

3.6. Traffic and Safety

3.6.1. Traffic Calming, Speed Control and Accident Prevention

The Impact of Safety Measures

Control of traffic is necessary as a result of increased vehicle numbers, the size and speed of vehicles, and the need to make the highway safer, easier and more pleasant for all users.

Suffolk is renowned for its landscape quality and attractive villages and traffic calming measures can have an adverse effect on this environment. The problem is not unique to Suffolk:

"While there have been some successes, integration of the calming measures with rural character has not always been achieved." ('Roads in the Countryside', Countryside Commission 1995).

Research carried out by the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions shows that safety measures do indeed reduce vehicle speeds and accidents but the report concludes that:

"..... scheme effectiveness in terms of speeds and accident reduction may need to be weighted against unwanted effects such as visual intrusion."
(Traffic Advisory Leaflet 1/00: Traffic Calming in Villages on Major Roads)

In Suffolk, therefore, the local authorities have resolved that, as far as is practical, the design of schemes will consider the environmental impact on the local distinctiveness of the countryside as well as the important issue of safety for the user of the highway.

Designing Schemes

- Legislation sometimes requires certain standards to be achieved. However, in other circumstances regulations allow some flexibility

- The design of safety schemes should use the existing physical topography, vegetation, buildings and other structures, so that they appear as an integral part of the landscape and the historic road pattern
- Solutions should reinforce local identity by careful choice of detailing, materials and street furniture
- Whilst traffic safety features often rely on visual impact, standard solutions solely designed to be highly noticeable are largely inappropriate in sensitive rural areas
- Generally the use of red surfacing is inappropriate on environmental grounds in rural areas and buff surfacing is usually preferred
- Schemes should avoid increasing noise and air pollution
- Schemes should cater for the needs of cyclists and pedestrians
- The introduction of new features such as carriageway narrowing, chicanes or bends should be designed to be in keeping with the existing road pattern
- In certain instances, allowing on street parking can be an effective way of slowing traffic
- Carriageway narrowing can provide opportunities for additional planting
- The environmental impact of any necessary additional warning signs and lines should be carefully considered
- The widespread use of bollards should be avoided. Where they are necessary, simple, unpainted timber bollards incorporating reflectors are usually preferable to standard plastic or metal heritage styles.
- Consider using locally made barriers, bollards, fencing, etc. These are often cheaper than standard ones from national suppliers and are more sustainable.

Traffic Calming -



Build-outs using surface dressing and granite setts are a simple and effective measure



Buff rather than red rumble strips are preferable on rural roads



The hedgerow on the right will, when matured, visually narrow the carriageway and is the first stage of a speed reduction scheme

3.6.2. Gateways

Gateways are incorporated into traffic management schemes to signal changes such as a lower speed limit. The gateway itself may be a standard metal highway sign with the village name, timber gates and fences or structures made of brick or other materials. In addition, there may also be a variety of elements such as carriageway narrowing, a change in the road surface, kerbing, signs, road markings and bollards.

Rather than using standard design solutions it is important to work with the existing character of the locality. There already exist a number of features which, as well as encouraging vehicles to slow down, combine to contribute significantly to the attractive character and appearance of Suffolk's villages and countryside. These features could be used to form the basis of designs for new gateways. They include, amongst other things:

- trees, verges and hedges
- old brick and flint boundary walls
- white painted metal and concrete post and rails
- timber picket fences
- historic cast and wrought iron bollards, posts and railings
- timber post and rails
- metal parkland railings
- timber bollards
- gate houses, toll gates and lodge buildings

There are also historic precedents for the use of particular surface materials, including:

- bound gravel
- small areas of cobbles
- areas of granite setts
- granite slabs used as channels and kerbs
- Yorkstone setts and paving
- the local red and white bricks used as paviers
- blue clay stable paviers, kerbs and channels

Combinations of some of these features can be incorporated in gateway designs which are not only effective in terms of traffic calming but are also historically appropriate, locally distinctive and interesting streetscape features themselves.

