

# ARNCOTT PARISH COUNCIL

## RESPONSE TO OCC'S DECISION TO CANCEL THE SCHOOL BUS SERVICE FROM ARNCOTT VILLAGE TO FIVE ACRES PRIMARY SCHOOL IN AMBROSDEN

The Arccott Parish Council has been made aware of Oxfordshire County Council's decision to stop providing a school bus service from January 2019 for Arccott village children who attend Five Acres Primary School in Ambrosden. The Arccott parish councillors have read the contents of the letter and route assessment report given to the parents of the Arccott village pupils who will be affected by this decision. On behalf of these village parishioners, Arccott parish council has decided that it should write and inform you of its strong objection to your decision and to give you the reasons as to why this decision should be overturned and why the bus service should be continued.

The Arccott parish councillors note that the decision to cancel the bus service has been made based only on the personal viewpoint of an Oxfordshire County Council principal engineer who has formed the opinion that a safe walking route exists between the villages of Arccott and Ambrosden for mothers / guardians and small children.

The report states that the only part of the walking route assessed is that part of the route from the entrance / exit point to the village at Lower Arccott to the school gate in Ambrosden. Had the assessor also walked the full route through the village, he / she would have seen that there are very narrow sections of pavement in various places. He / she would also have seen that, to stay on the available pavements, people need to cross the road at three locations along the walking route before leaving the village at Lower Arccott.

It is more than disappointing that the assessment completely disregards the route from the entrance / exit point of The Village Close in Upper Arccott to the entrance / exit point at the end of the village in Lower Arccott. That section of the route is one mile long. Even more disappointing, and somewhat laughable, is the reason given in the report for the walking route through the village being considered as irrelevant. The report states that the 30mph speed limit through the village is considered to be sufficient reason in itself to be able to declare, by default, that the walking route is safe and doesn't need to be looked at – even where no footways are provided. An absolutely ridiculous assumption.

Contrary to the viewpoint of the OCC principal engineer, the Arccott parish councillors believe that the existing walking route between the villages is definitely NOT a safe walking route for mothers / guardians and small children at the times of day that they would need to walk that route. It is the opinion of the councillors that the conclusion of the report is wrong, totally unacceptable and has been arrived at with little, if any, regard to the varying safety hazards that exist along this route during the course of a year.

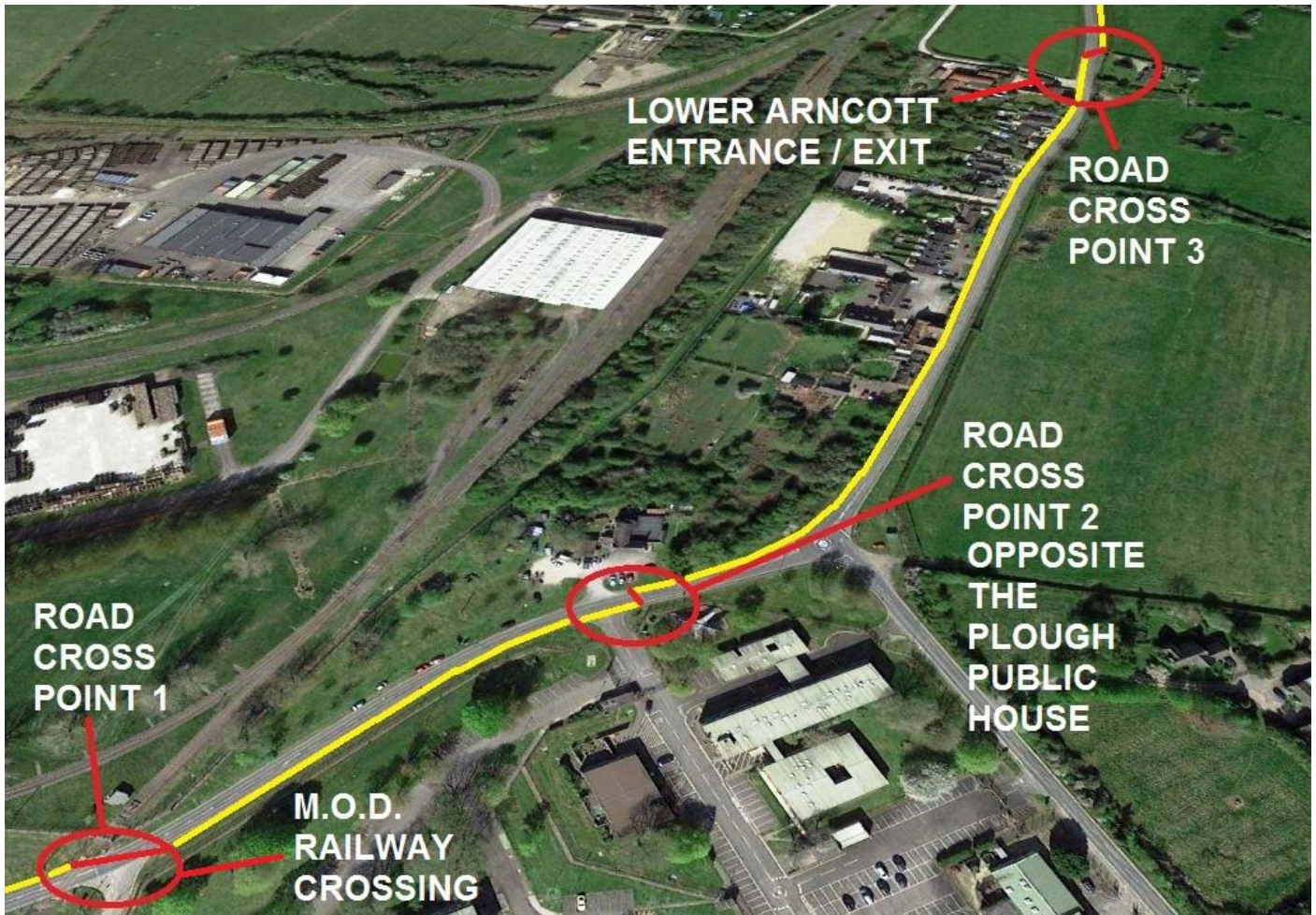
As no assessment of the walking route through Arccott village was carried out, the following pages contain information regarding that route and, in the opinion of the parish council and of the many people affected by this decision, the valid reasons as to why this walking route is anything but safe.

The report states that the walking route was assessed on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2018 and that the weather conditions were dry. It is also stated that the assessor considered how the availability of the route might be affected at different times of the year. However, the report does not give any details of what the assessor's considerations are.

During the autumn, winter and early spring there are many days when the village is enveloped in thick mist / fog resulting in very poor visibility for drivers and pedestrians. The dangers are much increased when the weather conditions combine to give freezing fog together with icy road and pavement surfaces. During times of freezing weather conditions the roads get salted most of the time but there are occasions when they don't. The pavements never get salted and are often

treacherous to try and walk on. On many other days at these times of the year there is heavy rainfall so the roads are very wet and, in places, are flooded along the roadside next to pavements. The stopping distance for vehicles is very much increased on wet and icy road surfaces. It is ridiculous to consider that this is a safe walking route in these sorts of conditions.

