

MONKLAND & STRETTFORD PARISH COUNCIL

ROAD TRAFFIC PLAN - THE A44



Traffic plan – Foreword

Monkland has experienced and suffered from traffic problems on the A44, since it replaced the A4112 over 30 years ago. The volume of traffic continues to increase and the speed and noise of vehicles is also perceived to have increased.

Previous Parish Councils have battled tirelessly to attempt to get the speed level reduced from 50 to 40mph without success as the road is a major A road and doesn't meet current requirements that allow that to happen eg insufficient exits on to the road.

The present Parish Council have decided to tackle the problem slightly differently and aim to get motorists to maintain a speed of 50mph, or less and certainly not exceed it. We aim to provide conditions and an environment whereby traffic through the village realises that they are in a village, a place where people live and work and this needs to be respected and safeguarded.

This Traffic Plan demonstrates how we propose to do this. It is a 'live' plan and can and will be tweaked as other ideas come forward and conditions change.

Lesley Brook

Chair of Monkland and Stretford Parish Council

Key Recommendations

1. The **A44 should be resurfaced** at the earliest opportunity to reduce environmental impacts including but not limited to noise and general safety.
2. The white lines should be adjusted or **removed** from the centre of the A44 through the village. The boundary lines should be encroached to give a sense of the road narrowing for road users in either direction. At the same time white gates should be installed to show the boundary and to communicate with road users. Surface colour should be changed to indicate that drivers are still in a village. The recent works completed on the A417 at Stretton Grandson and multiple other locations in Herefordshire are examples of that which we are seeking to achieve to improve safety.
3. A beautification plan should be initiated to cover the next 5-10 years in order to cultivate flower banks and promote wilderness areas within the village in order to give road users a village feel when transiting on the A44 and to make our home even better.
4. The speed limit should be reduced to 40mph if new evidence suggests this is possible.

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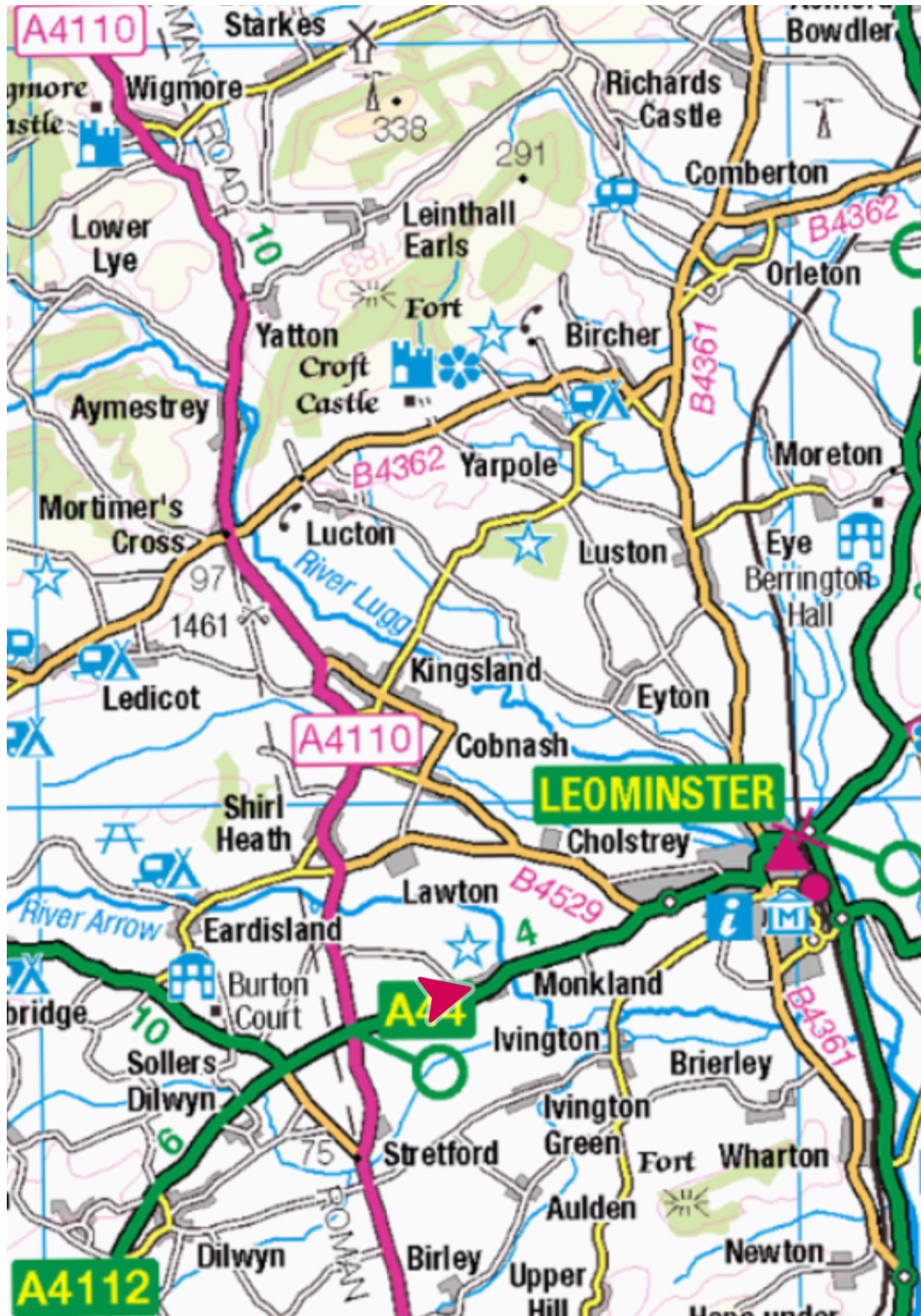
Chapter 1 - Introduction

