

Boughton Malherbe Parish Council Traffic Calming Scheme

The October edition of Malherbe Monthly contains an Editorial expressing the views of the editor. The Editor did not ask the Parish Council for comment before publication. Please read our response below before you react to the Editorial.

3rd Para. The £71,495 cost includes all design & planning costs to date. The £61,870 is to implement the scheme. Hence there is no increase in the overall estimated cost.

With regard to the six specific points made:

1. As the Parish Council are proposing to spend this large sum of money which in effect is all our money, would it not be diligent for the parishioners to be consulted on this expenditure. It involves spending well in excess of 70% of the Quinn money on one project.

Answer - In 2018 the Parish Council invited residents to suggest how they would like the council to spend the Quinn Estates donation. Traffic Calming was suggested by several residents in this exercise. The Parish Council has addressed all the suggestions made in this exercise except the purchase of the Village Green, which is not currently an option, and may never be so. The Parish Council has consulted extensively on the scheme and various options have been discussed at length at Parish Council meetings - with large numbers of resident's present. This process has led to a comprehensive scheme with wide support which can be funded from The Quinn Donation. If we now decide to spend less money we will have a less ambitious scheme, which may not have the same level of support. **Members of the public are invited to write to the Clerk with their views on whether they support spending 70% of the Quinn donation on this scheme or not. If an overwhelming majority are against spending this much the Council will reconsider.**

2. Does it seem right that the Parish Council has agreed to proceed with this project in the light of the costs being estimated and may well increase as the project is undertaken. This exposes the Parish Council to unknown expenditure which may be unaffordable. Would any of the us undertake a project where we do not know how much it is going to cost?

Answer - KCC is unable to provide a fixed price at this stage as there are a few more design actions, and a road safety audit, to be completed. However, they assure us that the final price will only vary slightly from this estimate. In any event, the council can re-think in the unlikely event that the final price is greatly changed. The Council has been asked to pay in advance, therefore there is no risk of the price changing once the scheme has commenced.

3. In addition to the initial cost of the project it is understood that any future maintenance of the scheme would be the responsibility of the Parish Council. As this is an unknown figure how will the council fund this?

Answer -The Council has agreed to establish a repairs fund which will comprise the remaining £11K of the Quinn donation plus an annual contribution from the budget. KCC say the features should not require replacement or maintenance for 5-10 years. The Council has opted for the hardest wearing red tarmac surface and granite setts to prolong their lifespan. It should be

noted that accidents resulting from the scheme design and construction will be KCC responsibility

4. Has the Parish Council sought assurance from Kent County Council and the Highways authority on whether this proposed scheme will have the desired effect of actually slowing down the speed of traffic passing through the village? Does it have any evidence this type of scheme actually works and has the council been advised on the viability or not of the scheme?

Answer - KCC has little research evidence on the effectiveness of such schemes. East Farleigh has recently introduced a scheme with red tarmac strips and traffic surveys show a modest decline in speeds. However, it is fair to say that there is little research evidence to suggest the impact of our scheme either way. However, as we are unable to have speed bumps or physical chicanes in our scheme, as we have no street lights, there is very little alternative, except to do nothing. This is clearly not supported within the village on the basis of consultation.

5. The scheme also brings to the village a lot of Red coloured road markings which to some may seem to be unsightly in a rural village.

Answer - Red tarmac has been on the drawings of the first and final schemes during consultation. No adverse comments were received. In addition, the council has chosen a scheme which majors on the granite set "chicanes" which are more in keeping with the village and have been mentioned by people in the village in the context of the Doddington scheme as a desirable approach.

6. This scheme also raises the question of spending a large sum of money on one project that will have no material effect for the parishioners that do not live in the village and will not benefit from it. To them it may seem unfair that a majority of the money received from Quinn is being spent on a project that they personally derive no benefit from and in addition may not have the desired effect of it actual slowing down the traffic.

Answer - No adverse comment was received from residents living outside the village during consultation. They nearly all use Headcorn Road. When developments are finished in Lenham/Headcorn it will be too late to do anything and we will not have a scheme to build on as circumstances change. The Parish Council asked the views of all residents of the Parish in 2018 regarding priorities for the use of the Quinn donation. Traffic Calming was one of the priorities identified in this survey. Other suggestions have either been implemented – village hall improvements, Platts Heath School Improvements, Lighting the passage by the Kings Head, or reviewed and deemed unviable.