This picture shows the overall hazardous part of the walking route that was not assessed.



The roadway through the village is used by a large volume of traffic each day. The type of traffic is varied – cars, vans, motor cycles, buses, rigid axle lorries and HGVs. Towards the end of 2017, the parish council decided that a traffic survey should be carried out and this was arranged by Mr Nigel Clark from Oxfordshire County Highways in Kidlington. The survey started on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> January and finished on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> January. Radar devices were located adjacent to the M.O.D. railway crossing on Norris Road and opposite to The Tally Ho Inn on Ploughley Road. Over the course of the seven days, the radar devices recorded every vehicle movement and its speed along those roads in both directions.

The following table has been compiled from the traffic survey data files received from Mr Clark on 25<sup>th</sup> January. The data in the table shows the total vehicle movements and speeds recorded along Norris Road and Ploughley Road between 8:00am to 9:00am and 3:00pm to 4:00pm on the January schooldays of Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup>, Thursday 11<sup>th</sup>, Friday 12<sup>th</sup>, Monday 15<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup>.

The fourth column from the left in the table refers to “ROAD CROSS POINT”. There are three road cross points.

Road cross point 1 is the crossing point at the M.O.D. railway crossing on Norris Road. Road cross point 2 is opposite The Plough public house just before the Palmer Avenue roundabout. Road cross point 3 is at the end of the village at Lower Arcott before the road build out.

### TRAFFIC SURVEY DATA COLLECTED IN ARNCOTT VILLAGE JANUARY 10th 2018 TO JANUARY 16th 2018

DAY	TIME	DIRECTN	ROAD CROSS POINT	VEHICLES IN 1 HOUR	RECORDED VEHICLE MOVEMENTS AND SPEED											
					No. OVER 30mph	% OVER 30mph	06 to 11 mph	11 to 16 mph	16 to 21 mph	21 to 26 mph	26 to 31 mph	31 to 36 mph	36 to 41 mph	41 to 46 mph	46 to 51 mph	51 to 56 mph
WED 10th JAN	08:00 TO	NORTH	1 TO 2	170	58	34	1	7	6	16	82	42	15	0	1	0
		NORTH	2 TO 3	135	40	30	0	0	3	46	46	31	5	4	0	0
	09:00	SOUTH	3 TO 2	257	14	5	1	1	26	138	77	12	2	0	0	0
		SOUTH	2 TO 1	270	44	16	3	34	59	49	81	38	6	0	0	0
	15:00 TO 16:00	NORTH	1 TO 2	200	67	34	3	34	24	6	66	52	14	0	0	1
		NORTH	2 TO 3	213	67	31	0	1	10	42	93	47	13	5	2	0
		SOUTH	3 TO 2	122	22	18	0	0	3	52	45	20	2	0	0	0
		SOUTH	2 TO 1	130	40	31	1	7	13	8	61	30	9	1	0	0
THU 11th JAN	08:00 TO	NORTH	1 TO 2	182	57	31	4	5	4	29	83	46	11	0	0	0
		NORTH	2 TO 3	154	49	32	0	1	5	43	56	37	7	3	2	0
	09:00	SOUTH	3 TO 2	268	15	6	0	1	10	152	90	13	2	0	0	0
		SOUTH	2 TO 1	258	58	22	4	38	55	33	70	49	8	1	0	0
	15:00 TO 16:00	NORTH	1 TO 2	134	40	30	3	20	20	11	40	29	10	1	0	0
		NORTH	2 TO 3	145	69	48	0	0	4	21	51	49	19	1	0	0
		SOUTH	3 TO 2	130	15	12	0	0	4	63	48	14	1	0	0	0
		SOUTH	2 TO 1	146	34	23	3	12	10	18	69	27	7	0	0	0
FRI 12th JAN	08:00 TO	NORTH	1 TO 2	152	59	39	1	9	1	16	66	48	10	1	0	0
		NORTH	2 TO 3	141	38	27	0	1	2	36	64	27	6	5	0	0
	09:00	SOUTH	3 TO 2	211	16	8	0	3	21	71	100	15	0	1	0	0
		SOUTH	2 TO 1	211	59	28	1	20	37	21	73	50	7	1	1	0
	15:00 TO 16:00	NORTH	1 TO 2	147	50	34	0	20	18	10	49	38	11	1	0	0
		NORTH	2 TO 3	171	56	33	0	0	2	25	88	37	11	8	0	0
		SOUTH	3 TO 2	104	11	11	0	0	4	40	49	10	1	0	0	0
		SOUTH	2 TO 1	113	47	42	1	0	3	13	49	41	4	2	0	0
MON 15th JAN	08:00 TO	NORTH	1 TO 2	151	61	40	2	4	2	17	65	54	7	0	0	0
		NORTH	2 TO 3	136	40	29	0	0	2	26	68	28	9	3	0	0
	09:00	SOUTH	3 TO 2	250	19	8	0	1	11	116	103	17	2	0	0	0
		SOUTH	2 TO 1	223	41	18	0	24	24	55	79	36	5	0	0	0
	15:00 TO 16:00	NORTH	1 TO 2	129	36	28	3	7	4	16	63	27	8	1	0	0
		NORTH	2 TO 3	146	44	30	0	3	6	27	66	33	10	1	0	0
		SOUTH	3 TO 2	116	13	11	0	0	6	48	49	10	2	1	0	0
		SOUTH	2 TO 1	137	55	40	1	8	5	12	56	44	6	5	0	0
TUE 16th JAN	08:00 TO	NORTH	1 TO 2	164	51	31	1	3	2	21	86	44	7	0	0	0
		NORTH	2 TO 3	146	46	32	0	2	9	33	56	38	7	1	0	0
	09:00	SOUTH	3 TO 2	245	22	9	0	0	21	99	103	18	3	1	0	0
		SOUTH	2 TO 1	201	45	22	3	8	15	54	76	35	9	1	0	0
	15:00 TO 16:00	NORTH	1 TO 2	136	57	42	3	6	4	14	52	42	13	2	0	0
		NORTH	2 TO 3	141	68	48	0	0	1	15	57	49	14	5	0	0
		SOUTH	3 TO 2	112	14	13	0	0	4	44	50	12	1	1	0	0
		SOUTH	2 TO 1	132	47	36	1	4	6	14	60	38	8	1	0	0