This is issue #1 of the road traffic plan for Monkland & Stretford Parish Council (PC) and is intended to provide the following;

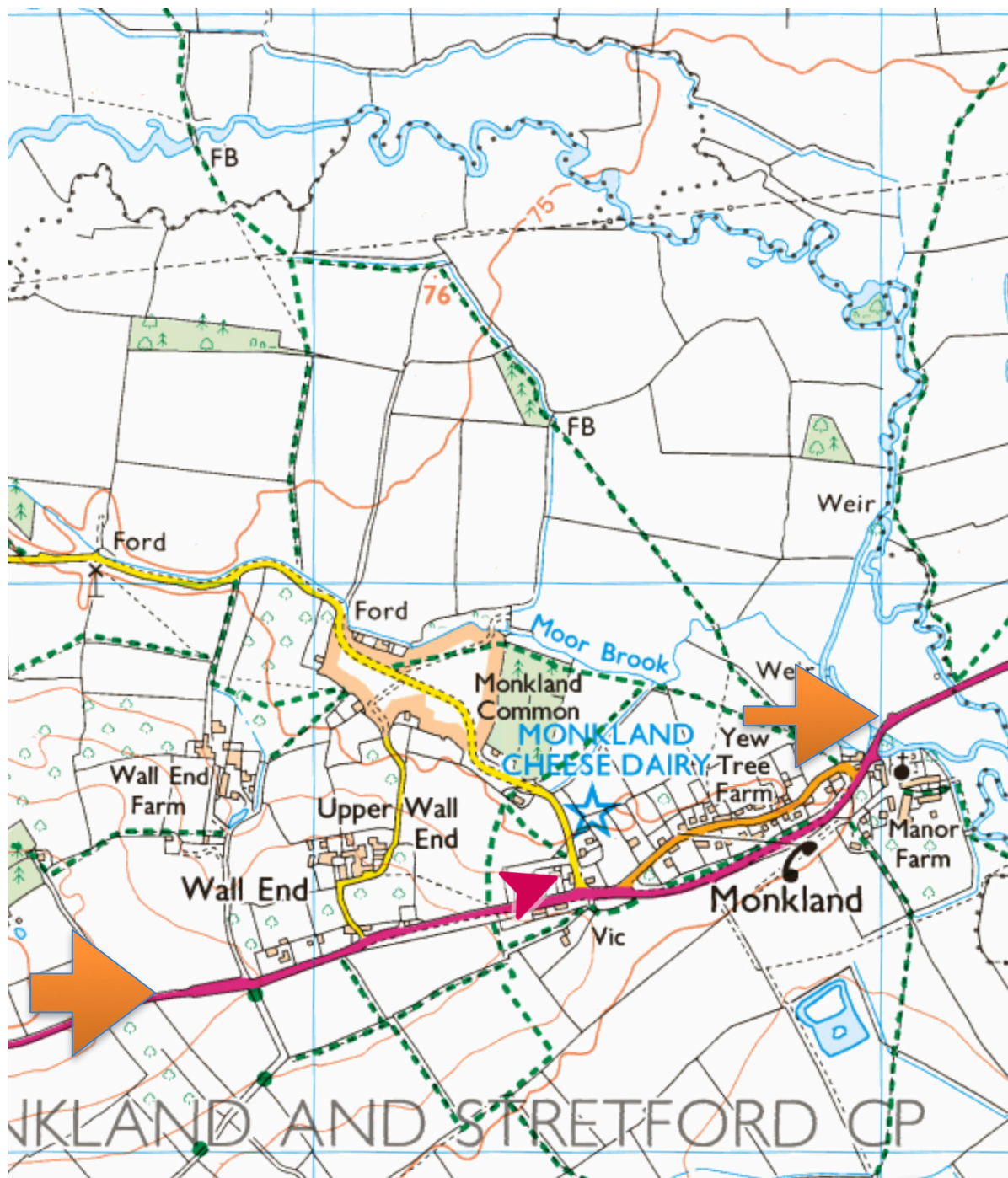
1. Planning advice to the PC on projects for the next 5-10 years.
2. Reference for the agency charged with maintaining and improving safety on the A44 through Monkland, the Police Commissioner's office and other similar agencies.
3. Reference for the county council and related contractors with regards to road repairs, improvements, signs and safety in order to ensure that budget spends on the A44 in Monkland are in line with the PC plan.

This document, when approved by the PC, will be distributed to the relevant departments and agencies in order to ensure that any further works on the A44 or associated with traffic through Monkland village are informed and considered. The plan includes a number of factors which the PC will undertake from its own resources but the plan seeks to highlight areas that would sit on budgets for resurfacing of roads and improvement to road safety. A clear example would be the planned resurfacing of the A44 through the village. When this is implemented by the Contractors acting on behalf of the County council it is the PC's express desire that the new surface is modern, quiet, safe and that the white lines are reapplied in accordance with this plan and multiple other locations in the county - in order to improve safety, reduce road noise and provide good value. The plan will be reviewed no later than 12 months after its first issue and revised accordingly.

Chapter 2 - The Geography of Monkland village



Monkland is situated to the west of the market town of Leominster and is equidistant between the County city of Hereford to the South and the Shropshire town of Ludlow to the North.



The A44 runs through our village and the area of concern starts in the west at (Plus code) 656R+93F Leominster and ends in the east at (plus code) 6685+479 Leominster. The What 3 words locations are in the West **Satple.Buggy.Demanding** and in the **East Elastic.Wheat.Thinkers**

An example of how the A44 could be transformed (and safer) is available on the A417 at the village of Stretton Grandison (**wolf.soccer.greet**) - The A417 has been resurfaced, colour changed, had the lines in the centre removed and the edge lines encroached along with white gates at the boundary.

Chapter 3 - A brief history of Monkland village

The village is lucky to have a number of keen historians with longstanding family links to the village and its surrounding area, in this case Malcom Weatherhead and Ian Forster have provided the following history of the village. This shows our ancient and historic ties to the land which we call home.

