

11. TRAFFIC AND TRAVEL

Traffic and Travel Objectives

- To support measures that reduce the need for travel by private cars, such as cycling, walking and public transport
- To encourage cycling and walking by creating new safe cycle paths and footpaths and by protecting existing pavements, footpaths and public rights of way
- To promote measures to improve safety and reduce the impact of traffic
- Where appropriate, to create 'home zones' and similar areas that help to re-balance priority between cars and other users

Background

- 11.1 The level of traffic is Broomfield's bugbear, the only major dislike about living here. The village sits astride the B1008, which is classed as a Principal Route One (PR1) - a major route into Chelmsford City Centre from the north. It also forms the only road access to Broomfield Hospital, the City's general hospital and largest employer. It was developed on the site of a former isolation hospital, in an age when increases in car traffic were considered less of a problem.
- 11.2 Due to this combination of factors and local traffic, the B1008 is at 96% capacity, one of the most congested routes in Chelmsford. This is evidenced in a range of professional studies, such as the Broomfield Corridor & Access to Broomfield Hospital Study (ECC/Mouchel 2007); and the Local Plan Evidence Base, Strategic & Local Junction Modelling, Preferred Option Addendum-2 February 2018 (please see our website for a full list). Particular pressure points are the section around the junction with Hospital Approach and the junction with School Lane at Angel Green (which is already over capacity and will become more so with planned new housing).
- 11.3 There is also a psychological impact to this heavy traffic. The current layout of Main Road tends to emphasise the village's ribbon development - a busy main road with some side roads tagged on, rather than a village community. It also tends to divide the village into east and west of Main Road, with just a few safe crossing points spread along the road. Focal

points, such as Angel Green and Church Green, sit alongside Main Road rather than sitting astride it - which would help to join the two sides of the village together. This psychological impact could be addressed by better design, as well as by seeking to reduce the volume of traffic.

- 11.4 There has been discussion about re-establishing the B1008's original function of serving the communities along the corridor (eg in the ECC/Mouchel study in 2007) but to date, there has been little progress.

Feedback from the Community

- 11.5 The level of traffic is the only major dislike about living in Broomfield shown in the Residents' Questionnaire. 94% of respondents disliked or disliked it a lot. A later question showed a similar response:
- Do you think that the level of traffic going through Broomfield is:**
- Satisfactory 2%
Mostly satisfactory but too heavy at peak time 38%
Too heavy most of the time 60%
- 11.6 The questionnaire also showed that most residents use private cars as their principal means of transport for all journeys. However, large percentages of responses suggested that buses, cycling and walking would be considered as alternatives given certain conditions. Further details can be found in the questionnaire summary (Q.7).

11.7 There was almost universal support (95% of responses) for continuing to work towards a network of safe cycle paths. There was also support for several other measures to reduce traffic or the impact of traffic:

	Support	Oppose
Village entry treatment near Main Road/Hospital Approach junction (gateway and markings to indicate entry to the village)	73%	5%
Vehicle-activated speed warning signs	86%	5%
Traffic islands/pedestrian refuges	47%	9%
More pedestrian lights/crossings	55%	12%
Speed camera(s)	49%	25%
Signpost hospital traffic along the A130 Essex Regiment Way	89%	3%
New access road into the northern side of Broomfield Hospital site from Blasford Hill	78%	12%

And specifically on small/residential roads:

	Support	Oppose
20 mph speed limits	80%	13%
Speed cushions (small humps at intervals across the road)	50%	14%

Neighbourhood Plan Travel Strategy

11.8 As traffic levels are such a key concern for residents, the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group has invested a lot of time in researching the feasibility of various possibilities for 'doing something about traffic'. The Plan puts forward a parish strategy for achieving improvements, while recognising the need for it to be dynamic, as situations will change and opportunities arise or close down, so it will continue to evolve long after the Neighbourhood Plan has been adopted.

11.9 Planning policies can play some role in mitigating the traffic impact of future development. However, most of the following strategy consists of community actions, because traffic problems already exist, so cannot be prevented by planning policy. The parish share of new development money (CIL) is one source of funding for solutions to traffic problems.

