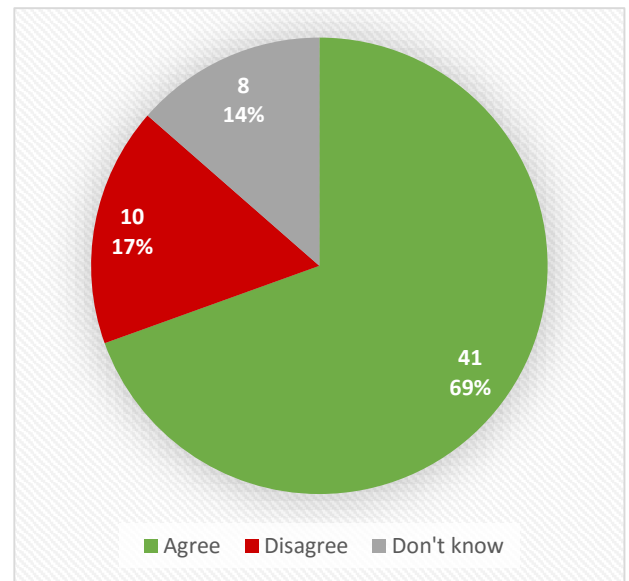
Speed cameras vs. SIDs on A34

Proposal: We recommend that speed cameras (rather than just SIDs) are installed between Astbury and Congleton. Do you agree or disagree with this suggestion?



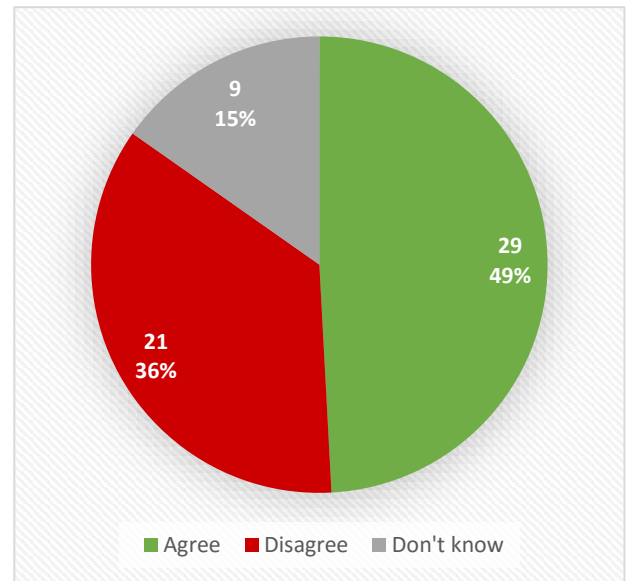
Extent of speed limit along Peel Lane and Dodds Lane

Proposal: We recommend that the 30mph zone be extended further east along Peel Lane and into Dodds Lane past Stye Heath. Do you agree or disagree with this recommendation?



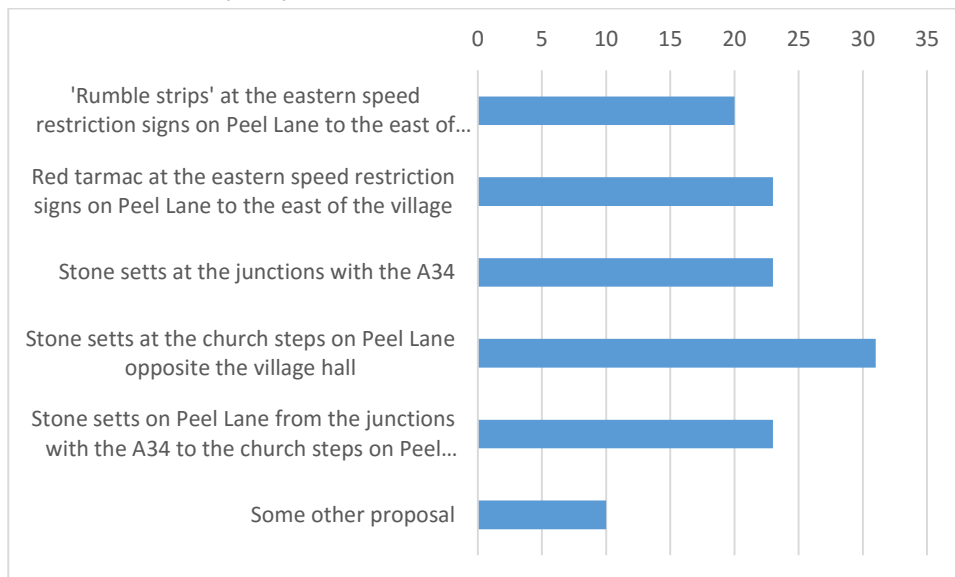
Speed limit in village

Proposal: We recommend that the speed limit in the current 30mph zone be reduced to 20mph. Do you agree or disagree with this recommendation?