TRAFFIC SURVEY DATA COLLECTED IN ARNCOTT VILLAGE  
 JANUARY 10th 2018 TO JANUARY 16th 2018

DAY & DATE	TIME OF DAY	ROAD CROSSING POINTS 1 AND 2 TOTAL VEHICLE MOVEMENT IN BOTH NORTH AND SOUTH DIRECTIONS IN ONE HOUR OVER M.O.D. RAILWAY CROSSING AND ROAD CROSSING BEFORE THE PALMER AVENUE ROUNDABOUT	AVERAGE No. OF VEHICLES PER MINUTE	AVERAGE TIME BETWEEN VEHICLES TO CROSS THE ROAD (SECS)
WED 10th JAN 2018	08:00 TO 09:00	440	7.3	8.2
	15:00 TO 16:00	330	5.5	10.9
THU 11th JAN 2018	08:00 TO 09:00	440	7.3	8.2
	15:00 TO 16:00	280	4.7	12.9
FRI 12th JAN 2018	08:00 TO 09:00	363	6.1	9.9
	15:00 TO 16:00	260	4.3	13.8
MON 15th JAN 2018	08:00 TO 09:00	374	6.2	9.6
	15:00 TO 16:00	266	4.4	13.5
TUE 16th JAN 2018	08:00 TO 09:00	365	6.1	9.9
	15:00 TO 16:00	268	4.5	13.4

TRAFFIC SURVEY DATA COLLECTED IN ARNCOTT VILLAGE  
 JANUARY 10th 2018 TO JANUARY 16th 2018

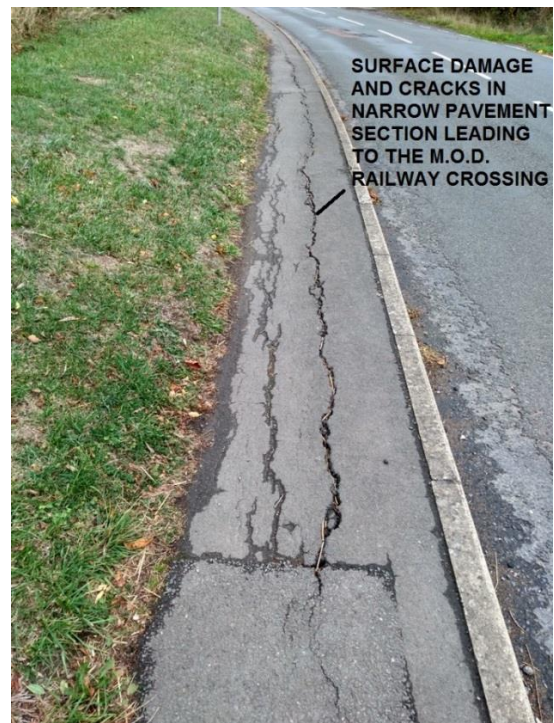
DAY & DATE	TIME	ROAD CROSSING POINT 3		AVERAGE TIME BETWEEN VEHICLES TO CROSS THE ROAD (SECS)
		TOTAL VEHICLE MOVEMENT IN BOTH NORTH AND SOUTH DIRECTIONS IN <b>ONE HOUR</b> AT THE VILLAGE ENTRANCE / EXIT POINT AT LOWER ARNCOTT	AVERAGE No. OF VEHICLES PER MINUTE	
WED 10th JAN 2018	08:00 TO 09:00	392	6.5	9.2
	15:00 TO 16:00	335	5.6	10.7
THU 11th JAN 2018	08:00 TO 09:00	422	7.0	8.5
	15:00 TO 16:00	275	4.6	13.1
FRI 12th JAN 2018	08:00 TO 09:00	352	5.9	10.2
	15:00 TO 16:00	275	4.6	13.1
MON 15th JAN 2018	08:00 TO 09:00	386	6.4	9.3
	15:00 TO 16:00	262	4.4	13.7
TUE 16th JAN 2018	08:00 TO 09:00	391	6.5	9.2
	15:00 TO 16:00	253	4.2	14.2

## SPEED AND DISTANCE TRAVELLED

Miles per hour	Kms per hour	Yards per minute	Metres per minute	Yards per second	Feet per second	Metres per second
60	96.6	1760.0	1609.3	29.3	88.0	26.8
55	88.5	1613.3	1475.2	26.9	80.7	24.6
50	80.5	1466.7	1341.1	24.4	73.3	22.4
45	72.4	1320.0	1207.0	22.0	66.0	20.1
40	64.4	1173.3	1072.9	19.6	58.7	17.9
35	56.3	1026.7	938.8	17.1	51.3	15.6
30	48.3	880.0	804.7	14.7	44.0	13.4

### WALKING ROUTE THROUGH THE VILLAGE

The walking route begins at the end of the village in Upper Arccott at the entrance to The Village Close. The route heads north along Murcott Road and pavement conditions are adequate until arriving at the junction of Green Lane and Norris Road. On occasions a delivery van is parked across the pavement at the junction of Hopcraft Close and Murcott Road at the time when people would need to start the walk to Ambrosden. The driver makes regular deliveries to a business in Hopcraft Close. The parked position of the delivery van makes it difficult for pedestrians to pass by. The pavement section from the Green Lane / Norris Road junction leading on towards the M.O.D. railway crossing is very narrow and, in places, is in need of surface repairs.

