

Case Study

Restoring Buriton's rural character: Putting people and place before traffic

Background

Excessive road markings and too many highway signs on rural lanes and roads, known as *highway clutter*, can spoil the intrinsic rural character of the South Downs National Park (SDNP) and give the sense that vehicles have priority over other road users.

These traffic issues are replicated across the SDNP where many rural lanes and settlements are affected by speeding traffic, rat running, anti-social driving and threats to the safety of other road users as a result of these driver behaviours.

The Buriton project shows how removing highway 'clutter' can reduce vehicle speeds and dominance in rural lanes, and reclaim the streets for pedestrians and other users as a result. Removing so called 'highway clutter' has also enhanced the appearance and historic character of the village by removing these urbanizing features.

The Department for Transport (DfT) produced an advice note in 2013 about decluttering and design speeds:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reducing-sign-clutter>

The SDNPA has produced road design guidance in partnership with the local Highway Authorities:
<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/care-for/roads-in-the-south-downs/>



The project

Buriton Parish council started a targeted project in 2009 to 'declutter' the lanes within the village to help reduce traffic speeds, enhance local character and improve safety for all road users. The project was part of a wider exercise, coordinated by the Parish Council, to ensure that the character of the village is respected and enhanced.

The need for this project was identified by the community during the production of a Village Design Statement in 1999, updated in 2008. Subsequently, the village produced a Local Character Assessment and a Parish Plan. These community planning documents drew attention to issues of speeding traffic, and the need to preserve the character and safety of the rural lanes.

In response to these findings, the parish council appointed a highway design consultant to prepare design proposals which would create better pedestrian spaces and address traffic issues. The scheme proposed removing unnecessary street clutter – eg bollards and road signs but also proposed gateways to the village along the key entrance points and the reinstatement of village 'spaces' which had been eroded over time.

Following detailed public engagement and successful fundraising by the Parish Council, the first phase of the scheme was implemented in 2009 at a cost of £45k. Funding came from a variety of sources including the district council, highway authority, Section 106 funding from local developers, and support from local councillors. Subsequent phases were undertaken in 2010 and 2012. These used a 'cost neutral' approach by combining works with scheduled operations by the highway authority. Not repainting white lines, for example, saves costs.

“The project improved the public realm, creating space for pedestrians and cyclists whilst influencing the behaviour of vehicle drivers.”

Maggie Johnston, Buriton Parish Council

The outcomes

The project improved public spaces, gave space back to pedestrians and cyclists and influenced the behaviour of vehicle drivers in ways which do not rely on increasing amounts of road signage, road paint, bollards and other inappropriate clutter. Improvements include:

- The encompassing of ‘outer gateway points’ on the approaches to the centre of the village. These ‘gateway’ points combine road narrowing, simple signing, planting and granite sett surface materials to alert drivers to the village ahead.
- The removal of approximately 30 road signs and bollards as well as 2 kilometres of centre line road markings and give-way markings at nine road junctions.
- The replacement of metal (lollipop) 30 mph signs with low, high quality oak markers.
- New hedgerows and semi-mature native trees have created new focal points for the community.
- Lowered kerb heights allow wide vehicles, including buses and farm vehicles, to pass each other
- The extension of 30 mph speed limits on each of the main approaches to the village
- One of the roads into the village was downgraded and is now confined to cyclists, pedestrians and farm access only.

The future

Communities can work closely with the relevant highway authority and design consultants to find innovative solutions to highway issues.

Phasing the works and breaking projects down into their constituent parts will improve the deliverability of schemes.

Procuring a specialist consultant to prepare design proposals can help to communicate clearly the overall vision for the village.

For more information, please contact:

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Buriton gateway ‘After’



The South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan (PMP) 2014–19 sets out a shared vision for how we all would like the National Park to be in the future. It includes 11 long-term outcomes, and provides a framework for communities, landowners, charities, businesses and public bodies to work together to make this vision and these outcomes a reality.

This project successfully achieved the following PMP outcomes:

Outcome 5 Outstanding visitor experiences are underpinned by a high quality access and sustainable transport network, supporting improved health and wellbeing.

Outcome 8 More responsibility and action is taken by visitors, residents and businesses to conserve and enhance the special qualities and use resources more wisely

southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/SDNP-Partnership-Management-Plan-2014-19.pdf

July 2019