Travel Strategy - Cycling

11.10 The key component of the Strategy is to radically improve facilities for safe cycling. There are several reasons for placing this emphasis on cycling infrastructure:

- 95% of questionnaire responses want the NP to secure a network of safe cycle paths
- There are few safe cycle paths in Broomfield at the moment, so investing in this should make a big difference compared to other options
- Current County and Government thinking support a switch from car use to cycling for a range of reasons. These include health benefits (see the Essex Cycling Strategy) and the response to COVID (see Government guidance about re-allocating road space)
- In turn, this means that changes that might discourage through traffic are more likely to be achieved if they are part of measures to promote cycling, for instance, lane narrowing to accommodate cycle lanes or creating more safe road crossings.

Current Cycling Infrastructure

11.11 Existing cycle paths to/from Chelmsford City Centre stop short of the Parish boundary. The existing off-road cycle path at the eastern end of the Avenues stops at Valley Bridge. So do the new segregated cycle lanes along Broomfield Road, which stop at the junction with Patching Hall Lane (Broomfield Parade).

11.12 The new Chelmsford City Growth Package (CCGP) has introduced two significant improvements within the Parish:

- An off-road cycle path from Goulton Road to Broomfield Hospital, which is nearing completion. However, the proposed on-road section from Goulton Road to the City Centre is currently unfunded. Also, if completed, it would take users towards Admirals Park rather than the train station/immediate City Centre.
- A new Pegasus crossing across the A130, connecting the eastern (Beaulieu/ Channels) part of the Parish with the village via Mill Lane. At the western end of Mill Lane, however, cyclists have to re-join the busy Main Road.

A cycle path connecting Broomfield Hospital to the Chelmer Valley Park and Ride is also expected to come forward at some stage, as part of infrastructure for the North-East Chelmsford Garden Village.

Our Proposals for New Cycle Paths

11.13 The main part of the Strategy is to achieve safe north/south routes, by joining the new cycle path at Goulton Road with the Avenues Cycle Path and the new Broomfield Road cycle lanes. If achieved, that would enable safe cycling from any part of Broomfield to the City Centre and train station.