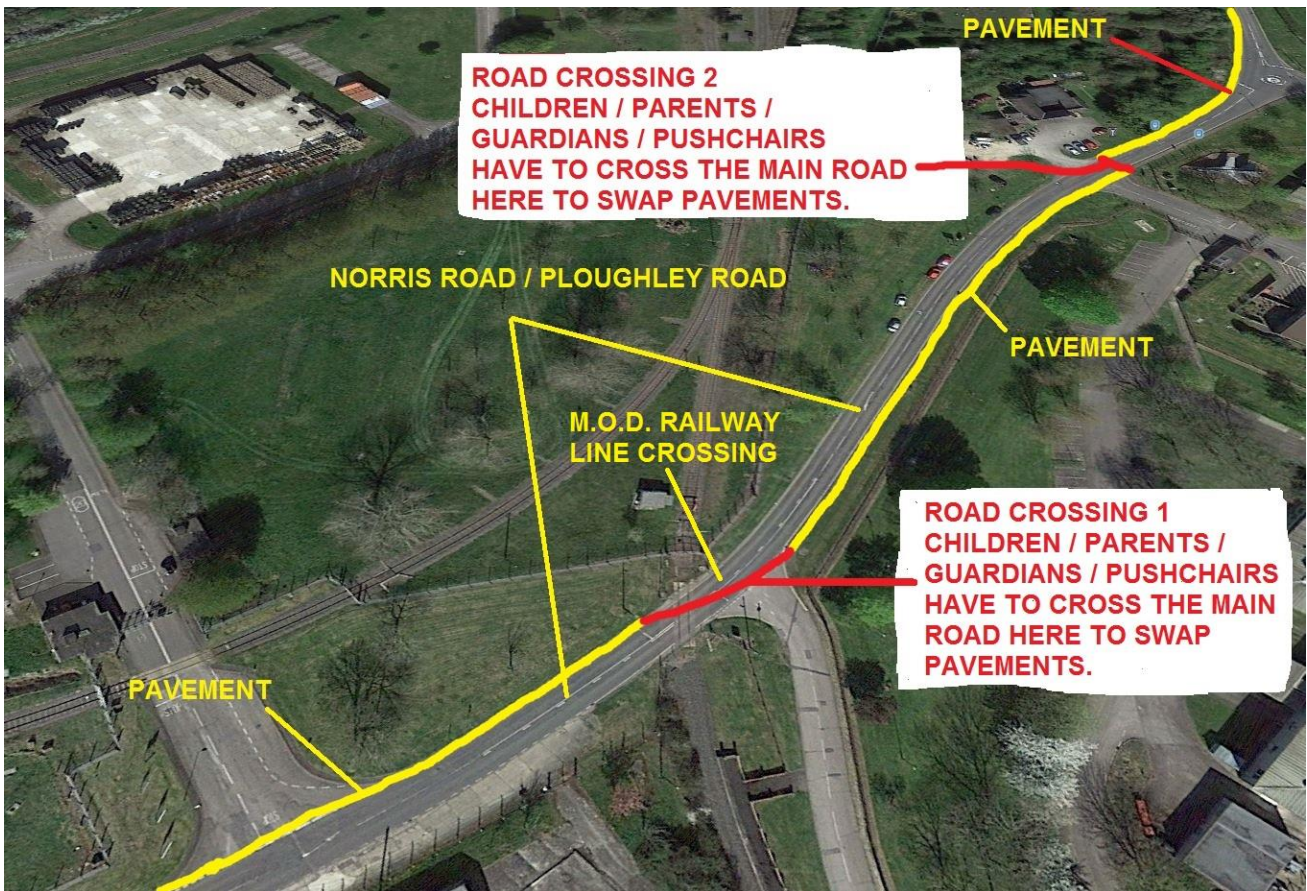


Having negotiated the route along the narrow pavement from the Green Lane / Norris Road junction, the first road crossing point ( crossing point 1 ) is arrived at which is next to the M.O.D. railway crossing. Whilst all three of the road crossing points within the village are hazardous, this crossing point is the least hazardous of the three.



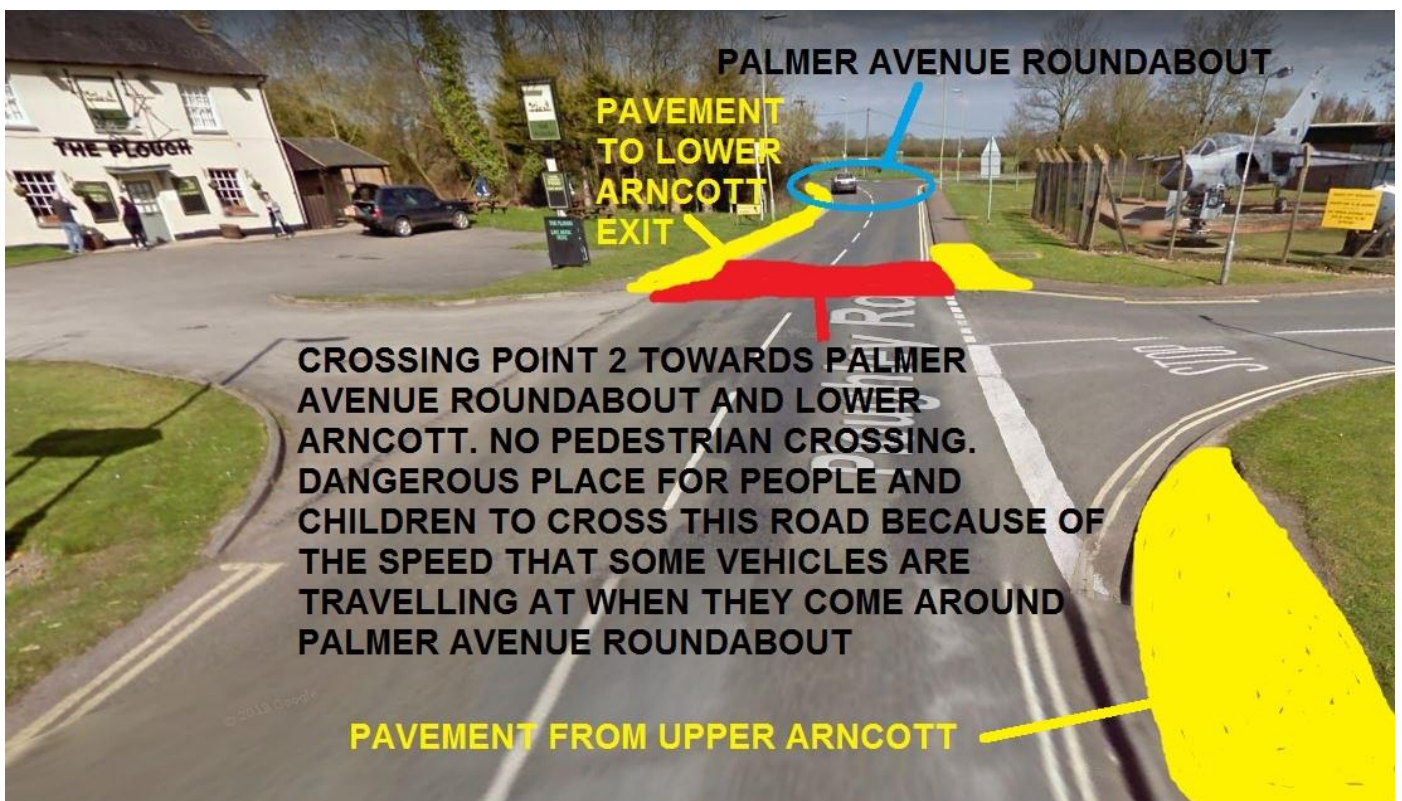
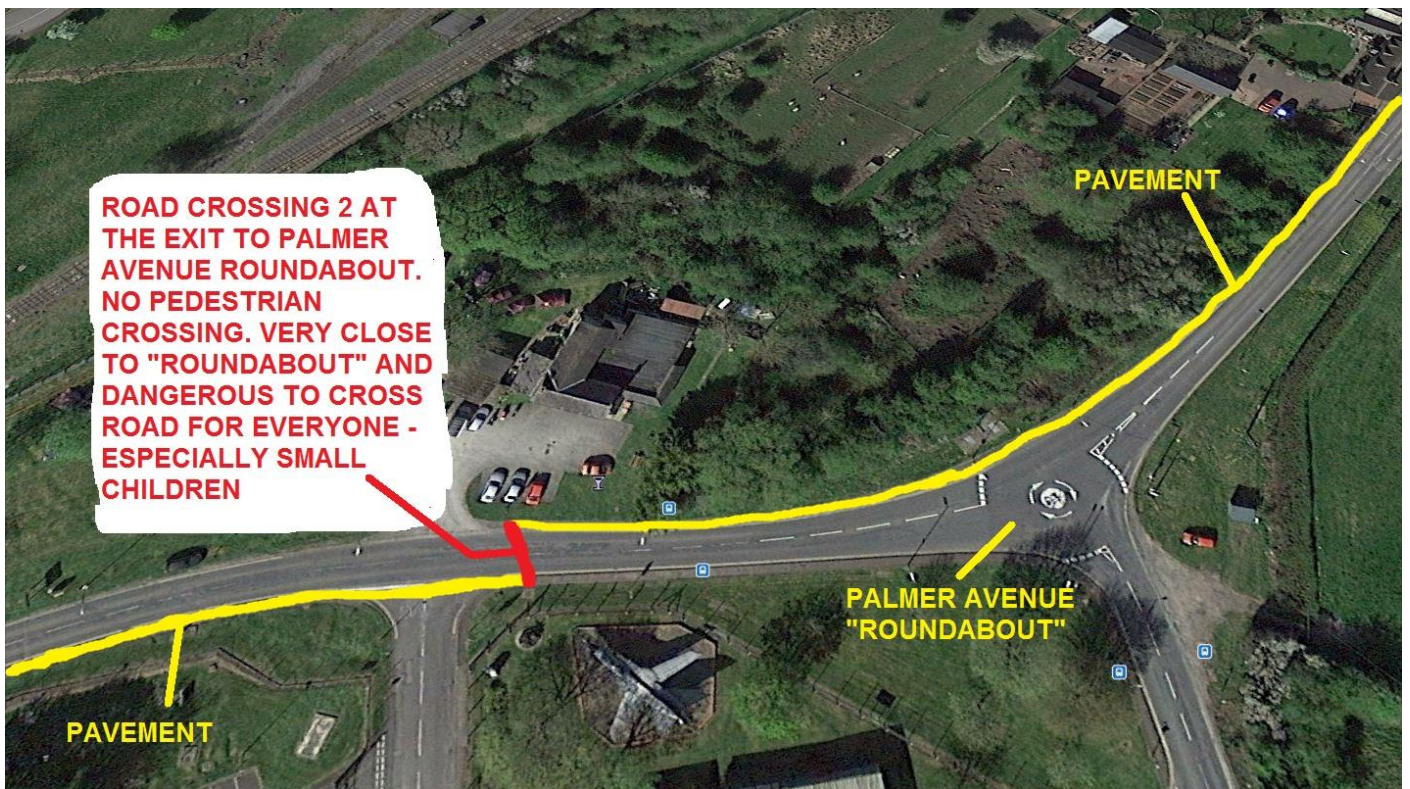


