

The Impact of traffic on the B1078 in Coddendam.
September 2006.

Coddendam - through route or living community?

A few facts:

***In 1996, Suffolk County Council's road consultants reported that "the B1078 through the village is inadequate for even the single flow of lorries currently allowed". However, the consultants' proposals to divert the HGVs were voted down, and no substantive measures have been put in place since.
HGVs are deliberately routed through the centre.***

By 2004 the number of HGVs had gone up by 24%, with more since.

In the last ten years, living conditions in Coddendam have steadily deteriorated owing to the ever-increasing traffic. Now the tipping-point has been reached when the quality of life is being seriously affected.

High Street houses are set immediately against the road, with very few having a buffer garden.

Many are within 1m of the carriageway.

There are Grade II listed buildings within 1 metre of the road.
One Grade II* building overhangs the carriageway.*

One house has now been hit five times, the last in August 2006.

In several parts of the street the road is too narrow for an HGV and another wide vehicle to pass.

*In one place even two normal cars cannot pass.
These narrowest places have no pavements.*

Walking down the street can be a very dangerous occupation, particularly for children and the elderly.

The situation is so dangerous for pedestrians that some residents often prefer to drive a few hundred yards to the village shop or bus stop rather than risk walking, especially if they have children.

***Cars parked in the High Street (they have no alternative) are regularly damaged.
One had to be written off.***

The noise of traffic is nearly constant during the day. At a range of 2m or less, the noise of HGVs in low gear is extremely disturbing.

Traffic congestion is very frequent. Traffic comes to a halt regularly, several times a day.

Residents are then denied the use of their own village street.

Emergency vehicles are regularly held up.

The MD of Ipswich Buses writes "We experience problems in the High Street on an almost daily basis, and fully support any moves which will allow our buses to operate on time".

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This report on the conditions in Coddenham brought about by the heavy traffic, particularly HGVs, was compiled and written by six High Street residents, and is based on a questionnaire sent to all those who live along the B1078 in Coddenham.

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September 2006.

A. SETTING THE SCENE

1. The SCC Local Transport Plan 2006-11

As one of its objectives, the plan will "minimise the impact of traffic and transport infrastructure (including air quality) in market towns, tourist honeypots and villages to protect the county's environment and built heritage". Other counties e.g. Leicestershire are active in putting in place arrangements to protect villages, but Coddenham has yet to see any action on the above.

2. General

In absolute terms of traffic counts Coddenham is comparable with many other places, e.g. edge of Grundisburgh, Bredfield. But Coddenham is uniquely disadvantaged, being in structure a small 'urban' area, with houses, many of historical and architectural interest, built immediately adjacent to the road, and through traffic, much of it heavy, deliberately directed right through the centre. The road is narrow and winding; in some places there is hardly room for even two narrow cars to pass each other. It is hard to find any rural village quite comparable.

3. History.

The SCC's own consultants said in their report in October 1996 that "the B1078 through the village is inadequate for even the single flow of lorries currently allowed". (a one-way system for HGVs has been in operation since 1993.)

However, the elected members of SCC rejected the consultants' proposal to divert heavy traffic away from Coddenham despite huge support from Coddenham, and since then there have been no substantive suggestions to ease the amount of traffic. Coddenham feels betrayed, and bitter.

Since the report in 1996 the number of vehicles and HGVs has increased enormously. Average Daily Flow of HGVs compared with previous surveys (source: SCC HGV Survey Report, 2004):-

Coddenham High St	Year	Eastbound	Westbound	Total
	1996	48	18	66
	2000	50	22	72
	2004	66	29	95

These increases (32% 2000-2004) are far greater than the average Suffolk 'B' road network increases of 18%. Note the accelerating rate of increase since 1996, no doubt continuing.

