

WITHERSFIELD ROADS

THERE IS CONCERN REGARDING THE PROPOSED ADDITIONAL TRAFFIC (reportedly 20 lorries a day) USING LARGE HGV TRUCKS COMING ONTO THE ROADS FOR A BIODIGESTION PLANT

NATIONAL STANDARDS

RECOMMENDED WIDTH FOR ROADS FOR DOMESTIC MOTOR TRAFFIC: 5.5m

Widest road widths in Withersfield measured 5.25m. and very few of these

NOTE: No measurements for vehicle widths include wing mirrors.

[RECOMMENDED WIDTH FOR 2 HGVs TO PASS 6.75m

[Passing not needed if lorries go into the Biodigester plant by The White Horse and exit onto the A1307]

Acorn Lorries – width maximum 2.8m, gross weight (i.e. vehicle weight and full load average 27 tonnes but can go up to 29 tonnes) Gross weight 44 tonnes possible

[HGV measurements: legal road width in UK for Lorries: 2.55m.

(New Scania lorry seen 14.9.23 asked width – “8 feet” = 2.44m]

THE REASONS FOR OBJECTING TO BIODIGESTER VEHICLES WITHERSFIELD

The main concern is the Church Street Bridge that would have to be used by lorries entering Withersfield and using Church Street to visit the Acorn gateway next to the White Horse at the top of the hill. See separate report on this bridge.

I measured WITHERSFIELD ROADS from the outer edges of the tarmac (some 30cms of tarmac crumbs not included) and found them to be hazardous and unsafe in some places because Widths vary within the length of every road. There are many acute bends – some 90%. See detailed measurements under ROUTES below* Average width is in the region of 4.5-4.8m, but we all drive leaving a gap of several cms, at the left edge of the road and want a gap down the centre of the road for passing, so those extra widths have to be remembered when calculating safety when driving.

VERGES

Most of the roads have grass verges that cannot be used in an emergency because they are too steep. Verges are *ca.* 25cm high, up to 29cm in summer with grass growth. On nearly all the length of Withersfield roads there is a deep DITCH behind the grass verge on both sides of the road. By some residences there are hedges immediately behind the verges. In some places there are not even verges, just a hedge or earth bank.

FOOTPATHS

Apart from a very short path between the church and bottom of Turnpike Hill there are NO FOOTPATHS BY THE SIDE OF THE ROADS.

PAVEMENTS

There are 3 places where short stretches of pavement edge the roads:

both sides of the Church Street bridge; on one side of the road opposite Albury Cottage in Church Street; and a longer pavement from Mountain Ash Villas on the edge of the village to the A1307 roundabout at the bottom of Queen Street. Otherwise there are NO PAVEMENTS in Withersfield.

PEDESTRIANS

WITH NO FOOTPATHS OR PAVEMENTS BESIDE THE ROADS, PEDESTRIANS ALREADY TAKE THEIR LIVES IN THEIR HANDS GOING FOR A WALK IN WITHERSFIELD AND HAVE TO JUMP ONTO THE GRASS VERGES TO ESCAPE ALL VEHICLES. Having an additional 20 large trucks a day at any time carrying heavy loads of waste passing close to pedestrians is a frightening and totally unacceptable prospect.

HORSES

Horses and riders are infrequently on the roads and the hunt has to use short sections. Large noisy lorries are a worry to all horse riders. Adding extra very large lorries to our roads is inviting situations for panicking horses.

PARKED CARS

There are 2 places with nearly permanently parked cars. Opposite Bradnam's there is a row of cottages, Approach Cottages, of which the middle 4? have no garage and so leave a car parked outside on the road. The width of road left for passing is 3.8m. Ventnore House in Thurlow Road, nearly always has a vehicle parked outside, leaving a 4m space for passing vehicles.

ACCIDENTS involving Biodigester lorries

Accidents would occur where there is no escape by driving to the left – and that is almost everywhere on Withersfield roads. Most of the verges are too high to mount. An accident would involve a tail back of cars that could not turn round and arrival of an AMBULANCE (National ambulances 2m to 2.4m wide and 3.59m long) would not facilitate manoeuvres to clear the road. Police cars may also be involved adding to the road blockage.

FIRE ENGINES are usually 2.3m wide.