Having crossed the road at this point, the journey continues along the pavement on the other side of the road heading down towards crossing point 2 opposite The Plough public house.



The location of crossing point 2 opposite The Plough public house has been measured as being 58 metres away from the Palmer Avenue roundabout.





The biggest concern at this crossing point is with regard to vehicles travelling southbound from Lower Arccott and coming around the roundabout in the direction of Upper Arccott. The "roundabout" is a painted circle on the road and vehicles cut across the circle instead of driving around it.





**CROSSING POINT 2 IS VERY CLOSE TO THE EXIT FROM PALMER AVENUE ROUNDABOUT. THERE IS NO PEDESTRIAN CROSSING HERE. VEHICLES TRAVEL QUICKLY OVER THE ROUNDABOUT - NOT AROUND IT AS CAN BE SEEN BY THE TYRE MARKINGS ON THE ROAD. THIS IS A DANGEROUS PLACE FOR PEOPLE TO CROSS THIS ROAD - ESPECIALLY SMALL CHILDREN**

**APPROACHING CROSSING POINT 2 FROM THE PALMER AVENUE ROUNDABOUT EXIT COMING FROM THE DIRECTION OF LOWER ARNCOTT**

**PAVEMENT LEADING TO VILLAGE EXIT AT LOWER ARNCOTT**

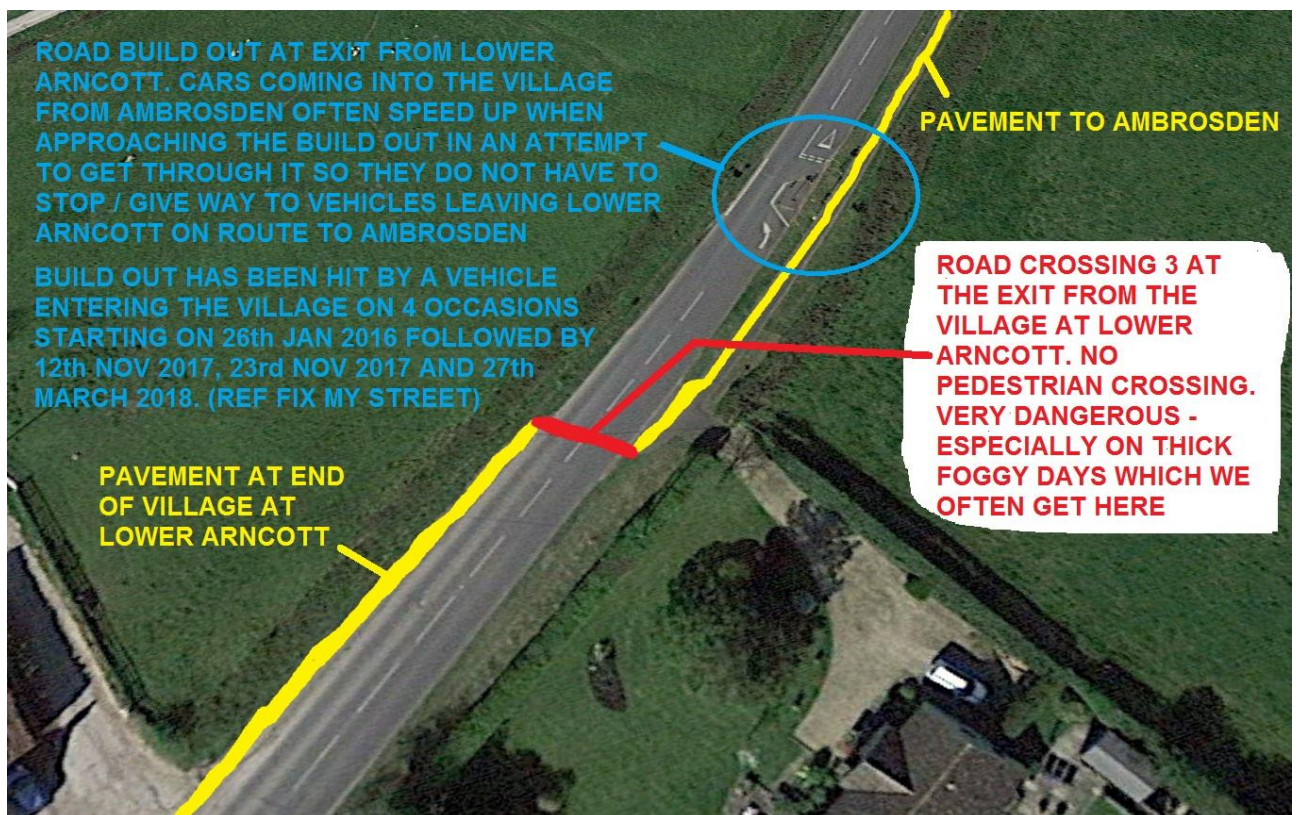
Many vehicles travelling southbound from Lower Arncott are not driven around the painted circle on the road – they are driven across it – effectively cutting the corner. Many drivers do not like slowing down so this manoeuvre allows the vehicles to travel across the roundabout at a faster speed than if the vehicles travelled around the roundabout. The faster exit speed of a vehicle cutting across the roundabout means that it will reach crossing point 2 sooner than a vehicle that is driven around the roundabout.