Various attempts have been made since 1996:-

- To have a width limit (instead of weight): Refused by SCC.
- To have a total one-way system: Refused by SCC.
- Barring *through* HGVs from accessing the B1078 at the A140 junction: Refused by SCC.
- 'Access only' sign on A140. Part of SORR scheme. Refused by SCC. [SORR is a group of villages located along the B1078/79 which attempts to find mutually acceptable solutions to the problems posed by HGVs].
- Signposting optional alternative route via U4713/C455, mostly in the parish of Hemingstone: declined by Hemingstone PC.

4. Traffic Management in place now:

The whole village has a 30mph limit, and the central zone has a 20 mph limit.

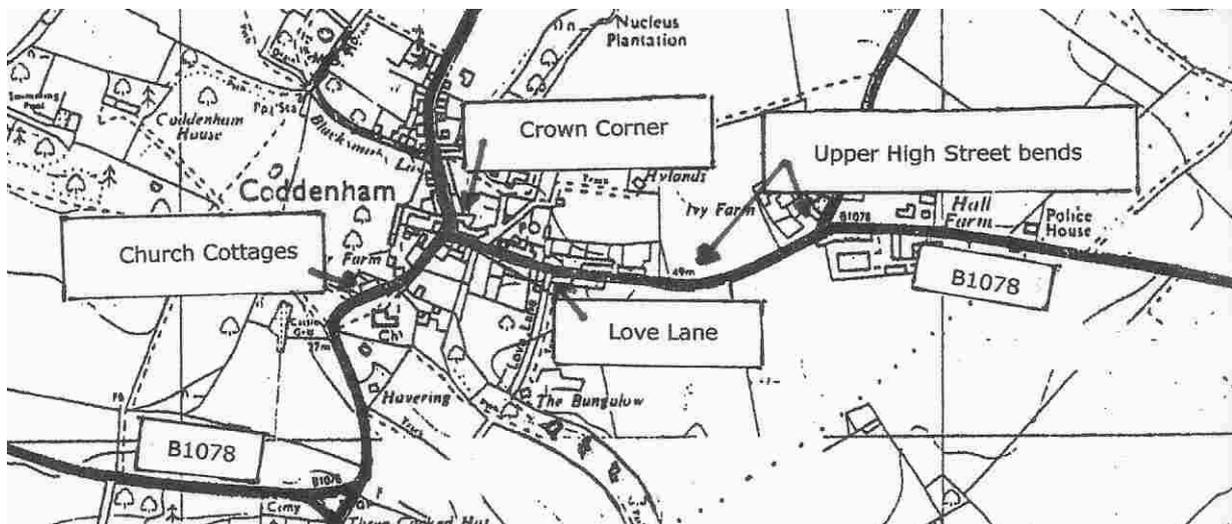
One-way (eastbound only) for HGVs has been in force since 1993. Return journey via Rectory Road, Hemingstone. However, many permitted vehicles (e.g. large furniture vans, all buses) travelling westwards are as wide, or nearly as wide, as HGVs. When any two such vehicles meet, traffic-jams occur, with reversing necessary, which can be extremely difficult and lengthy (with following vehicles close behind required to reverse as well.) There are also many HGVs flouting the westbound prohibition.

Coddenham is also an 'escape route' if the A14 is blocked due to an accident; lengthy traffic-jams invariably result, and the inhabitants cannot move about their own village. A notable case was on Friday 28th July 2006, when the village centre was choked for several hours.

HGV drivers using Sat-nav systems have the B1078 programmed into their routes without necessarily knowing about hazards and delays along that route.

5. The configuration of the B1078 road through Coddenham.

The village street resembles a small town inasmuch as the houses over the central area abut directly onto the street. "The sense of small-scale urban enclosure is accentuated with buildings tight into the highway and climbing the hill in steps" (Mid Suffolk District report on the Conservation Area). The street is very narrow in places, and there are sharp bends. The worst sections for generating congestion (and pedestrian hazards) are shown on the map below.



[photographs omitted in the section below]

1. The section by Church Cottages, below, (which are 15C listed buildings.) No pavement.

The HGV is here going westwards (against the traffic regulations), but there is not room for a wide vehicle and anything else either way. Cottage access is only via the roadway.