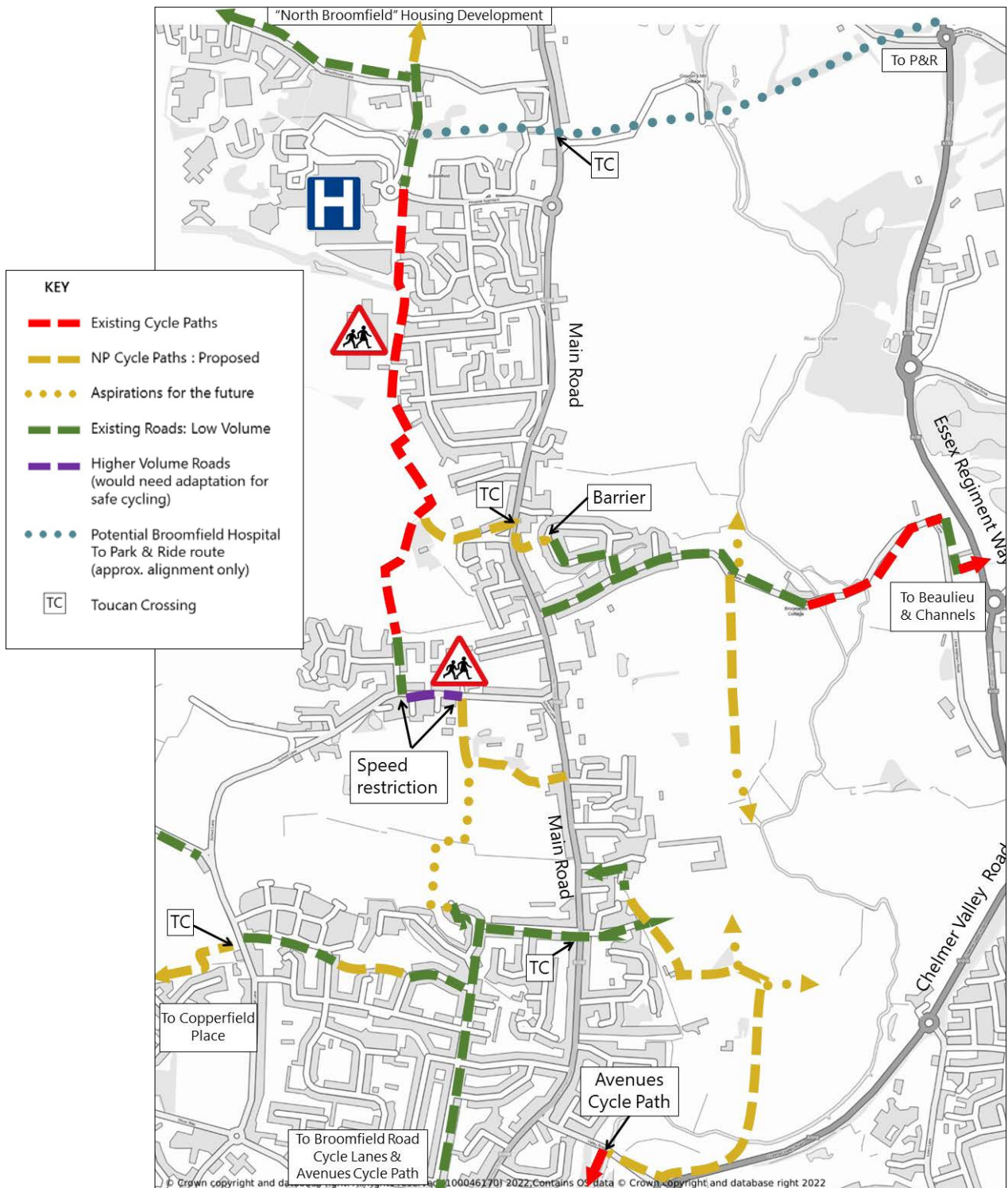


Fig 14 - Neighbourhood Plan Proposals for New Cycle Routes



11.14 The ultimate aim (shown on the map in Fig 14) is for there to be:

- a new cycle path to the west of the village from School Lane to Heathfield Road. From Heathfield Road, it is possible to use low-volume roads to reach the new Broomfield Road Cycle Lanes and the Avenues Cycle Path. Altogether, this would link Broomfield Hospital with the City Centre by the most direct route
- a new cycle path to the east of the village from Valley Bridge to Mill Lane. This would serve a dual function as a commuter cycling route and a leisure cycle path and footpath.

11.15 The map in Fig. 14 shows progress to date. Parts of these routes have already received a positive response from the relevant landowners, with final agreement subject to further negotiation and contract. These are shown as 'Proposed' in Fig 14. Other parts will need a lot more discussion and final agreement is still a long way off. These are shown as 'Aspirations' in Fig 14.

11.16 New rural cycle paths will generally be enclosed by hedgerows on both sides – see Community Action CA3 – Creation and Maintenance of Woodland and Hedgerows.

Cycle Hire

11.17 Schemes have recently been proposed to enable residents to hire bikes from the Village Hall at an affordable rate and to provide a re-charging base for e-scooters there. These will be investigated further, alongside the provision of new cycle paths.

Travel Strategy - Encouraging Walking

11.18 Like cycling, walking is a healthy and sustainable alternative to car use and is encouraged by national and local government policy. 70% of responses to the Residents' Questionnaire were positive about walking more, subject to improvements such as:

- better paths (eg wider pavements)
- safer footpaths, mostly in terms of protection from road traffic, including pollution
- better lighting and road crossings.

11.19 Most of the Parish is well served by rural footpaths, which are well-used for leisure walking but are less useful for walking to work or facilities within the village.

11.20 The recently developed eastern part of Broomfield (Beaulieu and Channels) has been masterplanned to promote walking and other forms of sustainable transport, but walking infrastructure is more varied in older parts of the Parish. Most residential roads have pavements on both sides. However, these can be very narrow (for instance, Main Road south of the junction with Vellacotts). In addition, pavements are affected by:

- Vehicles part-parked on the pavement in some areas (for instance, outside shops near the Roselawn Fields/Main Road junction) – a particular problem for people with pushchairs or in wheelchairs
- Cycling on the pavements, due to the lack of safe cycle paths/lanes.

