

East Devon Highways and Traffic Orders Committee

29th November 2018

Lay-bys alongside B3174 Cranbrook.

Report by Cllr Ray Bloxham - Broadclyst Division.

Recommendation: It is recommended that:

(a) The two lay-bys located on opposite sides of the highway alongside the B3174 at Cranbrook - approx. 100 Mts west of Parsons Lane - be closed to vehicular use by the introduction of a Traffic Regulation Order.

(b) That the design of an East / West cycle way to operate parallel to the B3174 to provide a cycle commuting route to and from Exeter in conjunction with other cycle routes already in situ be brought forward.

Background

The B3174 was formerly the A30 and prior to the construction of the M5 and current A30, the principle route into the west country. The location which is the subject of this report and the location of the two lay-bys referred to was previously in open countryside bounded on all sides by farmland. The two lay-bys provided an opportunity for a resting point for drivers at a location just prior to (when travelling west) or just after (when travelling east) the Exeter by-pass which was then often the location of severe traffic hold-ups.

The situation is now completely different with the principle routes being the A30 and M5 and the opportunity to make use of rest and refreshment points such as the M5 services at junction 30.

The B3174 is now a local route serving Cranbrook and its neighbouring villages and provides a local link to the major routes, to the City of Exeter and to other local towns. The need for traffic using the B3174 to have rest points at this location has therefore ceased. The B3174 is a designated diversion route for the A30 as and when required and provides a link between Daisymount junction (Ottery St Mary) and J29 of the M5.

In addition to the changes to the usage of the B3174, the local environment has changed with the construction of new homes which are part of the development of the Cranbrook new town. Homes are now located immediately adjacent to the B3174 and immediately adjacent to the lay-bys. Currently homes are occupied to the north of the B3174 but the land to the south is also allocated for development and subject to two validated planning applications.

The two lay-bys in question are now principally used by HGVs for overnight parking. There are a number of sites locally that are designated for HGV parking but these do make a charge. The nearest is just over a mile away at Clyst Honiton.

HGVs are tending to use the lay-bys as they currently provide a free location to overnight. This results in considerable disturbance to adjacent households and there have been a series of complaints about noise disturbance especially overnight from refrigerated units

and from engines being started and left running during the early hours. There have been ancillary complaints about anti-social behaviour by drivers using the hedgerow as a toilet and other unpleasant behaviours.

Cranbrook is one of the ten NHS pilot Healthy New Towns and cycling as a means of commuting, pleasure and exercise is popular in the town with a very active Cranbrook cycle club. Some cycle ways have been constructed and there are proposals for a network as the town builds out. A part of that network is a proposed commuting cycle way running east / west alongside the B3174. At the moment the route stops at the southern end of Younghayes Road and needs to continue eastwards along the verge along the northern edge of the B3174.

The B3174 will need to have some changes as the town develops and the route will be a key conduit within the urban framework of the town and not (as a present) a virtual by-pass.

Closure of the lay-by on the northern side of the road would provide an opportunity to have sufficient width to construct a cycle way along the existing verge. Alternatives such as making use of estate roads like Roman Way are not considered suitable on safety grounds but this needs to be tested by the publication of proposals and appropriate consultation.

The complaints by local residents have been referred to both Environmental Health at East Devon District Council and to Highways. EDDC Env. Health are supportive of the need to respond to the complaints which they consider are justified. Highways have to date been reluctant to make any changes to the current situation including rejecting the imposition of no overnight parking at this location.

The reasons highways have given are as follows:

- Enforcement is for The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency and residents should contact their helpline. (This has proved fruitless).
- It is for police to enforce anti-social issues. (This does not happen and the police are not resourced to do so).
- Highways do not support a sign erected and paid for by the Town Council requesting no overnight parking.
- Residents knew about the existence of the lay-bys when they purchased their homes.

Proposal

The proposal, as set out in the recommendation, is to close both lay-bys. The alternative of overnight closure is not being proposed in this report as it was rejected by highways, is largely unenforceable and will not resolve the problems.

Closure could be brought about temporarily and cheaply pending a decision on the future of the B3174. This will in some respects depend on the final form of the Cranbrook Master Plan and development plan document which is currently in draft form. However what is clear is that the location of the two lay-bys will be surrounded by urban development and the B3174 will be central to that development.

Some aspects of Cranbrook are determined. These include the fact that there will be an east / west cycle way alongside the B3174 and the fact that urban development has been allocated in the local plan. There are, however, some final details to be decided as to how

the B3174 through the town will look in the future and whether or not it might be downgraded and be more urban in form.

Photographs showing the location and proximity of occupied homes are appended to this report. Also appended is an extract from the EDDC Local Plan showing strategic allocation of housing in the locality and the preferred options Cranbrook Masterplan. Both indicate the location of the two lay-bys.

Financial Considerations

The lay by could be physically closed by very cost effective temporary measures until such time as permanent changes are brought forward by the developer consortium.

Environmental Impact Considerations

The closure of the two lay-bys will greatly enhance the amenity of local residents living in the new town of Cranbrook by removing overnight disturbance and anti-social behaviour by those using the lay-bys overnight.

The development of the cycle way network in Cranbrook will be commensurate with the ethos of the town, contribute to the Healthy New Towns project, provide effective cycle commuting facilities especially towards employment land at Sky Park, Lidl, Science Park, the developing Hayes Farm and beyond to Exeter.

Equality Considerations

There are no adverse impacts on any particular group. Alternative accessible lorry parking is available close by at an official site at Clyst Honiton and slightly further way at the M5 services.

Public Health

Closure would have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of residents.

Reasons for the recommendations

There is a need to act to address the considerable number of complaints that I have received about the disturbance caused by the use of these two lay-bys. Action is supported by EDDC Environmental Health Officers.

Making provision for a cycle way alongside the B3174 will provide better connectivity and encourage the use of sustainable transport as an alternative to the car.

This report was considered by Cranbrook Town Council at its Council meeting dated 17th September 2018 and it was resolved unanimously to support the recommendation to close both lay-bys as proposed in this report and to encourage the County Council to bring forward greater clarity on how the cycle path networks in Cranbrook will be delivered including the proposed cycle way alongside the B3174.

Ray Bloxham
Broadclyst Division.
01404 515246