2. Crown Corner (below), which has to be crossed by High Street inhabitants who wish to visit the shop. Here, the car has been unwise in proceeding to the corner.

3. The High Street above Love Lane (below), where it is particularly narrow. Two average cars cannot even pass here, and there is no pavement. Pedestrians get no protection whatever.

4. The upper High Street, leading up to the Ivy Farm area, which has two blind bends, and no pavement. This is very dangerous indeed for pedestrians.

B. THE SITUATION NOW

6. THE EFFECT ON MOTORISTS

Motorists caught in hold-ups are endlessly frustrated. Tempers are often lost. Reversing happens whenever two vehicles meet at one of the narrowest places – very difficult for HGVs, (invariably with a 'tail' of vehicles behind) and nearly impossible for articulated lorries.

Vehicles which use private property to try to find space to pass frequently cause damage. Motorists who use this route often, and who find the route clear, will tend to speed in order to get through quickly. Parked cars: although these can and do contribute to traffic congestion, most of these parked cars are away during the working day. Even if no cars were parked the bottle-necks would remain with their resulting holds-ups (involving reversing). Emergency vehicles are held up (see the sequence of photos); buses are regularly held up, sometimes up to 20 minutes.

A TYPICAL TRAFFIC HOLD-UP SITUATION

[four photos omitted]

1. HGV meets wide vehicle – in this case a bus
2. A tail-back quickly forms; note the ambulance
3. After various attempts at passing, the bus reverses
4. Eventually they pass at the top bend. The ambulance, bus, and everyone else, have now been waiting for about 15 minutes. Luckily the ambulance was not on an emergency call.

7. THE EFFECT ON THE LIVES OF CODDENHAM INHABITANTS.

Urban-type structure + amount of traffic = a marked deterioration in village life, in various respects.

Many adverse effects: on pedestrians, use of services, noise, fumes, damage to property, bus delays. Details are given below.

13 of those who live close to the road have thought/are thinking of moving away because of the traffic situation. Most (7) of these live within 2 metres of the roadway. Two families, both with young children, are actively moving/have recently moved, at least in part because of the traffic situation.

a) Damage to property.

22 householders reported that their property had been damaged. 10 of these are listed grade II (four of these reported damage to the listed building itself). Properties immediately adjacent to the road (with no intervening space at all) are particularly vulnerable. Ten of these report damage. In most cases, the damage is caused by impact, with damage by corrosion of brickwork and damage by vibration also reported.

At 3.25pm on 10th August 2006, an HGV struck Danecroft in the High Street, causing damage to the roof and gutter, in spite of some protection from a bollard. This is the fifth time that this property has been damaged. See the photograph below [omitted].

b) Listed Buildings and the Conservation Area.

The Conservation area which has been in operation since 1970, and was extended in 1983, includes the entire central part of the village.

Twenty-two of Coddenham's listed separate dwellings/buildings are accessed from the B1078 road. Of these, 21 are grade II (including two grade II*) and 1 grade I.

Nine of these are within 2m of the road, 5 within 1 metre. They are under considerable threat.

The photograph below [omitted] shows, on the left, a range of Grade II* listed buildings. They are within 1 metre of the road. The further jettied house (listed grade II*) overhangs the roadway.

These buildings coincide with narrow parts of the street, where there are no pavements. At least ten listed property-owners report damage, with eleven suffering vibration whenever an HGV goes through.

The Suffolk Magazine (Sept 2005): "*Coddenham is home to some of the county's finest examples of medieval timber-framed buildings.*" Those they refer to clearly include the same grade II* listed buildings.

The Mid Suffolk District Council appraisal on Coddenham (under the Planning, Listed Building and Conservation Act 1990 and PPG15) refers to:

'the top quality building within the central area is the grade II listed Old Lodge on High Street'*

The report then goes on to say:

'.....where the sense of small-scale urban enclosure is accentuated with buildings tight onto the highway boundary'.

But later in the report we hear:

'the B1078 which snakes through the village centre also brings its detractions in the form of traffic, but this does not now include heavy goods vehicles, now discouraged by the 20 mph zone and traffic calming measures recently installed by SCC'.