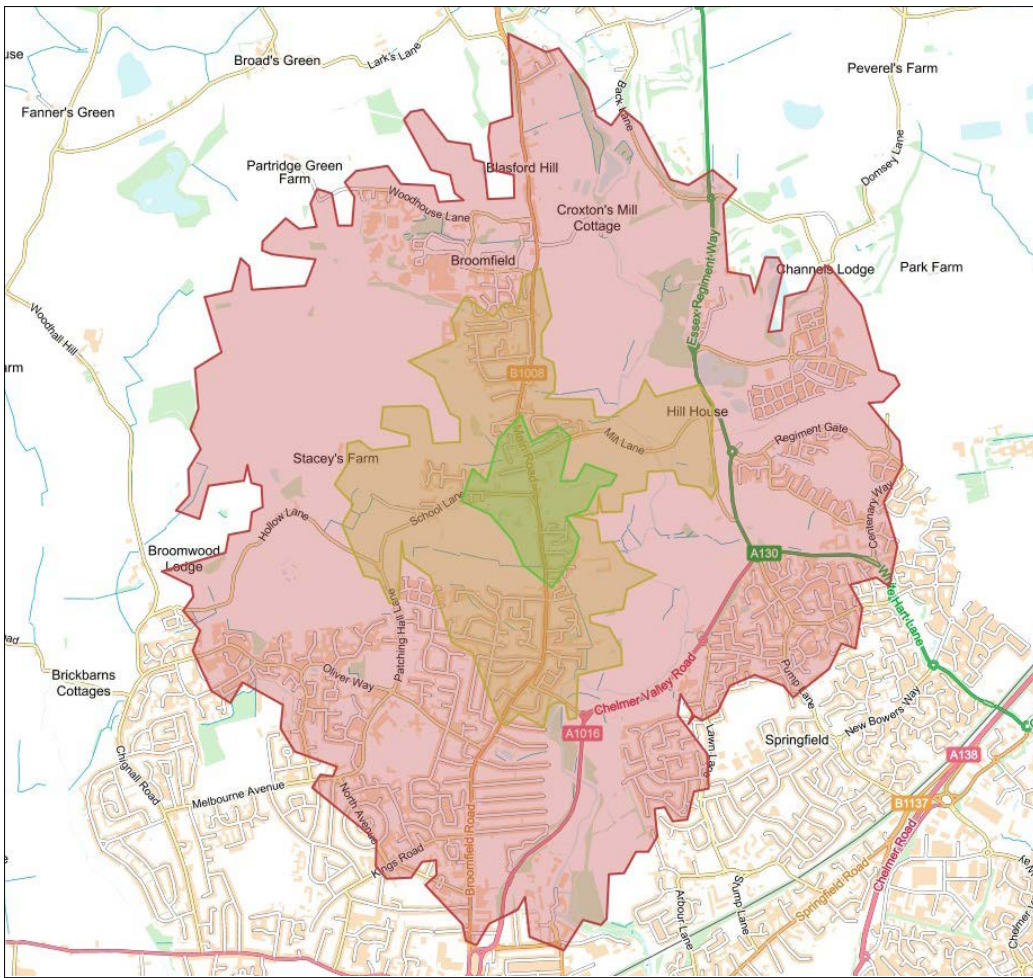
11.21 In terms of crossing points along Main Road, there are several pedestrian refuges, though less so in the narrower section in the south of the Parish.

- One zebra crossing near the junction with Erick Avenue
- Two pelican crossings, near the Angel pub and the junction with Williams Road.

However, there are none in the southern part of the Parish.

11.22 Not all obvious walking routes benefit from suitable crossings – for instance, there is no zebra or pelican crossing near Chelmer Valley High School. Difficulties in crossing may also deter some residents from catching the bus.

11.23 The walking distance from Broomfield to the train station ranges from around 1.5 miles to 3 miles. As illustrated on the Map 12, this equates to between 30 and 45 minutes' walk from the village centre. It is a direct route from the village, but it is not an attractive one at peak times as it follows the busy B1008. Although air quality is not seen as a problem in Broomfield officially, some sections of the B1008 – for instance where peak traffic tends to queue – appear to have poor air quality, which makes walking unpleasant. Air quality needs greater research and monitoring.



Map 12 - Indicative walking times from the village centre (library). – 15, 30 and 45 minutes

11.24 The new cycle paths proposed above will be built to enable walking as well. This should encourage people who are willing to walk long distances to the city centre, by providing routes away from main roads (including providing easier access to the existing Avenues foot and cycle path). However, the greatest scope for increasing walking will be for shorter distances from home to school, shops and other local facilities.

11.25 We propose to encourage walking through the following community actions. Again, these should be taken as the start of an evolving strategy, as new opportunities will arise during the lifetime of the Neighbourhood Plan, depending partly on funding opportunities and on the willingness of residents to get involved.