Monkland lies 4km south of Leominster and it stands on the river Arrow which is part of the Leon Valley of Saxon Times. The land is watered by many rivers including the Arrow, Lugg and Pinsley. There was, at one time, a Roman site at Stretford and Wattling street was built on the west border of the village.

The first Monks who came to Monkland from the Abbey of St. Peter of Castellione at Conches in Normandy. The walls of the church date from 1100 A.D. and the church tower was added in 1220 and later a window inserted in 1270. There were a number of different cells of monks over the next period. In 1475 it was granted to the Dean and Canons of Windsor, where it remained until 1831.

Monkland in the 1800s / early 1900s was a land of plenty; There were numerous apple orchards, which they say influenced the local agriculture as a direct result of the Monks of Conches who came from the heart of the French apple growing district and then introduced it to the local area. Hop Yards were at every farm giving income to farmers and workers over the years. Hereford cattle were kept on most of the farms along with Ryland sheep from Leominster. Ryland sheep can still be seen grazing on common land to this day.

The road through Monkland was also used by the Drovers, taking animals to markets and railway stations. Water was an important feature and this became an important reason to stop on their way to the markets. A public watering place existed in Monkland at Cow Lane, opposite the Lych Gate into the church. This water source was also used by the Manor farm and Brick House farm for their water supplies.

Sir Henry Williams Baker Bart was Vicar of Monkland from 1851 to 1877. He was the compiler and editor of Hymns Ancient and Modern, which are still used today by the Church of England. He composed many hymns, words and music, which were included in the hymnal. He was also a translator and author. He oversaw a substantial renovation and updating of the church, funded partly by public subscription but mainly by using his not inconsiderable fortune, commissioning one of the top Victorian church architects of the day. The school was also built with his help and money in 1852 and once in operation, had places for 60 children. The hand of Sir Henry is still felt in the village today, with his private built vicarage and staff house still in existence.

Monkland has a common of 11 acres, which has been part of village life for many hundreds of years. Grazing rights and village events are all held on the common, or the adjoining village green. The common has never been ploughed and hosts many species of wild flowers, herbs and native plants.

Much more could be written on the beautiful 'Black & White' buildings for which the Marches are famous - including but not limited to the historic, miller, smithy, post office and multiple ale houses. These can be explored via our social media pages and website in the future.

Chapter 4 - The A44 through our village - Early history what we've done.

Before the A44 existed the A4112 ran through the village of Monkland and was one of the main routes, before motorways, to South Wales and Pembrokeshire. In the 1950's and early 60's it was the main route for haulage company's carrying coal, coke and steel from Swansea Port Talbot and the Welsh villages to the Industrial West Midlands.

In the early days the approximate width of the road through the village was less than 4.9m. The minimum distance for rigid vehicles to pass on a UK 'A' road is 5.5m. Due to this road width issue and the level of heavy traffic a number accidents and/or collisions occurred with some residents witnessing traffic collisions on a number of consecutive days.

In 1962 a new road was built around Monkland, demolishing two houses, part of the old mill, a hop kiln and a barn. The new road was wider and straighter which had the effect of preventing collisions previously due to tight widths BUT increased accidents due to higher traffic speeds. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this was especially evident on the bridge at the East of the village, with some fatalities recorded.

A crash barrier was erected to prevent vehicles entering the river and at this time, the parish council requested a speed limit reduction but the request was rejected. In 1988/89 the A44 main road, via Eardisland, was diverted at Barons Cross, to run through Monkland despite a great deal of protesting by Monkland Parish Council and its parishioners. At this stage the A44 had a 60mph speed limit.

After complaints about the danger to pedestrians on the A44, new footpaths were added for parishioners to cross at the church, the public house and access the West end of the village. In modern times these footpaths remain in regular use despite the high volume of traffic and associated noise.

Archive evidence suggests that after the diversion of the A44, traffic numbers have increased from approximately 2500 vehicles per day to over 5000 per day and is believed to still be increasing. Monkland Parish Council again asked for a lower speed limit to be imposed through the village and with a great deal of campaigning and the help of the County Councillor, a speed limit of 50mph was passed with a mention of a 40 mph limit at a later date.