Clearly, those whose task it is to protect and support the Conservation Area **do not actually know what the situation is**. As in other respects, Coddenham feels ignored and abandoned.

In addition to listed buildings there are another 21 buildings marked on the 1839 tithe map which are very close to the roadway.

c) Pedestrians.

The effect of the heavy traffic and the large number of vehicles is perhaps felt most severely by those who wish to walk along the High Street and Church Road. It is perhaps the single most severe result of the traffic in curtailing village life.

- The most dangerous conditions for pedestrians are those outside peak periods when there is not traffic congestion, often when drivers tend to speed, in order to get through the village without being held up. The speed limits are widely disregarded, as was shown by the recent speed readings by 'SID'. Concern about the danger to pedestrians by speeding is a very big issue in the village.
- 15 houses have as their only entrance a pedestrian exit leading directly on to the carriageway, with no pavement as a 'buffer'. In each case these are very dangerous.
- The most dangerous areas are where there is no pavement on either side. These correspond closely with the narrowest parts of the road, where pedestrians are most in need of protection. Worst is the stretch immediately above Love Lane, where the roadway is bounded by walls on both sides with a total width of 14', increasing fuel emissions.
- Families which feel most vulnerable are those with children. Many of these will on no account allow their children to go down the street without an adult. Children catching the school bus are commonly taken to the bus stop by car, a journey of a few hundred metres.
- Use of Services: in many cases, residents will use their cars to go to the shop, church or pub, a walkable journey, but too dangerous.
- No-one who lives at the top Coddenham Hall section of the High Street voluntarily walks down the road into the centre. One resident reports 'I couldn't visit the pub unless I were willing to drink and drive. Walking is too dangerous'.

- Paradoxically, injuries to pedestrians are rare. The reason: the road is so dangerous that pedestrians take great caution and use it far less than they would wish.
- Recreational walking is very much inhibited. No-one walks along the B1078 except by need. Many feel confined to their houses.

d) Noise.

There are two factors which accentuate the noise disturbance: the narrow confined street acts as a sounding board, and HGVs going eastwards are in low gear on the hill. Also, there is no 'quiet' road surface to reduce wheel noise. To those living close by, the noise is an intrusion which double-glazing does little to alleviate. For some it is the most severe traffic-related problem.

Two-thirds of those who live along the B1078 found the noise oppressive, of whom 10 found it a 'very severe problem' (those closest to the highway) and a further 9 a 'considerable problem'.

27 properties feel vibration when an HGV goes by (10 of these are listed, 2 grade II*).

The worst times are during the morning and evening rush-hour, with a further disturbance starting at about 6.00am when HGVs start coming through.

e) Fumes.

Twenty-six respondents say they are disturbed by traffic fumes. Of these, 10 consider it a 'very severe' problem, and a further 9 a 'considerable' problem.

f) Parked Cars.

Very many householders have no option but to park their cars on the road.

Numbers parked on the road: about 21 (a variable number).

Cars damaged while parked: 16. (mostly wing-mirrors and scrapes down the side).

Cars suffering serious damage: 3. (of which 1 written off).

g) The bus service.

The 116 service is frequently delayed. Drivers report that 20 minutes delays are common. The Chief Executive of Ipswich Buses writes: "we experience problems in the high street on an almost daily basis, and fully support any moves which will ease these problems to allow our buses to operate on time without encountering any traffic problems in Coddenham".

A bus whose way is blocked tries (vainly) to turn round in a resident's private driveway. [photo omitted]

h) Traffic Congestion.

Traffic jams occur many times a day. In every case these involve some vehicle(s) reversing. Many try to turn round in the private driveways. At these times, residents cannot either move in or out by car.

12 households considered this a 'very severe' problem, and a further 13 a 'considerable' problem.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Frequently Asked Questions

Q. People know that the traffic is bad when they chose to buy a house in Coddendam. It is unreasonable for them then to start complaining afterwards. Surely they are typical 'Nimbys'?