Public Rights of Way

11.26 As indicated above, most of the Parish is well-served by rural footpaths and public rights of way. These are generally unmetalled, so more appropriate for leisure

use, but are nonetheless important for encouraging walking. So, they need to be protected where new developments take place.

Travel Strategy - Encouraging Bus Use

11.27 The Broomfield Road Corridor is well-served by buses, largely due to the needs of Broomfield Hospital, with route C1 services running approximately every 10-15 minutes during the day. However, it is expensive for anyone without a concession, currently around £4 to £5 for an adult day return to the City Centre.

11.28 The Chelmer Valley Park and Ride is situated on the A130 Essex Regiment Way, just north of the Parish boundary. This doubtless draws away car traffic that might otherwise use the B1008. Before COVID, it also operated a bus to Broomfield Hospital.

11.29 When the 'North of Broomfield' housing development takes place, the developers will be required to operate a 'Smarter Choices Campaign' for 10 years. This includes the appointment of a co-ordinator to support better publicity about bus services, subsidised public transport promotions and personalised travel plans. The area of benefit would be the existing village from School Lane northwards.

11.30 Responses to the residents' questionnaire indicated that the following measures would encourage greater bus use:

- cheaper fares - this was mentioned by over half the respondents who commented
- greater frequency (especially to coincide with hospital shift changes and visitor times)
- more reliability, additional destinations and better child and disabled access.

Unfortunately, these measures are largely beyond the powers and budget of a parish council. Nonetheless, the Parish Council may be able to encourage bus use, especially through publicity.

POLICY BFD15 - PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

Proposals shall safeguard all public rights of way including footpaths, bridleways, byways, green lanes and unclassified county roads.

Proposals will not be permitted which:

- i. adversely affect any existing public right of way, and the public's enjoyment of it; or
- ii. detract from the character of any existing right of way, including the urbanisation of it; or
- iii. do not accord with the need to improve and provide access to the countryside for the disabled.

Only in exceptional circumstances will proposals that would result in the diversion of the route of an existing right of way be acceptable.

Community Action CA14 - Strategy to Encourage Sustainable Travel

Working with Essex Highways, the City Council, interested residents and others, the Parish Council will:

Cycling

Seek to achieve a network of safe cycle paths, as indicated in Fig. 14. The first priority will be to create north/south routes that will link with existing paths into the City Centre.

Investigate and (where appropriate) implement other measures to encourage cycling, such as an affordable cycle hire scheme, provision of more cycle racks where necessary and a re-charging base for e-scooters at the Village Hall.

Walking

Encourage walking by:

- carrying out an audit of pavements and where necessary, submitting bids to the Local Highways Partnership (LHP) for widening, improving, installing better lighting etc
- where parking on pavements is a persistent problem, installing notices to discourage it
- working with schools to support initiatives such as the Walking Bus
- installing a footpath or steps from the northern end of Vellacotts to Ashford Place/Main Road, subject to landowners' agreement
- investigating the possibility of a new crossing near the Main Road/Court Road junction, to encourage safe walking to Chelmer Valley High School, and at other points on Main Road
- setting up air quality monitoring points along Main Road and, where problems are identified, campaign for improvements.

(Further suggestions from residents are welcomed through the Neighbourhood Plan consultation process).

Encourage Bus Use

Work with the 'Smarter Choices Campaign' to ensure that local residents get the greatest possible benefit from it (eg by running awareness campaigns in the Broomfield Times and on the Parish website; seeking to extend the area of benefit to include the southern part of the Parish).

Work with the Broomfield Hospital transport co-ordinator to increase the number of Hospital-related journeys made by bus or other forms of sustainable transport.

Install a new bus shelter at the northbound Erick Avenue stop (opposite Clobbs Yard).