As well as incorporating a message which reinforces the need to drive carefully gateways can also be useful in other ways:

- to help to further reinforce the local identity of a town or village by incorporating an image of a local landmark, sculpture or the village sign
- to provide information about local services
- to display information about twin towns or awards won by the community
- to incorporate information about what is of interest in a settlement

Gateways -



White concrete post and rail gateway at Coddenham reflects the roadside railings around the village

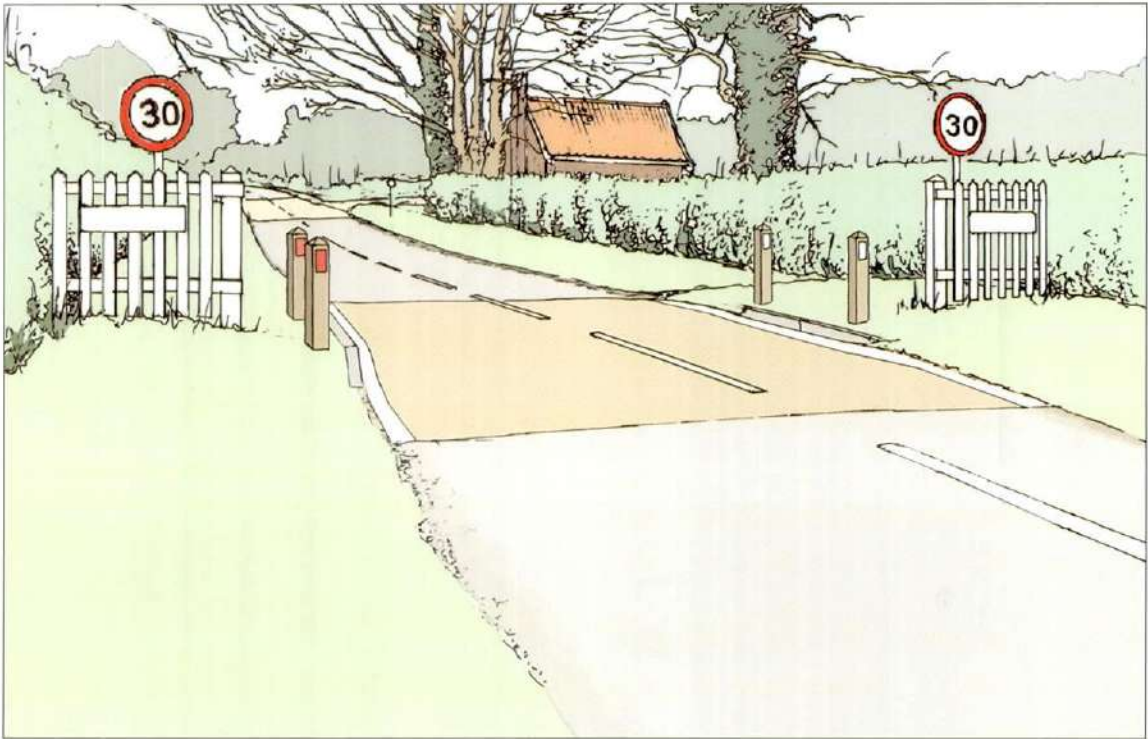
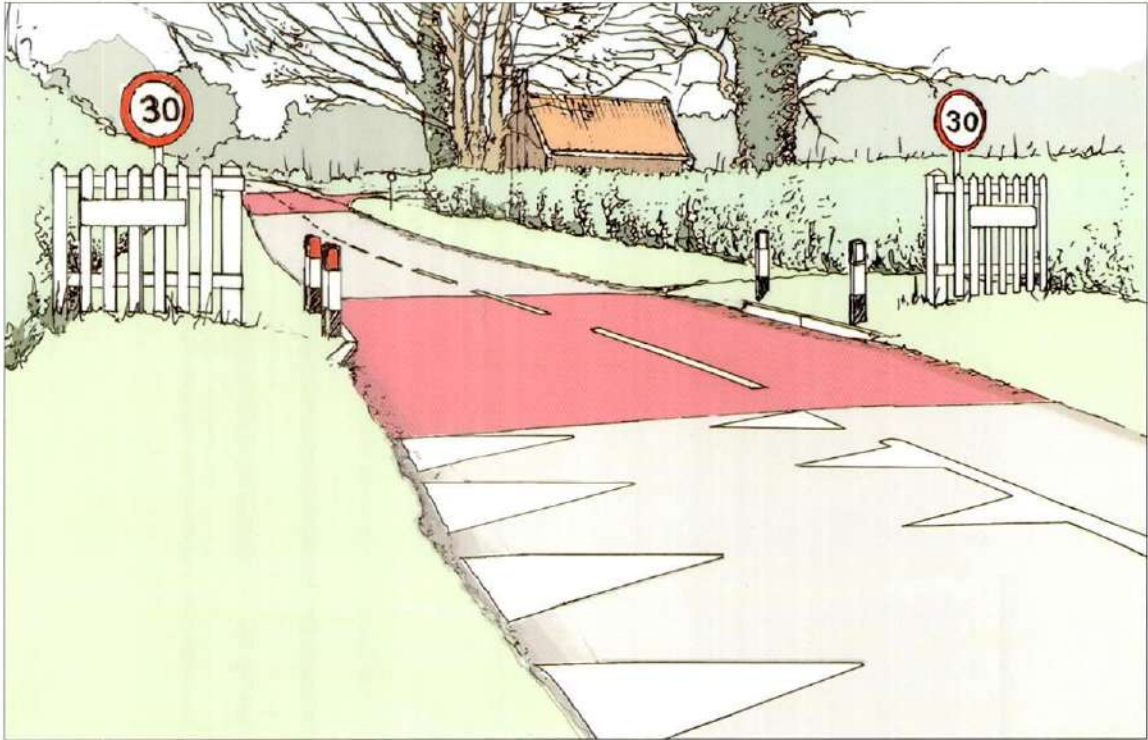