*For further details and measurements See ROUTES below

ROUTE A A1307 ROUNDABOUT , QUEEN STREET TO TOWN GREEN IN CENTRE OF VILLAGE

Queen Street , road width 5m except:

1) from roundabout, almost immediately on the left in Queen Street is the wide entrance to Bradman's a timber merchant's premises with a shop open 8am-5pm Monday to Saturday for sales of timber, and building materials. It is a busy site with movement of both large and small vehicles.

2) opposite Bradnam's is a row of 8 Approach Cottages, the central 4? of which have no garage and leave their cars on the roadside against a pavement. There are almost always 2 or 3 cars parked there.

Road width between cars and edge of road for passing: 3.8m

Watching a stream of vehicles going towards the village on this first stretch of Queen Street, all of the large delivery vans & trade vans proceeded along the road with their tyres over the middle white painted lines.

Two accident points: A few yards further on the left is a bridge over an old railway with a wall by the roadside frequently hit by cars and mended. Opposite is a house 'Merrimac', with a hedge that has been frequently run into and the fence broken. The pavement stretches from Carvel to the A1307 roundabout. Beyond these houses on the right the road bends sharply right and further along enters a 40mph speed limit. There are several bends with oncoming traffic unseen by car drivers. The road ends in the centre of the village by Town Green.

ROUTE B SLIP ROAD OFF A1307 WITH A WIDE ENTRANCE THAT QUICKLY NARROWS AND BENDS TO PROCEED UPHILL TO A SHARP CORNER.

Names of Streets on this route: AMERICA HILL (a local name given road when American woman lived at bottom of hill in 20C); SILVER STREET; HORSEHEATH ROAD; HOLLOW HILL; CHURCH STREET

AMERICA HILL

This section of the road is particularly hazardous at harvest time, where residents hope not to meet a Vestey Farm vehicle with a tractor and wide load. Inevitably it is the resident's car that has to give way. IF TWO VEHICLES CANNOT PASS one will have to roll back to the bottom of the hill or the other make a tricky steep reverse to the top.

Road widths vary between 4.5m and 4.83 m all the way from bottom to top. A 90 degrees bend at the top means a car driver is very close to the bend before he can see anyone coming.

SILVER STREET

Silver Street is where most accidents in the village have occurred. The section where houses face each other across the tarmac measures 4.8-4.9m.

A sharp right bend at the top of a hill and winding road leads down past the White Horse and entrance of Skippers Lane to Hollow Hill. There are 2 notices, one each end of a short section in the middle of Silver Street, stating "ONCOMING TRAFFIC IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD". If there is a 2.55m lorry, on the road where it is 4.8m wide at its widest, driving down the middle of the road, where does any other vehicle driving in the opposite direction go?

HORSEHEATH ROAD

Silver Street farmhouse, Sparrow Hall and and Flitcher Farm before semi-detached farmhouse with a short section of road free of variations in width. There are two semi-detached houses above The White Horse which will have the new plant's entrance between them and the pub.

HOLLOW HILL

Begins opposite The White Horse, 5.25m then quickly narrowing going downhill towards the church, having 4 houses on the left with no verge.

CHURCH STREET

A continuation of Hollow Hill with a house Albury Cottage on a high bank, which is a pinch point, 4.3m wide, and would preclude any road widening scheme. At this point the road has a pavement of a few metres opposite Albury Cottage.. Near Homestall Crescent road width is 4.5m. Opposite the Church at the bottom of the hill the road is 5m wide. Lower down there is a waiting space for cars to allow oncoming traffic to cross a bridge.

Church Street Bridge: Length 55.8m Width 5.26m (road 3.46m + 2 pavements each 90cm = 1.8m). Sides of bridge made of wooden boards painted white - length 4.5m. Brick walk beneath bridge – from base of bridge down to bed of brook 1.8m, with a high and wide arch in the centre.

Can this bridge take the extra weight of several heavily laden lorries daily crossing it? The pavements were put in deliberately to limit the width so that only one vehicle could cross at a time and the sides strengthened at the same time.

Just beyond the bridge is Town Green in the centre of the village with a village sign and a war memorial, with the meeting places for Routes A and B and C.

ROUTE C

The road leads from the village centre towards Great Thurlow up Turnike Hill, Thurlow Road and Withersfield road.

Opposite Burton Green 5m; Withersfield road sign alongside 30mph sign 4.6m; 30 mile limit 4.57m; High Noon Farm entrance 4.57m; 40 mph and round sign “National Speed Limit Applies” 4.8m with bends on to the parish boundary. The verges are deep backed with a ditch both sides of the road. By the boundary with Great Thurlow the width of the road is 4.45m. After the last village house, on both sides of the road, the verge is backed by a ditch.