As can be seen from the previous paragraphs, prior to 2016 there is evidence that the Parish Council (PC) for Monkland and Stretford had conducted a number of initiatives to reduce the speed limit on the A44 to 50mph and a continued effort to reduce it further still to 40mph. The evidence is available to review in the PC archive minutes. For the purposes of this plan the focus of data and decisions is based on the period of time between 2016 and the present date (2022).

In early 2016 the PC implemented a period of speed monitoring on the A44. The speed monitoring data showed speeds were within an 85% percentile figure. At the time this figure attained from the speed data prevented any further work to reduce the speed limit from 50mph to 40mph as the data failed to show the A44 speed met the criteria for speed review. The PC went on to investigate funding for new signage on the A44 through the village.

On the 22nd Sept 2016 a Balfour Beattie (BB) site visit suggested a location for a Speed Indicator Device (SiD) and a costing for one SiD was received from Robin Quant (Balfour Beatty). The costs and time available for the use of a SiD appeared to be very high without any evidence from BB on the cost, reward benefit. UK wide academic research has also concluded that SiD's are less effective on roads with a higher than 30mph speed limit.

On the 11th Oct 2016 a meeting with Ian Connolly (West Mercia Police Traffic Management Advisor) concluded with a second period of speed monitoring to validate the first data set. The results of this second data capture also showed the A44 speeds to be within an 85% percentile figure and therefore NOT eligible for consideration for a speed reduction.

On the 17th Jan 2017 The PC met with John Campion (West Mercia Police Commissioner) on a site visit to the A44 bridge to indicate speed problems and also view the perception of speeding vehicles on the A44 whilst standing in the pub car park. The outcome of this meeting concluded that John Campion's office would match fund costing of new signage/road surface at the East of the Arrow bridge. Unfortunately a mother died and her young children suffered serious injuries on this very bridge in a Road Traffic Incident (RTI) before any speed measures had been put in place.

On the 21st Feb 2017 a meeting with Balfour Beatty is convened to discuss signage/road surface on A44. On the 30th July 2017 The PC agree to the A44 costs along with match funding from Police Commissioner. On the 24th October 2017 ADL Traffic & Highways Engineering Ltd carried out a speed limit review of Monkland and submitted the review document. The review was carried out by Amol Pisal - Principle Traffic Engineer. The outcome of this study was as before, no reduction in speed limit and agree with new signage/road surface. On the 19th April 2018 the A44 signage and a small area of new road surface was completed at the East side of Arrow bridge. On the 8th July 2018 The PC conducted another meeting with Ray Wallace - BB regarding speed reduction.

In 2019 the PC conducted a detailed review of the effects of various traffic management options. The availability of empirical data from government sources allowed the PC to present options to the village on which management options may be viable and within budget for the PC. This lead onto the chair of the PC implementing a consultation with the village in order to democratically spend funds in order to make the A44 safer for residents.

On 18 May 2021 representatives of the PC met with Ian Connolly (West Mercia Police) and Simon Hobbs (Herefordshire Council) in order to discuss the outcome of the village consultation. Specifically the use of 'White Gates' at village boundaries. This meeting took place in the Monkland Arms carpark and proved to be of significant interest to the PC. Mr Simon Hobbs advised on a number of considerations which the PC should consider before installing white gates. Mr Hobbs also advised that the A44 road surface and white lines marked on the A44 should be considered a priority for any council plans. Mr Hobbs also gave examples of other county locations which had produced plans and executed schemes to improve road safety. These will be further covered in chapter 5.

Chapter 5 - Future intent

One of the key recommendations made by Hereford County Council and West Mercia Police during a village site visit in 2021 involves the feel of the village and in particular the perception of being in a village environment when transiting through on the A44.

It's evident from some reports that when entering the village from the east there is a noticeable change in perception for road users. This is, in part, due to the change in road surface at the bridge over the river Arrow and the aesthetically pleasing properties which back onto the main road. Similar reports also suggest that when the village is entered from the opposite direction, which has a number of concealed entrances to the A44, it's less clear that a road user is in a village environment or if a village centre exists.

