

## TRAFFIC ON STARKHOLMES ROAD AND CHURCH STREET

Appendix Z of the Cawdor Quality Development report is a traffic impact study, dated 1995. This deals with the impact of the relief road layout and the one way system on the bridge on the traffic flows in that part of Matlock. It is based on traffic flow data taken in 1991, using the 50<sup>th</sup> highest peak hour flow. The original data did not include traffic going through Starkholmes, and inevitably the predictions took no account of traffic diverting along this road because of the impact of the relief road layout.

The main conclusion in the report was that the junction at the south side of the bridge would reach capacity between 12 and 20 years of the year the data was collected, depending on the assumed growth of traffic. This means that we can expect capacity to be reached **at best**, by 2011, if the alternative route through Starkholmes was not available. Diversion of traffic through Starkholmes will extend this period. This will be known by the County officers, one of whom has pointed out that the Starkholmes route must be regarded as part of the traffic network around Matlock.

The road from Cromford to Matlock Green provides the only north-east bound route from the A6 between Ambergate and the new Sainsbury's roundabout (neglecting the more complex route from Whatstandwell). It is therefore heavily used. Sat-navs direct traffic along it to Chesterfield and Sheffield, and all points north and east of Crown Square. The road is unclassified, no more than 4 metres wide in places, has many bends which are blind at 30 mph, has no footpath along much of its length, and footpaths on one side only at the narrowest points, and these switch from one side to the other in the blind spots. It serves 2 schools, both of which add to the congestion between the hours of 8 and 9 am and 3.30 and 5 pm. The road's narrowest points are in Starkholmes village itself, on Tagg Hill, at bends on either side of Pic Tor Lane, and at bends on Willersley Lane. Where there is a pavement at these locations, wide loads frequently mount it to avoid oncoming vehicles; they drive pedestrians against the walls, brush them with their wing mirrors, and damage walls and gates. In some parts, houses flank the road without any protection and residents have to step out directly onto the road.

Within the Cawdor Quarry Development, money was set aside for improvement to the road network where traffic problems could be shown to arise from this development. This money had to be allocated with 18 months of the relief road being opened, and used within 5 years. The relief road was first used in October 2007, so if this constituted opening, that money appears to be unavailable now.

Over the summer of 2009 there have been 3 accidents involving hospitalisations, 2 of these involving pedestrians. There have also been numerous less serious ones, one totally blocking the road for a period, and others knocking walls and gates posts down. Door mirrors are hit, parked cars are damaged, residents are put in danger, pedestrians', and especially children's, safety is threatened.

Two site meetings have been held with the county officers responsible, one including the County Cabinet Member for Highways. There have been many other representations, and letters have been sent seeking clarification of the issue of available finance, and to enquire if there has been more up-to-date assessments of the traffic flows using more modern data. No reply has yet been obtained.

This road is used as a main thoroughfare, and the layout of the new relief road encourages this. As an unclassified minor country road through 2 villages, it is obviously totally unsuitable for this purpose. If highway engineering is about anything, it is about matching road design to use, and this patently is not being done here. And things can only get worse as traffic increases. A number of suggestions for mitigation have been proposed by residents. These include access only, as one option, which might exclude the road from sat-nav routing: a lower speed limit and speed restrictors and cameras would discourage late night racing (which is encouraged at present by the speed cameras on Dale Road): other severe traffic calming measures would discourage through traffic during the day.

There are some obvious questions which need to be answered by the Highways Department:

- 1 Why construct a road system which at best was already predicted to reach capacity within a few years of completion, or is there a more up to date study which includes the traffic through Starkholmes and which negates these predictions?
- 2 What is the effect of the Starkholmes route on these predictions and what would happen if Starkholmes was made access only or if traffic reduction measures were employed?
- 3 Is the promised funding for road improvement around Matlock still available?

Whatever the answers to these questions, the traffic situation along this road will only get worse if nothing is done soon. Pedestrians and residents have rights as well as motorists.