



Northamptonshire County Council

Rt. Hon. Andrea Leadsom MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A0AA

Our ref: IM/rm/la
Your ref:
Date: 3rd Sept 2018

Dear Andrea,

The A422 closed, in both directions, with immediate effect closed on Tuesday 7th August. The bridge over the Farthinghoe Stream just outside the village of Farthinghoe has been inspected and is considered unsafe for all road users. After initially thinking we would allow bikes, pedestrians and horses it was decided this would be legally closed to all.

We are now working with all partners to get a design and method of work approved and to put in place all the necessary permits and consents. The bridge is located next to gas and sewer mains that will mean further agreements will be required before we are able to start repair works. Northamptonshire Highways are working with all agencies to accelerate the strengthening works so that they can complete as soon as is feasible.

Northamptonshire Highways is extremely conscious of the impact to the public and have not taken the decision to close this route lightly. We are aware of the implications of our actions; however, we do have a duty not only to safeguard members of the public, but also to manage our structures so that they do not pose an unacceptable risk to public safety.

On the day of closure we installed significant traffic management to ensure access was prohibited and nothing would cross the bridge. Our initial temporary closure was replaced with a hard closure and concrete barriers on August 8th. There have been issues with signage being removed but we have monitored and addressed this and have been keeping in closer contact with interested residents and Parishes.

By the 16th August we –

1. Had reports of increased vehicles usage damaging road surfaces. We agreed to increase our routine inspections for this road and any repairs prioritised to ensure these roads are kept as safe as possible. This is now happening.
2. Monitoring of all signage is taking place continually. We did have an issue with people removing signs but this has reduced.

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3. Our Structure Department has instructed a number of inspections of other structures within the area who are experiencing heavier volumes of local traffic.
4. Our Traffic Management Specialists, Chevron improved the signage from the A422 to make sure it is as clear as possible that there are no HGV's to use these road. Portable matrix signs went up to show HGV diversion
5. We raised concerns with Northamptonshire Police about anti-social driving carried out by inconsiderate road users.
6. Community 30mph signs were put up in Halse.
7. Bridge at Marston can't take additional weight of rat runners. We closed this road and seems to be working.

We have agreed with Highways England that their messaging boards on the M40 will carry information and we have positioned digital signage at key junctions to signpost vehicles to the diversion and HGVs to alert them of no access routes. They do have control of these signs and may change them without notice but they have been helping us out.

We had been investigating the possibility of opening the road at the end of the year, under temporary traffic lights, to allow traffic to use the route again. This would have entailed the propping of the bridge but it has been agreed that this would not be cost effective. It could actually cause more damage to the bridge, whilst still requiring EA consent and lengthening the time this would affect local communities.

The design we are now working to is to install a weight bearing membrane. This is the most cost effective way of working and will mean the structure will be solid for years to come. Our team are finalising details of the agreed design and programme and, once they are agreed, we will be able to provide a further progress report and timings.

Our team is also working with local bus operators and schools to ensure everyone is aware of the situation and progress as we are able to. Stagecoach has altered their 500 to take into account the alternative route and the additional journey time. This new bus timetable will run from September.

We are doing all we can re signage and reviewing constantly. We are also aware we are in a quieter period and that term time will change traffic again. We have been looking at ways to mitigate the impact when the schools return after the summer break as there is a concern regarding the additional traffic but also the speed some drivers are doing when in the area. Please find attached the plan of action. An emergency TTRO has been put in place to bring the speed limit down to 20mph on approach to the school frontages with additional school children signs. Looking at the local area and the other locations that are likely to be affected and to mitigate impact, we have also included the same measures to be put in place at Greatworth. These measures are only being put in place at school locations but will be there until the road opens fully. We cannot put these everywhere but can in areas of high risk like schools.

Satnav will also, on occasion send vehicles in the wrong direction, but this takes time for the closure to register and we are not able to expedite this.

As you can imagine drivers will make their own decisions but it is certainly something that is a priority for us. We would never divert traffic onto back roads.