If a group of mothers / guardians, small children and pushchairs with babies in are crossing the road at the same time as a vehicle leaving the roundabout and travelling at 35mph, the vehicle will hit that group of people 3.7 seconds after leaving the roundabout unless the driver of the vehicle is concentrating on what he / she is doing and brakes the vehicle in time without losing control. If the road is wet / icy then emergency braking of a vehicle means the chances of the driver staying in control are reduced and the vehicle could end up skidding into the people crossing the road and going over the dropped kerb onto the pavement.

The final leg of the journey to the end of the village at Lower Arncott is made along the pavement running alongside Ploughley Road. Yet again, there are many sections of this pavement that are narrow. On these narrow stretches of pavement, vehicles such as HGVs and buses travelling northbound to Ambrosden pass by in close proximity to pedestrians. The wind draught created by these types of vehicles is significant and can pose much danger – especially to small children. Most weekday mornings at walking time, delivery vans to the Tally Ho Inn pull up alongside the building. The delivery vans, some – not all, are sometimes parked across the narrow pavement and this forces pedestrians to step onto the road and walk around the van to get back onto the pavement.



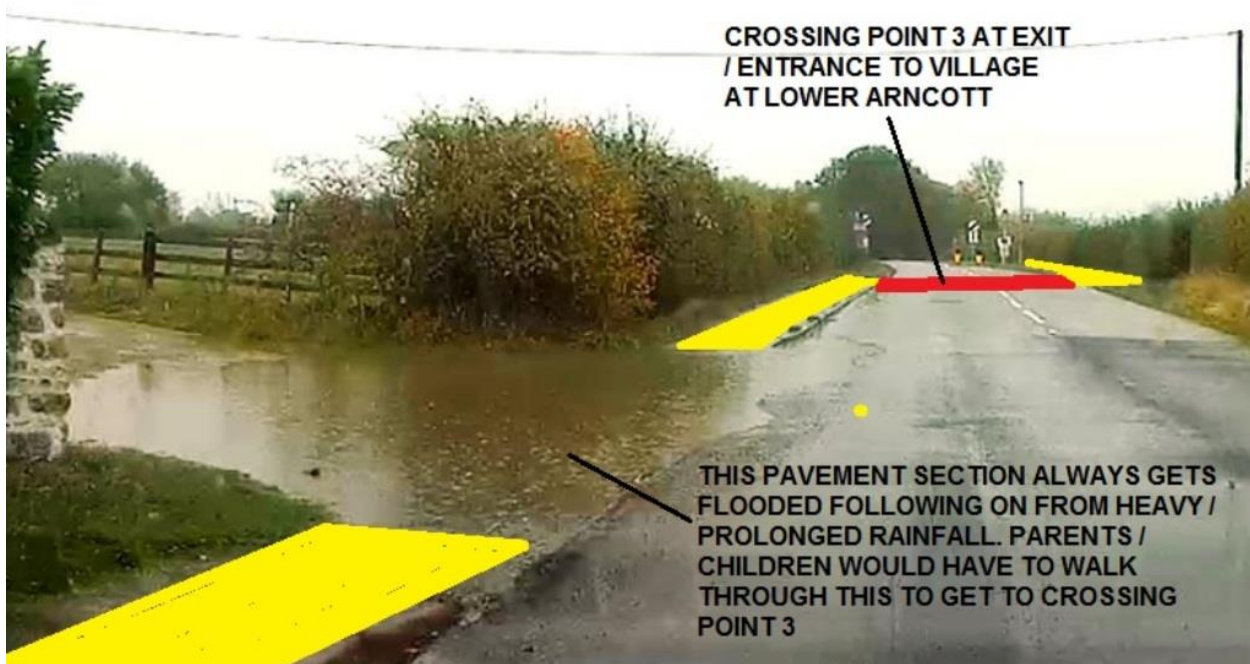
As the end of the village is approaching, the road bends to the left. The last road crossing point is around the bend and cannot be seen until going around the bend.



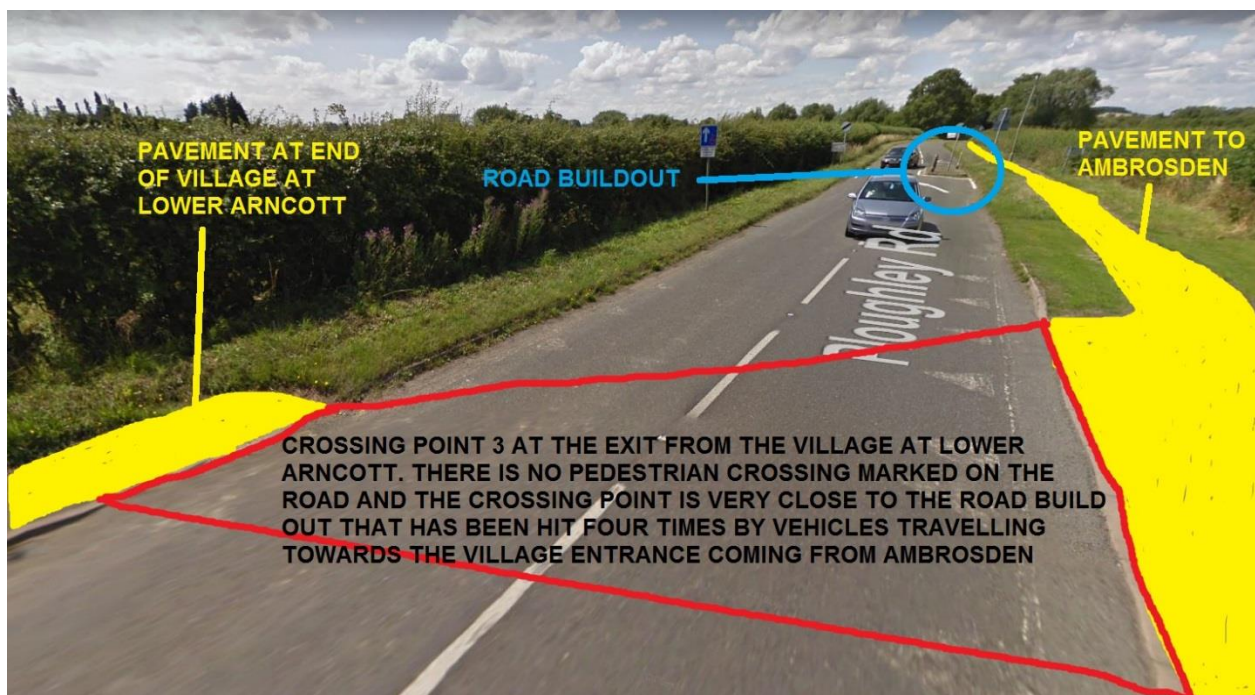
Having nearly reached the end of the village at Lower Arncott, it is sometimes necessary for people to have to negotiate a flooded section of pavement. This is not an uncommon occurrence following on from heavy rain. Although this has been reported several times, nothing has ever been done to



resolve the problem. Pedestrians now have two choices – stay on the pavement and walk through the flooded section or step onto the northbound road lane and walk past the flooded section.