A. If this argument is followed, there would never be any traffic-relief schemes anywhere, as nearly all rural roads in England have some dwellings. You have to look for the betterment of the majority in the area. Also, many people who live in the High Street have lived here for many years (40% of the respondents have been here for more than 20 years), when conditions were very different. However, although traffic on all roads has increased greatly in the last few years, in Coddendam the tipping point has now been reached where village life is being destroyed.

Q. Would not the congestion be a lot better if no cars were parked in the High Street?

A. First, there is no possibility of this happening without major planning changes and very big expenditure. Second, although the High Street is now full of parked cars at night, most of them are away during the day. Although there is some waiting on account of parked cars, this is not the cause of the main blockages, which occur where there is no possibility of two vehicles passing each other because of the narrow and winding street.

Q. If nothing is done, what will happen?

A. Congestion at peak periods will increase until the village comes to a total standstill for long periods. Sooner or later there will have to be a proper solution found. In addition, the feeling of abandonment and betrayal is already very high, and in the absence of any action, the patience of the people of Coddendam is likely to run out. There are already those who advocate more extreme measures, with deliberate traffic disruption. Their number is likely to increase as time goes by.

Q. No recent reports of pedestrian accidents have been received, so can the street be as dangerous as is maintained?

A. The reason is that pedestrians avoid walking there if possible, as it is so dangerous. It takes hardy and adult pedestrians to walk in the High Street, and parents of young children who wish to visit the shop will often go by car for a journey of perhaps 300m, thereby contributing to the congestion.

Appendix 2 - Residents' Comments:

- 'Cannot allow our son (9) to cross the road alone as there is no pavement on opposite side of the road.'
- 'Local walks around Coddenham - I gave them up soon after moving here.'
- 'Cannot walk safely with a child and a dog.'
- 'Cannot enjoy the pleasures I used to get walking down to the shop.'
- 'To walk up the high street is life threatening- this is detrimental to social intercourse between neighbours.'
- 'Very dangerous to take my grandchildren and wheelchair bound family members to the church/shop/hall/play area.'
- 'We walk only along road at least busy traffic times never in heavy rush hour.'
- 'Cannot enjoy walks and visiting the shop with the family and dog safely.'
- 'I have to collect my children from the bus by car, for a journey that is about 1/3 of a mile long. I will not let the children walk into the village along the road - it is far too dangerous.'
- 'My 2 cars have each been hit twice, 1 car had to be written off!'
- 'We are unable to enjoy our village. I couldn't visit the pub unless I were willing to drink and drive. Walking is too dangerous.'
- 'I arrive home from work approx 4pm each day and have to contend with idling lorries backed up outside my house.'
- 'There has been damage to my car. My time in Coddenham has been spoilt by the traffic.'
- 'The catastrophic effect on pedestrians'
- 'Visual intrusion. HGVs can completely obscure view out of ground floor windows at front. '
- 'Children's school bus has failed to arrive as traffic congestion has caused the driver to reroute!'
- 'Speed. We find it impossible to use the pedestrian access to our house.'
- 'This is outrageous - are they trying to destroy village life?'
- 'If the A14 is closed due to an accident Coddenham suffers hugely from a log jam of traffic. I have phoned local police on these occasions, fearing damage to life and properties.'
- 'Cuts down on social interaction and inhibits walking up the High Street, particularly with children!! HGV's should not be allowed up our street.'
- 'Erosion of verges, improper use of our driveway by other vehicles turning to avoid traffic jams. I have been clipped by a passing car's wing mirror whilst walking and sworn at for actually walking!!!'
- 'Intensity, speed and jams and aggressive, abusive drivers with no consideration for village dwellers.'
- 'Unable to walk safely into a lovely village. Speeding cars are a big problem when the road is clear!'
- 'Pedestrians are very vulnerable along the non-footpathed parts of the road (vehicles tend not to slow down when pedestrians are out there in the road).'
- 'This is supposed to be a conservation area. Surely it must be respected as such?'**