



Traffic And Footpaths

The road network as we have seen is essentially medieval. The recent development has taken place by creating complex but self contained road networks accessing the existing road structure. The creation of the by pass along the line of the old railway the B1256 has no doubt relieved some traffic from the town centre.

The result is that traffic volumes are high throughout the day and speeds of traffic are regularly excessive on large parts of the main road network. Servicing of retail premises takes place from narrow and busy roads and car parking takes upon large areas close to the centre.

The recent traffic study (Mouchel Parkman for Essex County Council 2006) showed that some 54 -58% of traffic was passing through the town. The most significant routes being Causeway to Stortford Road; The Causeway, Chelmsford Road and St Edmunds Lane. The report estimates that around 40% of trips along High Street are through only and thus potentially divertible. The level of traffic has increased 24% in the 6 years since 1998 which compares to 10%

nationally. There is evidence of a significant number of road injuries with most of them in the High Street Market Place area. The report concludes that the A 120 by pass has had little effect on traffic levels in the town.

A number of initiatives are examined by the report but in the short run it recommends only the signposting of traffic from the B184 and the Stortford Road so that it uses the B 1256 and the redesign of High Street to create a shared space; that is more low speed mixing of vehicles and pedestrians. The report gives no indication of what degree of transfer that this would achieve but it is obvious that any attempts to discourage through traffic are to be welcomed.

One of the keys to future traffic movement in Dunmow is the Woodside Way or 'western by-pass' linking the B1256 to the B184. This is partially completed but final completion is linked to the completion of certain numbers of houses on the Woodlands Park estate. The construction of the road has already destroyed important woodland and has reduced the residual woodland in value but nevertheless it is very frustrating for its completion to be delayed in the light of the traffic situation in the town centre as described in the Mouchel Parkman report. It seems clear that a combination of the western by pass and the re routing recommended by the study would very significantly reduce through traffic and relieve pressure on High Street.

Cycling and footpaths

The footpath network in Dunmow is very comprehensive but suffers to a degree from poor maintenance, poor signage, a lack of connectivity in places and conflict with vehicles at crossing points. It gives good access in most parts of the town both from residential areas into the town centre and out into the wider countryside. There are some very good long distance routes such as the Flitch Way that connect to it. However there are a number of routes where the rights of way have become unclear such as St Mary's to The Causeway and west of Olives Wood.

There are also sections of path where housing developments have seriously compromised the attractiveness and usability by creating very narrow and possibly dangerous paths. The whole of the Woodlands Park estate has adversely affected routes both long term and short term and it is vital that more account is taken of the need to maintain attractive paths.

Very few of the paths are suitable for cycling. Nothing is known about the levels of cycling in the town; however the potential would seem to be high. Topography makes cycling attractive in the town and the use of cycles for school trips would reduce the level of school run car trips.

The main issues in paths are

- Directness
- Clear marking and destination information.
- Personal safety perceived and real lighting.
- Surfacing
- Connectivity
- Safety from traffic

The network of footpaths is thus very good but there is much to be done to improve it and to encourage greater use by adults and children by residents and by visitors. The Town Council will be producing new maps, as none currently exists but a programme of improvements clearly needs to be put in place as well.

Facilities for cyclists and measures to encourage cycling are totally inadequate and a major effort is needed.

In pursuing all of these objectives it is vital that new development makes a serious contribution. Thus we recommend that new development should:

- Make generous provision for cycle parking and storage
- Create safe cycling routes to known destinations or contribute to such routes – separate from footpaths or integrated into footpaths or integrated in the road network.
- Create attractive and well paved footpaths with modest lighting where appropriate with safe crossings over roads
- Contribute to making such provision off the site where it can be shown that the residents or users of the development will create demand for such routes
- Provide signage and provide information to residents and users of the developments