The diversion for the A422 is via the M40 and A43 for Motorway Traffic and the B4525/A43 for Non-Motorway Traffic. We have requested additional support from the police who are the only people able to police the road traffic in this area and enforce it but they do not really have the resources to assist us.

Our bus team have also been liaising with Stagecoach to ensure a good service remains. Stagecoach in Oxfordshire have now registered a formal diversion for the 500 via a vis the A422 road closure. Attached is their diversionary route, which misses two stops in Middleton Cheney, but otherwise preserves the route and Farthinghoe continues to have a service.

The new timetable for this route drops the service frequency from every 20 minutes to every 30 minutes at peak times (it was already every 30 minutes through the off-peak and at weekends), and down to every 90 minutes in the evening and on Sundays. In doing so, Stagecoach have added 11 minutes of extra running time to the service which should help to ensure a reliable service.


We are not able to reduce the speeds on all roads but we have also had our Community Liaison Team out in some areas affected by the closure and introduced 30mph signs. It is proven there comes a point where too many signs are detrimental and drivers actually stop being aware of any.

At all times we have allowed access for local traffic and have tried to assist local businesses with 'open as usual' signage.

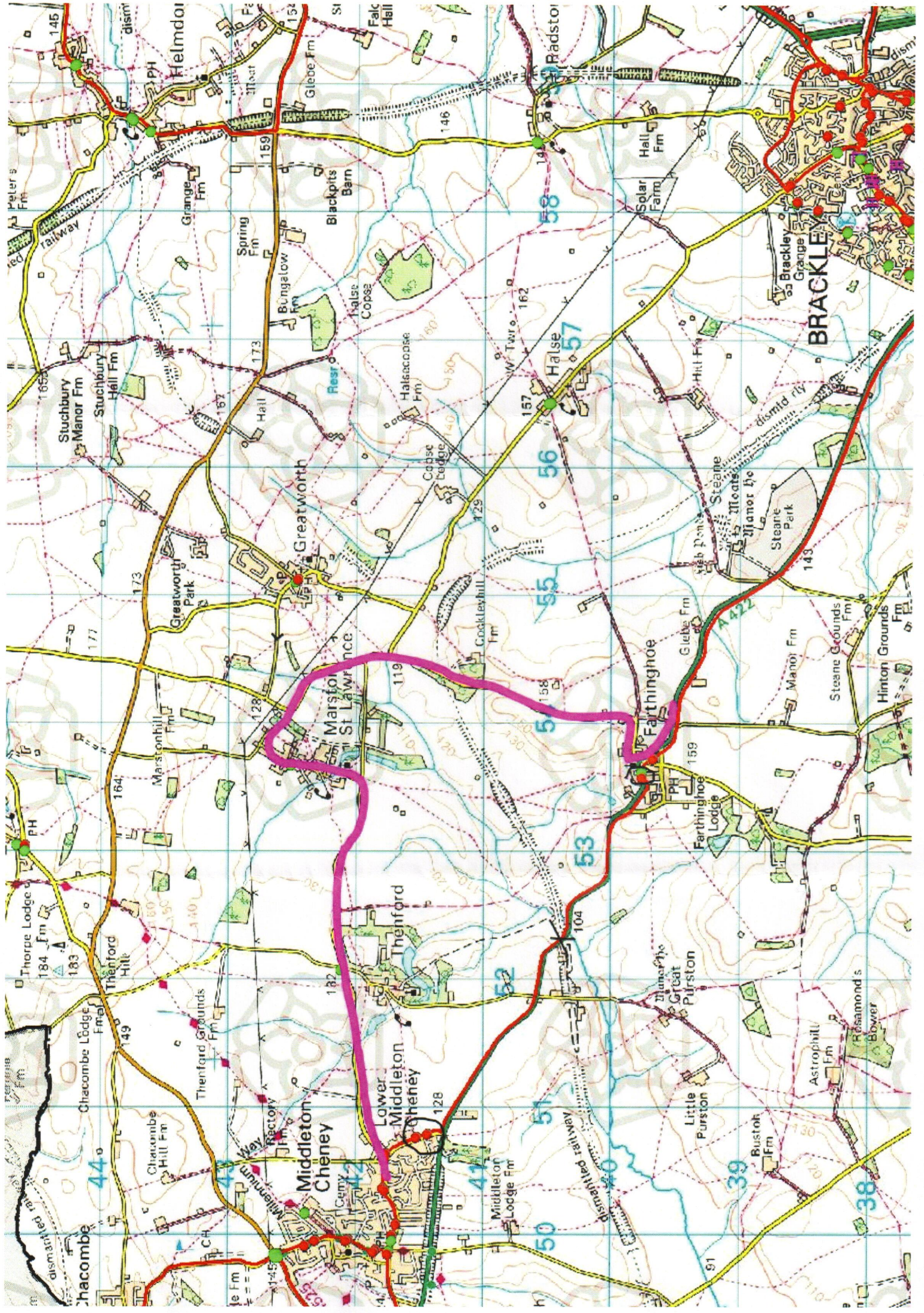
I hope you can see that, since your communication on August 8th Northamptonshire Highways really have tried everything and anything to help alleviate the issues but really do need the help of the general public to abide by road traffic laws.