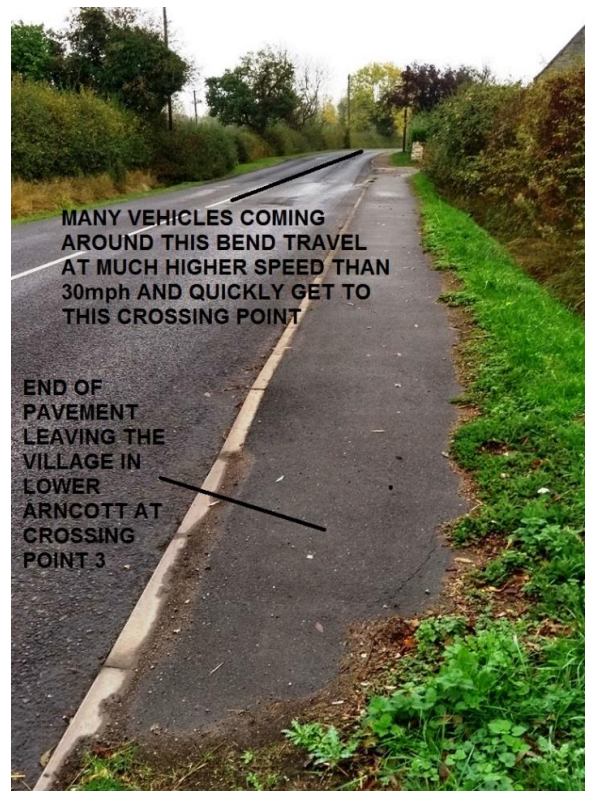
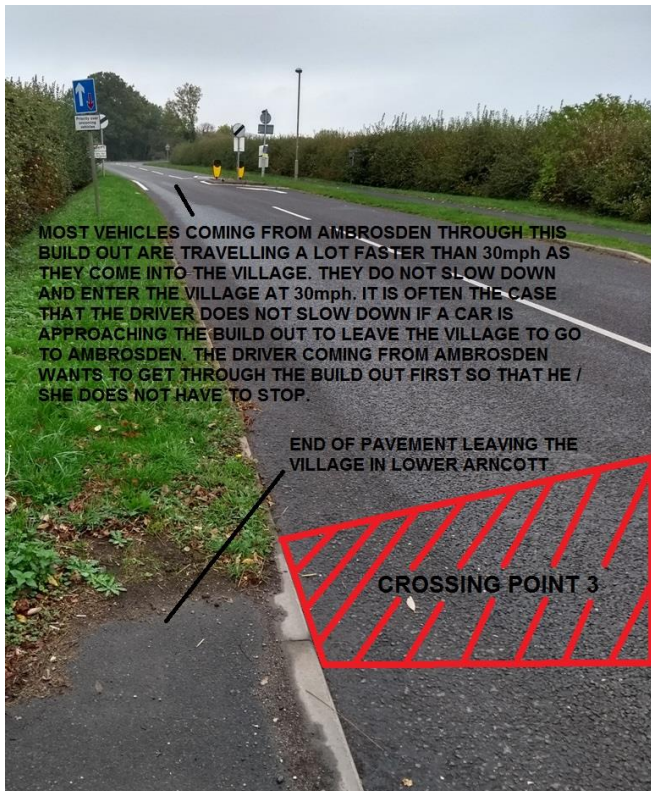


Standing at the end of the pavement from the village at crossing point 3, it is now necessary to cross the road again to reach the pavement that leads to Ambrosden. This crossing is, without doubt or argument, the most hazardous and dangerous place to have to cross the road.

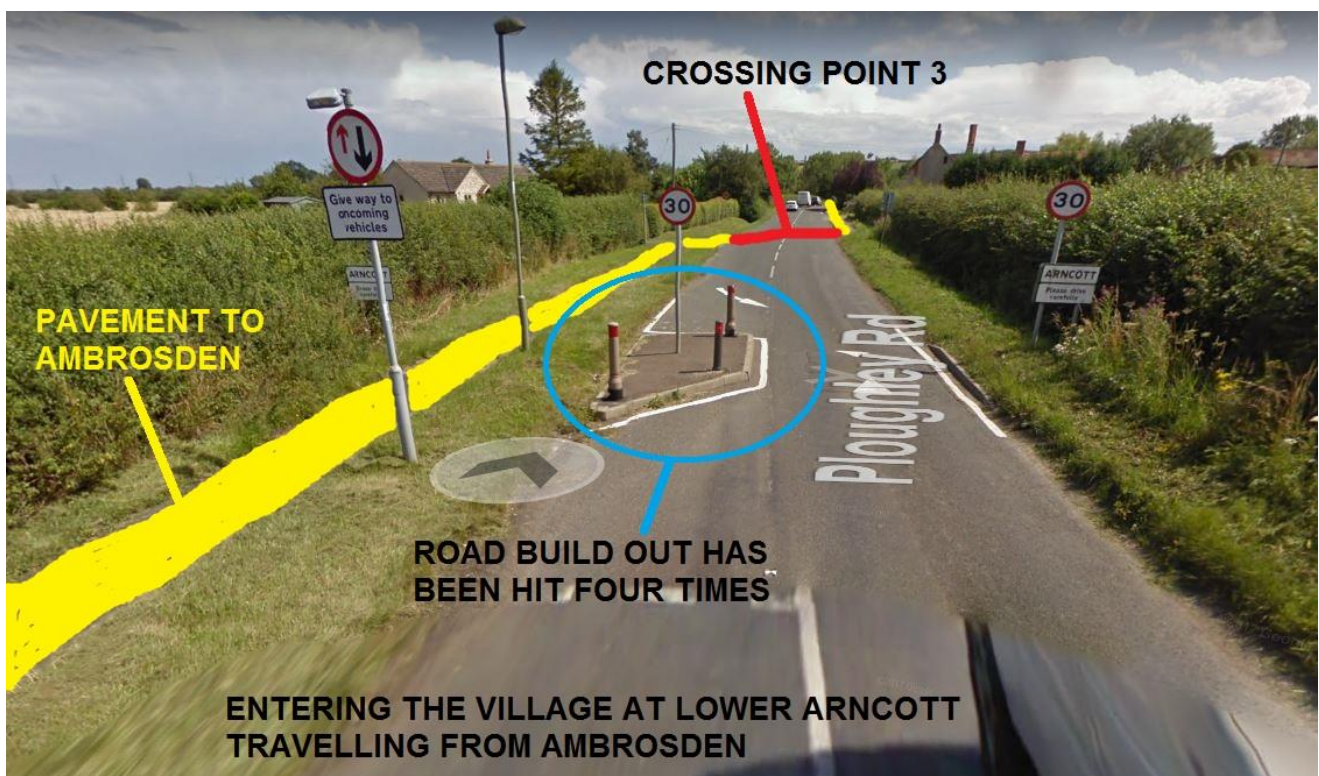




This is the view in both directions when standing on the pavement at crossing point 3



The speed of many vehicles travelling into and out of the village at this point is in excess of 30mph. For incoming traffic the 30mph speed limit begins at the road build out.