Reducing the Impact of Traffic

11.31 This section is about reducing the impact of traffic in ways other than encouraging sustainable travel.

Main Road (B1008)

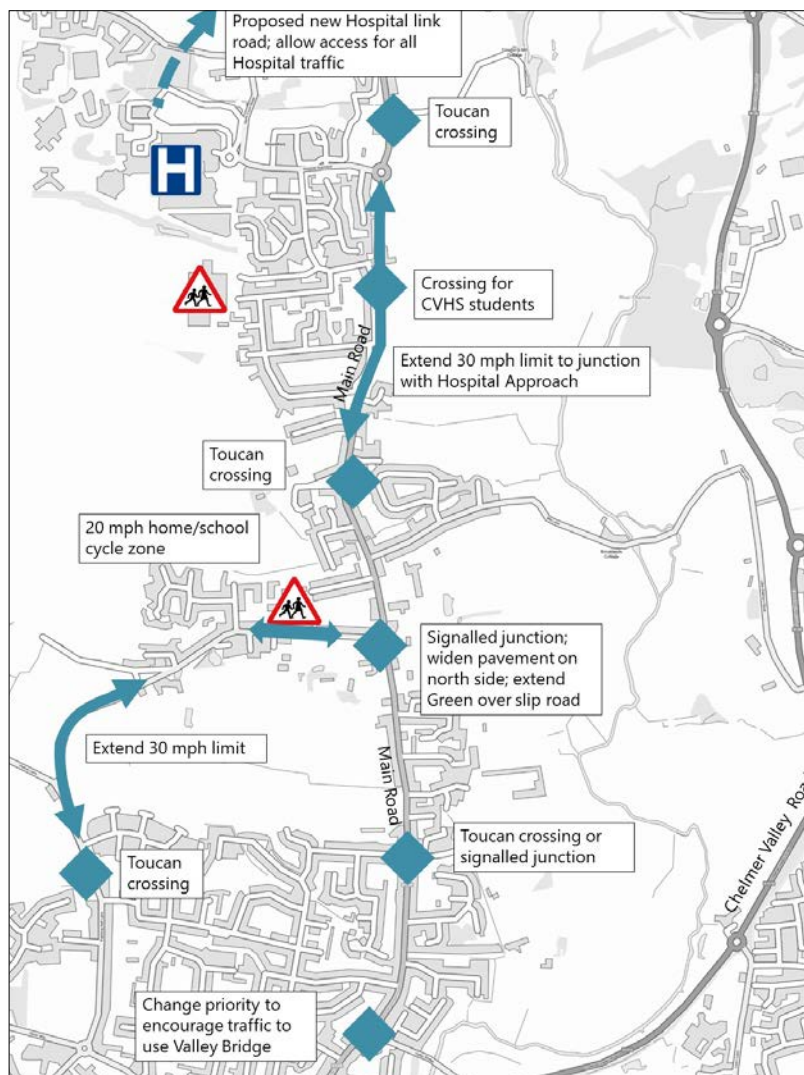
11.32 Main Road is classified in the Essex Highways hierarchy as a Principal Route One (PR1). In the Essex Speed Management Strategy, these are described as: Priority 1 County Routes may be interurban or connecting routes, radial feeder or town centre access routes. What is important is the need to maintain free flowing traffic movement on them due to the function they perform within the network.

11.33 There is clearly tension between this role and the aspiration for the B1008 to serve the local communities along the Broomfield corridor (as proposed in the Mouchel study). While the PR1 status remains, it will be difficult to introduce many of the traffic calming measures that residents would like to see. Nonetheless, the Government is keen to see the appropriate continuation of measures introduced during the COVID emergency and has

re-stated statutory guidance to this effect (July 2021). These aim to increase road space for cyclists and walkers, which inevitably means reducing road space for private vehicles. Furthermore, when the Radial Distributor Road around Beaulieu Park is completed and as work is progressed on the Chelmsford North-East Bypass, there may be scope to re-examine the role of the B1008.

11.34 There is therefore a need for a flexible traffic reduction strategy and an ongoing dialogue with Essex Highways and relevant stakeholders to ensure that all opportunities to mitigate the impact of through traffic are taken.

11.35 The preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan has enabled an opportunity to examine measures which might slow traffic speeds and reduce the impact of through traffic. Some of these are linked to the proposals for new cycle paths, which include toucan crossings to ensure the safety of both cyclists and pedestrians. More crossings would also help to reduce the psychological impact of traffic, by increasing connectivity across Main Road.



Map 13 - Suggestions for traffic mitigation (larger scale maps can be found on the Neighbourhood Plan website)

11.36 Suggested measures are outlined on the map in **Map 13**, with some more detailed maps on the Neighbourhood Plan website. However, these are just suggestions at this stage, and they will need to be discussed in greater detail with the Highways Authority. As indicated, Main Road is classified as a Principal Route 1 (PR1) and some may be considered to conflict with this role. Nonetheless, residents' views on these suggestions are welcomed during the Neighbourhood Plan consultation and beyond. Further suggestions are also welcome.