Thank you for the time and effort in bringing these matters to our attention.

Yours sincerely



Cllr Ian Morris
Cabinet Member for Transport, Highways & Environment



1061 Farthinghoe Bridge

Farthinghoe Bridge is located on the A422, Farthinghoe Road between the villages of Middleton Cheney and Farthinghoe in South Northamptonshire.

The structure carries the A422 over Farthinghoe stream and consists of 2 types of construction; the original brick arch bridge with a steel corrugated arch extension.

The skew brick arch supports the carriageway whilst the corrugated steel arch, added to the north of the structure in 1971, supports the north verge.

The bridge is inspected every two years, and the capacity is checked every 12 years.

The last inspection in October 2016 identified defects in the brick arch that were of concern, including cracks and bricks dropping from the crown of the arch barrel. These defects had deteriorated gradually over years, but had worsened considerably in recent years.

Previous repairs appeared to be failing as well.

Following the October 2016 inspection, Farthinghoe Bridge was added to the Bridge Maintenance programme. The bridge was also re-assessed and due to the condition of the bridge, a monitoring programme was commenced.

Immediate Action

At the last monitoring inspection in August 2018, there was a noticeable increase in the measurement of the drop of the bricks in the arch crown. If these bricks do drop out, then the structural integrity of the arch is compromised, with the potential for it to collapse without warning.

A further assessment was carried out on the 7th August 2018 based upon a further inspection that determined that the bottom ring displacement/separation has increased considerably and found that the structure could only carry 0.37 tonne Assessment Live Load.

Due to the volume of traffic and number of heavy vehicles using the route, Northamptonshire Highways took the operational decision to close the A422