The only obstruction point is opposite Vendore House where a car is frequently parked leaving a 4m space for a passing vehicle.

ROUTE D Skippers Lane

The road from West Wratting crosses the parish boundary at Cadgers Wood where the road is 5.25m wide – the widest point on Withersfield roads. At Exhibition Farm the road is 5m; Exhibition Cottages 5.25m before a very severe bend; near the end of the road 4.8m before the road is deliberately wide to join Horseheath Road opposite The White Horse. Here Biodigester lorries would take a sharp right then sharp left into the plant entrance near The White Horse.

[ROUTE E Great Wratting Road leading off Route C

The entrance to this road has 2 notices: ‘QUIET LANE’ and UNSUITABLE FOR HGVs. By the Pheasantry the road is 4.3m followed by 5 warning bollards placed round a bend The width varies but as narrow as 3.56m, 3.9m, then 4m and 4.3m near the 30mph and a “National Speed Limit Applies” circular sign with a diagonal line across it. Rough grass verges 1.5m deep have a ditch behind on both sides. Lorries would do well to observe the warning signs and certainly this route is not suitable for Biodigester lorries.]

PEOPLE MATTER: Present users

DRIVERS

Biodigester Lorry Drivers should not be asked to drive the dangerous Withersfield roads where their widths widen and narrow all along their length and round sharp bends. Biodigester loaded vehicles are too wide to be able to comfortably pass other traffic on the Withersfield roads. We have been told that 20 Biodigester lorries a day will pass through Withersfield. That is when the plant is newly opened. If, and when, business increases, what guarantee is there that in the future 30 or 40 lorries a day will not be passing through? Their drivers will be uncomfortably wary driving through Withersfield.

One of the widest trucks, on the roads here twice a week, is the refuse collection vehicle. It is 2.16m wide and 15 tonnes when empty and 26 tonnes when full.

Van drivers, already numerous on Withersfield roads, have to contend with the road conditions plus other trucks and delivery vans for online orders, groceries, dustbin clearance trucks (2.16 wide), oil tankers, Vestey Farm tractors and trailers, etc. Van widths typically are 1.7m and one driver of a Luton van (a "Luton Van" is 2.7m wide) in the village told me "We" that is her fellow grocery store van drivers "are dreading it" i.e. the coming of the biodigester plant lorries. Apart from the heavy vehicles, several drivers a day in cars and SUVs answer calls for help from residents when things go wrong in their homes.

RESIDENTS/PEDESTRIANS

Residents driving their cars (the latest cars are 1.86m wide) and SUVs (which now measure 1.8-2.1m wide) already have to stop or pull left to avoid many of the lorries and trucks.

Pedestrians have to hop up onto verges even when cars pass to keep safe and none of us wants to be caught on the roadside when a loaded Biodigester lorry 2.15 m? wide comes speeding towards us. Since we have no footpaths or pavements no such vehicles should impinge on our right to walk in our own village safely.

ALL OF THESE PEOPLE FREQUENTLY USING THE VILLAGE ROADS MATTER and imposing extra Biodigester vehicles on them is inconsiderate at its mildest and deeply offensive at its worst.

THE WHITE HORSE

The White Horse is Withersfield's only pub. It stands by a busy 3-way crossroads point. No-one going to the pub to sit indoors or outside to enjoy relaxing with a drink wants huge lorries negotiating the crossroad in front of the pub. Hearing large lorries engage a low gear by the pub before turning into the plant gateway next to it are not what people enjoying a pint or staying overnight in the chalets

attached to the pub, want to suffer. People matter and the whole village has been hurt by this Biodigester plan foisted on them. To place the gateway to the plant next to their pub is to add insult to injury.

People Matter. Withersfield is a whole village of people whose way of life matters, and whose opposition to this plan to build a biodigester plant that impinges on road safety all over the village should be respected.

CONCLUSION

Withersfield roads are totally unsuitable to carry any further traffic and wide laden lorries are the least acceptable additional vehicles. The village is probably at the point, or very close to it, where it is now carrying the maximum amount of traffic safely. It is unreasonable to daily impose 20 additional laden Biodigestion lorries on the residents and road users in the village.

Signed: Christine E Jackson A.L.A. F.L.S. local historian and author of 16 natural history books .