Road surface measures

Because respondents were allowed select more than one proposal, the numbers add up to more than the number of respondents. Note that some respondents selected 'Some other proposal' but did not supply any, while some paper respondents didn't tick that box but provided a proposal or a comment anyway: all are included below.



“All or some of the above may help so something more unified.”

“Sleeping policemen fitted every 30 feet from the main road junctions up to the junctions off Peel Lane and Dodds Lane, in addition to the chicane by the church steps.”

“Do not fit stone setts as they are extremely slippery when wet; just fit a speed indication sign like Padgbury Lane: this works well”.

“Red tarmac would look terrible in a beautiful country village. Natural stone every time. Please do not spoil the look of the area.”

“Sporadic rumble strips or setts throughout village as traffic-calming measure.”

“I think this is a very difficult problem to resolve”

“A pelican crossing from the village hall car park to the church steps”

“Possibly close steps at the church - just leave one set of steps but make it safer.”

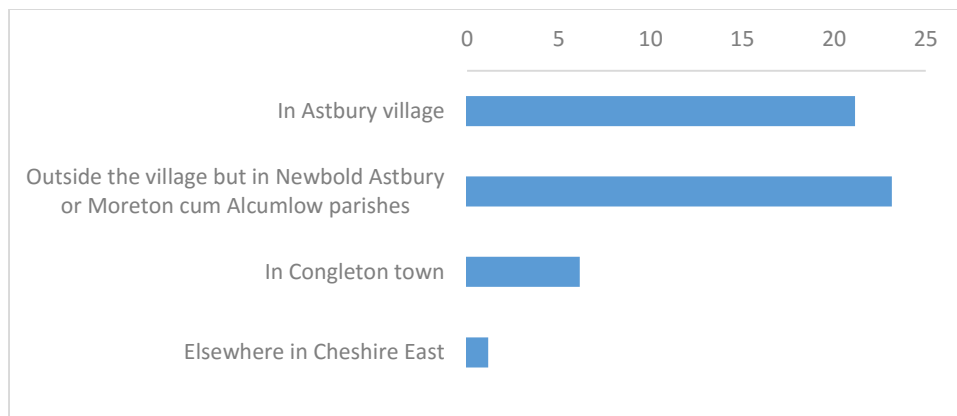
“All traffic calming measures welcome.”

Finally...

Location of respondents

As we might expect, the majority of respondents reported living in the Newbold Astbury and Moreton cum Alcumlow, roughly equally split between those living in the village itself (21) and those living elsewhere in the parishes (23). No respondents lived in our neighbouring rural parishes, but six came from Congleton town and one from elsewhere in Cheshire East. Not surprisingly, no respondents reported living beyond that.

Eight respondents (including those that did not return the second sheet of questions) did not give a location.



Other suggestions or comments

“Anything to put traffic off using the village as a short cut”

“The importance of the school children cannot be overestimated therefore the sign for the school should not be hidden in the hedge.”

“The School warning sign should not be obscured by the hedge. This is dangerous. ”

“The proposed Traffic Calming Measures are all valuable as a means of slowing and managing the growing traffic streams through Astbury Village. Combined, they would be effective in helping achieve that objective. The budgets involved are minor. All steps proposed should be implemented in full, and should all be implemented simultaneously and as soon as possible.

However, the proposed Measures have a vital flaw. They ignore the key need of Astbury as a community, and the responsibility placed upon the local Parish Council and its superior Cheshire East Council. They do nothing to reduce the traffic flows which leave and join the A34 within the Village.

Without an alternative and more attractive road feeding the A34 and its links to Mossley, Mow Cop, Biddulph and beyond, the proposed Traffic Calming Measures will act solely to create slow traffic congestion. The results will be increasing gridlock around the village green and onto the adjacent A34.

Given the minimal width of existing Pavements, which on the Northern side of the Village are significantly narrower than the generally-accepted pedestrian and wheelchair-usable 1.5 metres, the gridlock allied to growing traffic will increase impact on residents and visitors.

That will make living in Astbury, visiting friends and relations, and supporting the village's church, village hall, pub, farm shop and school more of a challenge. Walking and cycling within the village community will become even more threatening and unsafe than current. Disabled and elderly people using wheelchairs will find access and transit infeasible.

There is only one solution to this growing problem. Road traffic within Astbury must be prevented by the provision of a Bypass. This would enable the pedestrianisation of Astbury Village, the creation of a safe and attractive environment for the historic Conservation Area and its iconic features and buildings, and the widening of Pavements to current construction advisory levels of 1.5 metres. It would enable Astbury Village to return to its original function of a community for residence, education, employment and enjoyment, rather than its current role as a rat-run.”