Many drivers approaching the road build out from Ambrosden do not apply their brakes to attain a speed of 30mph BEFORE passing through the road build out to enter Lower Arccott. After leaving Ambrosden vehicles can legally travel at 60mph. It's often the case that some vehicles travel faster than 60mph and some vehicles actually overtake others. The majority of vehicles approaching the build out from Ambrosden are travelling a lot faster than 30mph and if the drivers do not have to give way to vehicles leaving Lower Arccott they simply take their foot off the accelerator pedal when



approaching and passing through the build out and then allow their vehicles to just coast down to speeds around 30mph as they travel up Ploughley Road towards the Palmer Avenue roundabout.

Vehicles leaving the village have right of way over vehicles entering the village. Some drivers leaving the village do not reduce their speed if they see a vehicle coming towards the build out to enter the village. The intention is to make sure that the distance to the road build out is closed quickly enough to force the vehicle coming into the village to give way and stop at the road build out. However, the drivers entering the village are also intent on getting through the road build out before having to give way and stop for the vehicle leaving the village. This situation results in two drivers trying to make sure that each vehicle arrives at the build out before the other one does. Vehicle speed and awareness of the immediate surroundings is then a secondary consideration which presents an enormous risk for any pedestrians attempting to cross the road.

The road build out has been hit four times by vehicles entering the village since the beginning of 2016 – dates being Jan 26<sup>th</sup> 2016, Nov 12<sup>th</sup> 2017, Nov 23<sup>rd</sup> 2017 and Mar 27<sup>th</sup> 2018.

The measured distance from the road build out to the crossing point at the end of the pavement is 38 metres. In an ideal situation, a vehicle coming through the build out from Ambrosden will be travelling at 30 mph. At a distance of 38 metres it will take that vehicle 2.8 seconds to reach the crossing point. If, as is more likely, the vehicle is travelling at 40 mph (or more) it will take only 2.1 seconds (or less) to reach the crossing point. Lack of awareness on the part of the driver could prove to be fatal if people are in the process of crossing the road.

This crossing point is close the River Ray and in late autumn / winter / early spring there are many days when this part of the village is enveloped in thick fog. Drivers travelling through the road build out would have little, if any, time to react to a group of adults and children crossing the road.

Leaving the village at Lower Arcnott, the final leg of the journey continues along the path to Ambrosden. This is the only part of the walking route that has been “assessed” by the engineer.



This path runs alongside the Ploughley Road and the speed limit for this section of road is 60mph. The path is narrow and runs close to the side of the road. The path is separated from the road by a narrow grass verge. There is no dropped kerb and it is very easy for a car to leave the road, run over the grass verge and onto the path. There have been several occasions over previous years when drivers have lost control of their vehicles on this section of road and the vehicles have travelled over the path and have ended up in the hedgerow or in a field on the other side of the hedgerow. Several years ago a driver lost control of his vehicle along this stretch of road in icy conditions. His car left the road, crossed the grass verge and hit a lady walking on the path. She died as a result of her injuries. The lady was an Arcnott resident. It is not unusual for mothers / guardians, small children and push chairs to walk together as a group. Walking in a group affords a good level of safety from personal attack. However, the width of the path means that these pedestrians would

need to walk in single file. That then presents a much bigger target for any vehicle that leaves the road and ends up on the pathway. The path is also used by joggers and cyclists and it is not unusual to see a large number of soldiers from the nearby military barracks running along the path as part of their training. The narrow width of the path makes it very difficult for large groups of people walking / running / cycling in opposite directions to pass by each other without having to move onto the grass verge and, sometimes, onto the road.

In freezing / snowy weather the paths all along the “safe” walking route do not get gritted so the surfaces are very dangerous to walk on. Pedestrians – including small children - walking on these paths in these conditions could very easily slip and fall over, possibly onto the road, and break arms, legs and / or other bones. In previous years following on from heavy snow many sections of the walking route have been impassable. When similar conditions exist in the future the mothers / guardians and small children would not be able to walk along the full length of pavements and paths on the route to Ambrosden so the children would not be able to attend school.

On dry and bright days the walking route for small children is risky and hazardous. It should also be noted that at certain times of the year the position of the sun is such that it affects the visibility of drivers approaching the build out when coming from Ambrosden and this has contributed to the accidents that have happened there. It cannot be over emphasised that the risks and hazards are significantly increased during times of bad weather – especially in late autumn, winter and early spring. There are many days during these months that the walking route also suffers from thick fog / mist, wet and / frozen road surfaces, frozen / ice covered / snow covered pathways and therefore presents enormous dangers to pedestrians having to use the route. Instead of carrying out a “part assessment” on a nice day in September, perhaps the OCC assessors would care to walk the full route both ways with the parents / guardians and children on several days in that type of weather. The assessors would then get a true appreciation of the realities of the hazards and dangers of walking that route.

There is a controlled crossing point in Ambrosden village. There are new centre islands in the road in Ambrosden village to assist people in crossing the road. There are no controlled crossing points in Arccott or anywhere else along this route and there are also no centre islands to assist crossing the road in Arccott or anywhere else along the route.

This concludes the Arccott parish council analysis / assessment of the risks and hazards encountered on the walking route between Upper Arccott to Ambrosden. Exactly the same risks and hazards exist on the return journey from Ambrosden to Upper Arccott. Arccott parish council consider that there is no justification whatsoever for the cancellation of this school bus service and it objects to this decision in the strongest possible terms. It is the opinion of Arccott parish council that Oxfordshire County Council’s “assessment” of the walking route is farcical. The report contains absolutely no meaningful data of any type. The assessment was carried out along part of the route on one dry day in September and the decision that a safe walking route exists has been made without any understanding or appreciation of the full length of the route. It would seem that the assessment was carried out in a hurry and its sole objective is simply to submit something that Oxfordshire County Council can use to cancel the school bus service and justify a saving of £30,000 per year. In the opinion of the Arccott parish council, this is a small price to pay for the guarantee of safety for the children from Arccott village who need to attend school in Ambrosden. The residents of Arccott pay council tax every year and a significant percentage of that tax goes into the coffers of Oxfordshire County Council. It is therefore entirely reasonable that the residents should expect that a safe method of transport is provided to take the Arccott village children to school and back each day. To force these children to walk to school and back each day throughout the year along the “safe assessed” walking route is outrageous and is a catastrophe waiting to happen. Arccott parish council is therefore asking for this ridiculous decision be re-assessed, overturned on the grounds of adult, child and infant safety and that the school bus service be reinstated.