11.37 Responses to the Residents Questionnaire also showed general support for:

- Vehicle-activated speed warning signs
- Traffic islands/pedestrian refuges
- More pedestrian lights/crossings
- Speed camera(s).

11.38 More detailed work needs to be done to identify appropriate locations for these and gather the evidence needed to support their introduction. Suggestions are welcomed as part of the Neighbourhood Plan consultation.

11.39 Finally, the long-awaited village gateway near Hospital Approach needs to be implemented. And support maintained for the proposed new Hospital Access Road to be open to all Hospital-related traffic and so reduce the pressure on Hospital Approach and its junction with Main Road.

Other Roads

11.40 All other roads in Broomfield are classified as local roads or private roads. There is greater flexibility with local roads to introduce traffic calming and other measures to re-adjust the balance in favour of pedestrians and cyclists. Many local roads in Broomfield are also residential cul-de-sacs.

11.41 The Essex Speed Management Strategy allows 20mph speed limits and zones to be considered on local roads (which is the norm for new residential roads). It also includes the option of Home Zones, where streets are re-designed to reclaim space for non-car users. Advisory 20mph speed limits can be set up in the vicinity of schools, an idea that is also referred to in the Government's new post-COVID guidance (referred to as 'school streets').

11.42 The Parish Council would like to see more existing residential roads 'retro-fitted' to enable lower speed limits and re-allocated road space during the lifetime of the Neighbourhood Plan. 20mph limits on such roads attracted 80% support in the residents' questionnaire. And the additional Community Infrastructure Levy funding that the Parish will receive from development once the Plan is adopted is a potential source of funding for such schemes.

11.43 It is important that such schemes have strong community support on the roads affected. Consultation with the residents concerned also helps to flag up any issues that may not be obvious to others. So, the Parish Council will invite residents who would like their roads to be considered for 20mph zones or home zones to put their road forward. The Parish Council can then work with them to develop a scheme and seek the necessary permission and funding.

11.44 In 2014, the Parish Council consulted residents of Hollow Lane about the impact of the new development north of Copperfield Road. Residents' strong preference was for closure at the western end. The Council has been lobbying for this ever since and was very pleased that the County Council has now decided to go ahead. We think Hollow Lane will be a good local example of how restricting vehicle access can create an excellent resource for leisure, walking and cycling which the local community can enjoy.

11.45 More recently, the Council was approached by residents in School Lane about speed restrictions and is working with them and the Primary School to explore this. This has already led to the zebra crossing outside the School being re-painted; overgrown vegetation being cut back to improve visibility; Community Speedwatch being revived; and to a 'Twenty's Plenty' campaign being prepared. A map outlining further plans for a 20mph Home/School Zone can be found on the website.

11.46 The work being carried out in School Lane could form a model for other roads where residents want to address traffic concerns.

Community Action CA15 - Reducing the Impact of Traffic

The Parish Council will progress a strategy to reduce the impact of traffic and (where possible) to reduce traffic levels. This will be a dynamic strategy, taking advantage of opportunities that arise during the Neighbourhood Plan period, such as improving cycle path infrastructure and other County/Government initiatives. Potential measures for consideration include those shown in Map 13, together with:

- Village entry treatment near Main Road/Hospital Approach junction (gateway and markings to indicate entry to village)
- More vehicle-activated speed warning signs
- Traffic islands/pedestrian refuges
- Pedestrian lights/crossings
- Speed camera(s)

The strategy will be developed in partnership with the Highways Authority and other stakeholders such as the Local Highways Partnership, the City Council, Broomfield Hospital, East of England Ambulance Service and bus service providers.

The Council will continue to make the case for the proposed new Hospital Link from Blasford Hill to be multipurpose to better distribute traffic flows in the north of the Parish.

The Council will continue to work with School Lane residents and the Primary School to develop proposals for reduced speed limits and an environment that promotes walking to school and cycling.

The Council will also invite expressions of interest from residents who would like to introduce speed restrictions or re-design their roads to re-balance road use between cars and other users. Where appropriate, the Council will resource further work and develop proposals to submit to the Highways Authority.