Simple timber constructions can form effective and appropriate gateway features



This gateway reflects the character of a traditional toll gate which existed previously nearby

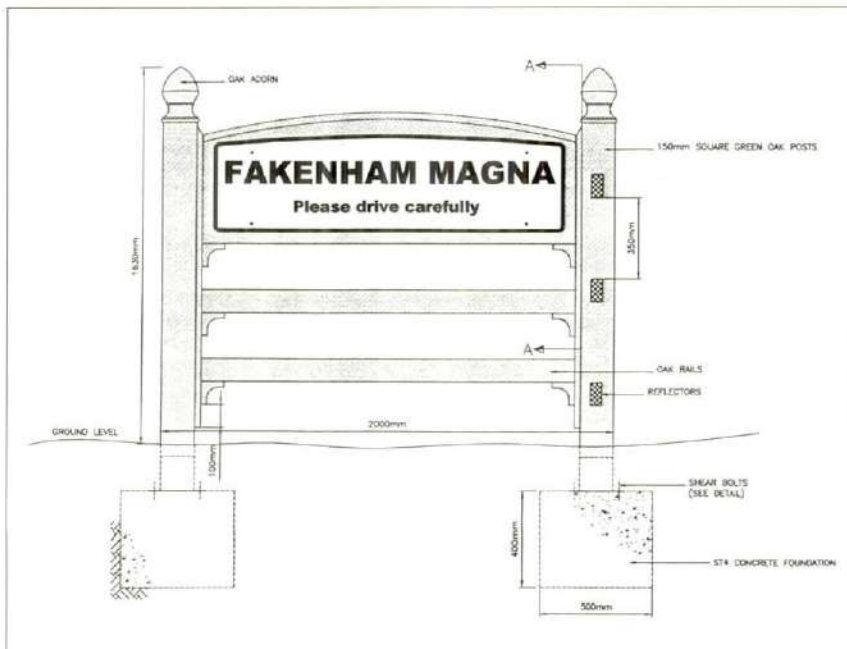
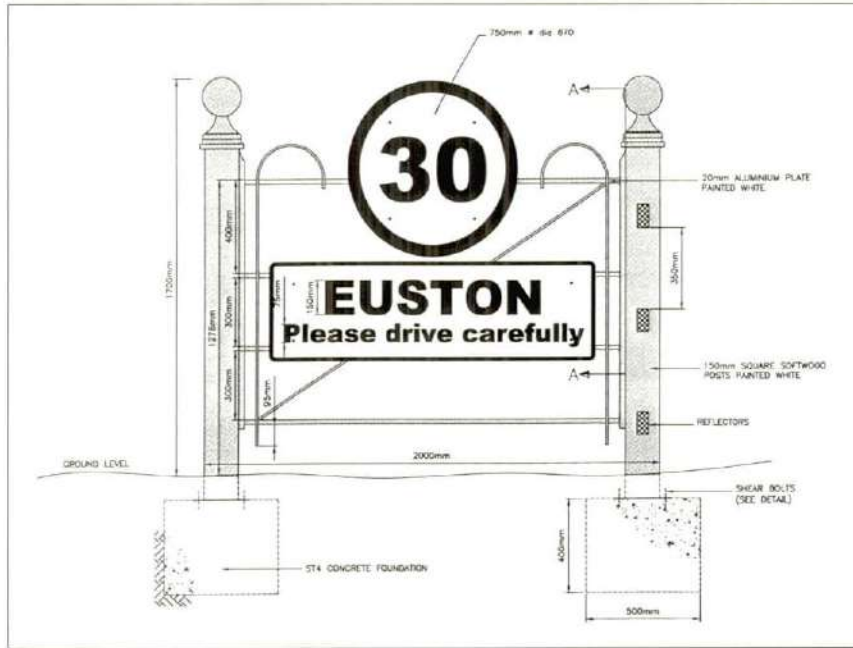
Gateways -