“If northern roadway is closed at its junction with A34 traffic could be seriously compromised both on A34 in both directions and on southern roadway. This could cause more RTAs (and expense to Cheshire East) and "road rage" incidents at peak commuter times.

It could however be of benefit to Astbury residents living on northern roadway.

Compromise - with an Astbury Bypass.

Construction of a Bypass around Astbury Village would avoid the necessity to construct and pay for all the previous suggestions in this survey.

I would agree with many of the proposals suggested for traffic calming measures in Astbury Village. However the utter chaos, noise, vibration and pollution of queuing vehicles throughout the day, every day and the many inconsiderate and impatient commuters on our local roads weigh heavily in such discussions.

The sensible way forward is to construct an Astbury Bypass - that way both residents and commuters benefit!”

“The questionnaire is confusing - the questions ask 'Do you agree or disagree', then give a yes, no, don't know option. I.e., the question should be do you agree - ans yes, no, don't know. I answered 'yes' as 'I agree'. ”

“The proposals as presented are fragmented and superficial. Each independently addressing a single specific issue with insufficient regard to the broader challenge. As such I also find the proposals lacking in imagination and ambition. Furthermore, there is no consideration given to the likely overall impact which remains completely unknown.

There is every possibility of causing further issues - the existing situation with narrow roads and difficult junctions tends towards slowing traffic through the village and spreading the weight of traffic across two roads. Removing uncertainty seems likely to increase speeds. Most modern and forward thinking schemes now make use of uncertainty as a valuable tool in encouraging drivers to pay greater attention and slow traffic naturally.

Disappointingly, the proposals include recommendations for ugly and intrusive road signs in Astbury Village which ought to be a non-starter.”

“I would like to see more integrated proposals - there are elements I like but imaginative traffic calming should be the aim and not speed restrictions and cameras.”

“As a resident I find that unless I leave the house prior to 7.20 a.m. each morning, the traffic flow delays me considerably from accessing Peel Lane during peak times.”

“With all the above proposals access is still required for emergency services, agricultural vehicles as this is a farming area, and HGVs for deliveries. The problem is the volume of cars using this route to avoid detection.”

“Fit CCTV cameras to the A34/village green junctions to capture evidence of drivers deliberately trying to force themselves out across traffic on the main road, causing accidents.”

“If the drains can be fixed in the road at Styehill”

“There's no point in reducing the speed limit on Magpie Bank unless it can be enforced: no one takes notice now, it's like a race-track and a death trap for those of us trying to turn at this point. The speed limit needs reducing on the A34 to at least Astbury Garden Centre. Speed cameras or just SIDs need installing - even police presence with cameras. Something to encourage the speed limit to be adhered to.”

“Those of you that were on the council ten years ago will remember that I took this recommendation [20mph in the village] to the AGM of Cheshire Council but it did not get voted in. Since then it has been adopted in many school areas and even on housing estates. I still think twenty is plenty!”

“Always thought the village green should be a one-way system. It is perfectly designed for this. Two-way traffic is terrible for all exits and entrances as getting on or off the A34 is hazardous at this point. The garage is also a busy spot and this would make it so much safer.”

“We live in Peel Drive and at peak times I have counted 29 cars/vans all in line. Then all try to enter village and they back-up from village. So anything to slow traffic down must help. Also some of the earlier proposals might need a temporary measure to see if they work.”

“I am not entirely clear about third traffic flow option [both roadways one-way]. If I imagine the A34, northern roadway and southern roadway to be a roundabout (except at the Apex!) which means that all eastbound traffic enters the northern roadway and all southbound and northbound A34 traffic enters the southern roadway then that is my preferred option (a yellow boxed area would be required on A34 northbound side). The danger of the second and fourth options [closure of northern roadway at A34; make only northern roadway one-way] is that traffic will back up and give greater access inconvenience than at present to local

residents, school, Glebe Farm, church and village hall. Please do not believe traffic will be deterred from using Astbury roads instead of Congleton until the link road is complete.”

“These proposals do not address the hugely significant problem of the "throat" outside the Egerton Arms and worse at Rose Cottage. I suspect the only solution to drivers racing to get through the "throat" is to install traffic lights. Road signs to indicate priority to traffic heading towards Congleton would be much less effective but a second option.”

“Westbound traffic already backs up through the village at busy times, so I wouldn't like to see a scheme that would make it worse.”

“Your ideas for the village will cause more not fewer problems. The biggest danger in the village is the traffic to and from Glebe Farm, there will be a fatality at this access at some point in the future.”

Appendix – Aerial view of village