The following projects are considered in order of priority (although some will operate continually and concurrently).

1. Road Surface - The road surface, according to reports from Hereford Council representatives, is heading towards a position when it will need to be replaced. This is evident by the increasing number of pot holes, poor condition of white lines and general surface condition. It is expected that when the A44 through Monkland is re-surfaced that the County Council liaise with the PC to ensure that the re-surface work is broadly in alignment with this plan. The PC would seek to have an alternate colour from West to east and a different set-up of 'white lines' as described in a later paragraph.

2. White Lines - The research previously conducted by the PC into traffic management on the A44 concluded that some form of physiological infrastructure should be installed - the most obvious option being 'White Gates'. However it has been advised by the County Council that a similar effect can be achieved over a longer distance by an alternative set of white lines on the road. The examples cited include the removal of the centre line (if safe to do) and an encroachment of the boundary lines to give road users the perception that the road is narrow - evidence has shown this to reduce speed and increase safety. It has become evident that this is now being employed across the county with the neighbouring village of Pembridge already converted. The PC would seek to ensure that when the A44 is resurfaced that the surface and white lines are implemented inline with this plan.

3. White Gates - At the point when the road is resurfaced the village will seek to install a white gate at the western boundary on the A44 with an updated village sign, a speed limit sign and some form of communication e.g. "Thank-you for driving carefully through our village". It is also the PC's desire to conduct a full review of the signs used throughout the village and especially on the A44. The results of the audit will then be communicated to the relevant agencies for advice. More speed limit signs are required to ensure road users are reminded of the speed limit - this could form part of the resurface works as seen in other projects with roundels placed on the road surface.

4. Beautification - The general appearance of the village as viewed from the A44 is a primary consideration and an important aspect of the perception of road users. The PC wish to implement a number of projects in the next 5-10 years including but not limited to new flower banks, tidy and litter parties, village centre work (telephone box, bus shelter, etc), grass verge maintenance, tree husbandry, road and leisure signs etc etc.

5. Speed Identification Device (SiD) - A SiD remains a further tool to be implemented by the PC if the above measures require further action or support. The PC will consider that in annual budgets as the priority actions (listed above) take shape.

6. Speed Limit reduced to 40mph - The PC should plan to gather evidence again in the future if the criteria looks favourable for a potential speed reduction on the A44.

Chapter 6 - Summary and Recommendations

In summary this document has highlighted the ancient history of Monkland village and highlighted the decades of negative relations with the A44 trunk road which runs through the villages. So What?

It is anticipated that the A44 will be resurfaced in the near future as the surface has already been dressed (over 5 years ago according to county council sources). It is also very evident that the residents and parish council believe the A44 traffic to be the single most dangerous aspect of our village life. It is also apparent that as the road surface has deteriorated through natural degradation and traffic has increased an environmental noise impact is becoming more of an issue.

1. The A44 should be resurfaced at the earliest opportunity to reduce environmental impacts including but not limited to noise and general safety.
2. The white lines should be adjusted or **removed** from the centre of the A44 through the village and the boundary lines encroached to give a sense of the road narrowing for road users in either direction. The road surface colour should be contrasting to further highlight to users that they are transiting through a rural community. At the same time white gates should be installed to show the boundary and to communicate with road users. As per multiple other locations in Herefordshire (Stretton Grandison on the A419 is our ideal example).
3. A beautification plan should be initiated to cover the next 5-10 years in order to cultivate flower banks and promote wilderness areas within the village in order to give road users a village feel when transiting on the A44 and to make our home even better.
4. This road traffic plan should be revised and re-issued on an annual basis. The distribution should include, but is not limited too, the Police Commissioner, WM Police rural team, Town and County Council, Highways England and the WM police road safety trust.
5. The criteria for speed reduction on 'A' roads should be reviewed for any future changes in order to ensure the PC can apply for a reduction with the current data.