Features such as buff coloured surfacing, simple road markings and timber bollards are more appropriate to the Suffolk countryside



Parkland railings and gates at Glevering were the inspiration for a gateway at Euston, another estate village



Oak gateway designed for Fakenham Magna

3.6.3. Junction Improvements

Crossroads and T-Junctions

Rural Suffolk is served by a large network of minor roads. Junction improvements are sometimes necessary on safety grounds. Most junctions in rural areas are T-junctions or crossroads. Quite often a road has a split junction leaving a small green area in between the carriageways.

When carrying out junction improvements:

- wherever possible reduce the area of carriageway and realign the road edge rather than use large areas of hatching
- wherever possible retain trees, hedgerows and verges, including any central green spaces
- if vegetation is removed, then replace it wherever possible with species suitable for the location
- kerbing should be kept to a minimum, avoid kerbing central green spaces

Junctions -



The grass verges were extended at this junction improvement at Playford Corner



Central green spaces should be retained

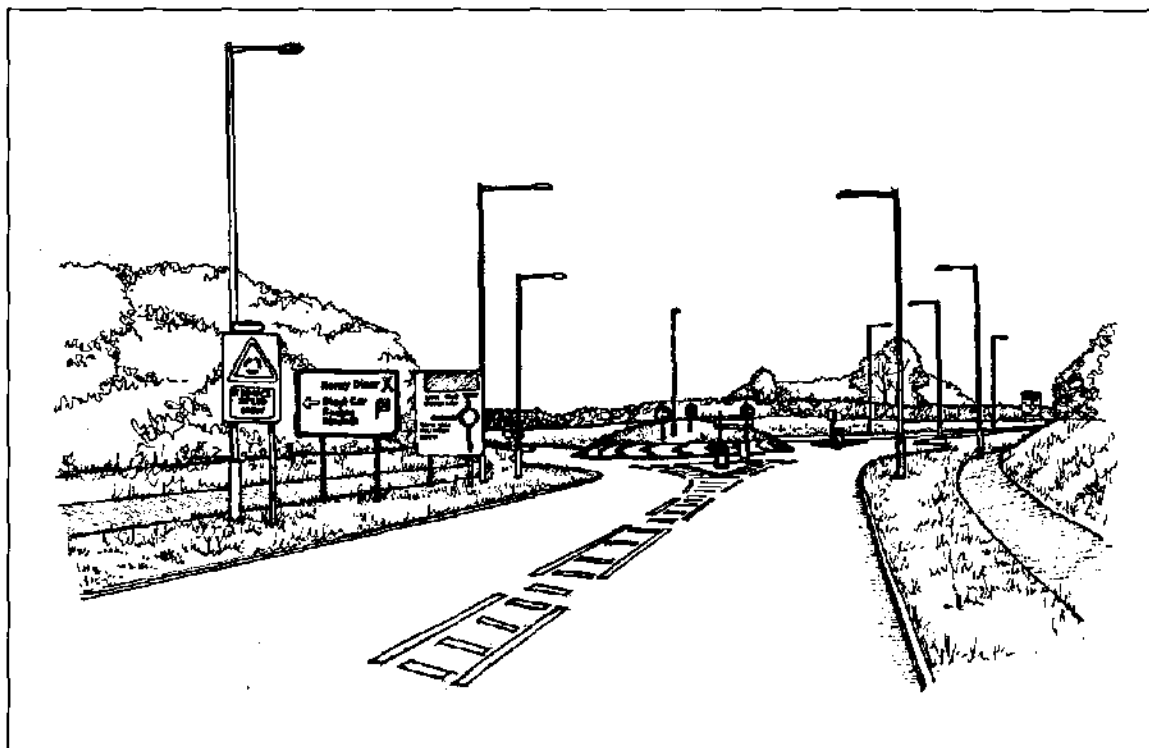
- keep signs and road markings to the absolute minimum
- if the scheme incorporates a new signpost, then consider using a traditional signpost in sensitive areas

Roundabouts

Roundabouts are normally associated with urban areas or major roads where the volume of traffic and multiple routes make this sort of junction control essential. Lighting must be provided to a satisfactory standard at roundabouts and this can be inappropriate in the countryside. Roundabouts, with their necessary signs, lines and lighting, can appear alien in a rural context and other junction treatments are visually preferable.

If, however, a roundabout is the most suitable solution, then several issues must be carefully considered:

- Lighting should be kept to a minimum and light pollution carefully controlled
- Planting on roundabouts in the countryside should be appropriate to the environment of the area and should in almost every instance be native species
- Sponsorship of roundabouts is only permitted if appropriate signage and planting can be agreed with the sponsor
- Consideration should be given to creating a wildlife habitat by using appropriate plants and seed mixes
- Cutting regimes should respect the needs of wildlife as well as safety considerations
- Barriers, retaining walls, kerbing and other structures should be kept to a minimum
- Detailing and choice of materials should relate satisfactorily to the local environment. The use of standard solutions and components will not always be appropriate.
- Signage should be kept to a minimum and should be located carefully to reduce clutter



"Isolated roundabouts and lit junctions can be very intrusive . . . The intrusion of roundabouts is often made worse by large and numerous signs and by widening and kerbing of approach roads in the countryside."

(ROADS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE - COUNTRYSIDE AGENCY 1995 REF: CCP 459)

3.6.4. Signs and Roadmarkings

General policies and guidance on signs and road markings for the County's roads are fully covered in "Traffic Management on Suffolk's Roads: Guidelines and References". This document details usage and design of all signs, together with a brief section on environmental issues, including the EnCheck system.

Signs and markings are an important element of traffic management and road safety. However, they can increase clutter in the countryside and the need for any additional signs should be considered very carefully. In all cases, the number and size of signs should be kept to the minimum.

Location of Signs

- Wherever possible, they should be placed, by agreement, on existing features such as buildings, boundary walls, railings, posts
- Where signs are fixed onto new posts then the number of posts should be kept to a minimum, and the height of the sign and post should be kept as low as possible
- Avoid locating signs against the skyline; carefully placing them in front of trees or hedges will reduce their impact
- Regular spacing of speed limit repeater signs is a legal requirement but, wherever possible, signs should be located on existing features
- Signs should be located safely where they can be clearly seen, but should also have regard to their setting