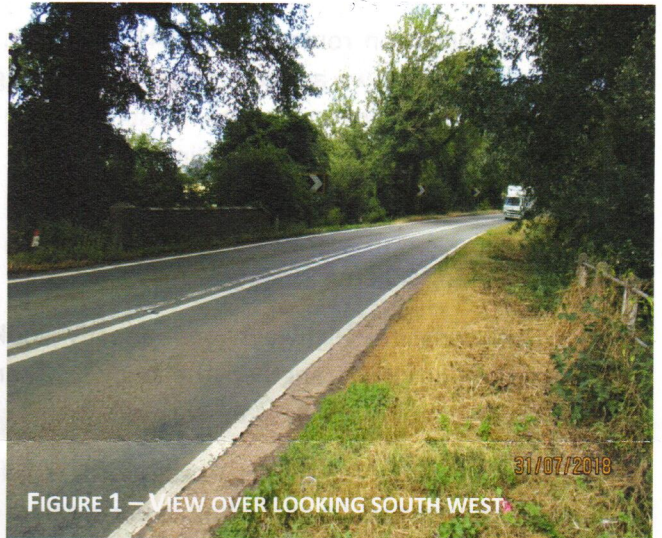


FIGURE 1 — VIEW OVER LOOKING SOUTH WEST

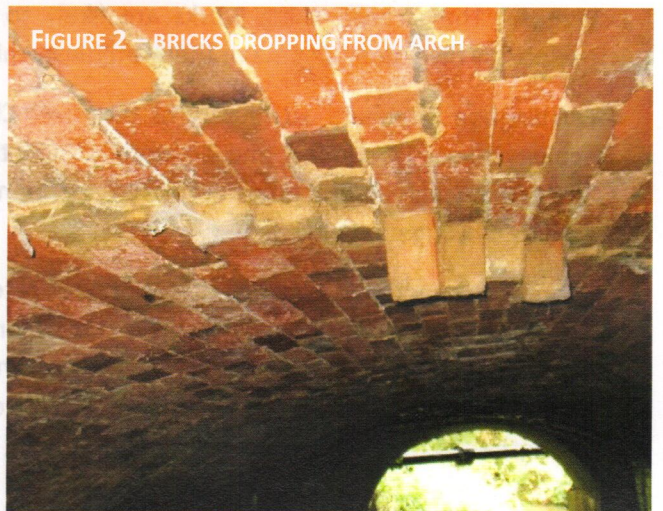


FIGURE 2 — BRICKS DROPPING FROM ARCH



FIGURE 3 - CRACKING

1061 Farthinghoe Bridge

Traffic Management / diversion

The main diversion route via the A43 and M40. This is very clearly signed and we are committed to encouraging vehicles not to use local roads as they are not suitable due to proximity to local communities and weight limits.

Strengthening Scheme

Northamptonshire Highways are already looking at the various options to strengthen the bridge. There are many constraints that we will have to work with:

Running alongside the bridge to the north is a foul pressure main, and to the south of the bridge is a medium pressure gas main, in addition to BT and Western Power cables within the verges. The strengthening works are likely to require the temporary diversion of some of these utilities, which means working with third parties.

Farthinghoe Stream is a tributary of the River Cherwell, so Environment Agency consent is required. An ecology survey is required, and we already know that there is a protected wildflower area in the north verge. The ecology survey outcomes are very dependent on the time of year and the results may require further studies or mitigation works.

In order to speed things up the use of prefabricated liners manufactured from GRP (Glass Reinforced Plastic) are being considered to strengthen the existing brick arch. The GRP units are to be supplied in two pieces to allow working around the existing services which cause access issues. This will allow the strengthening of the bridge to be carried out without the need to divert the services or re-profile the road whilst strengthened the structure back to its full loading capacity.

General

Northamptonshire Highways have an ongoing bridge maintenance programme to help to prevent the bridges deteriorating further. In addition we are also preparing schemes to repair 9 major vehicular impacts to our bridges. All of which is being undertaken with very limited resources.

We are aware that Farthinghoe Bridge provides an important access between Brackley, Banbury and the M40, and we are expediting the works as much as is possible.

We will keep all affected parties informed as the scheme progresses.

Liaison@kierwsp.co.uk

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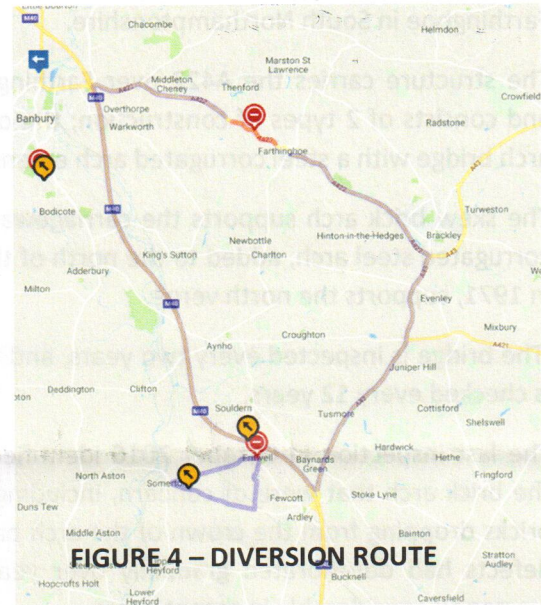
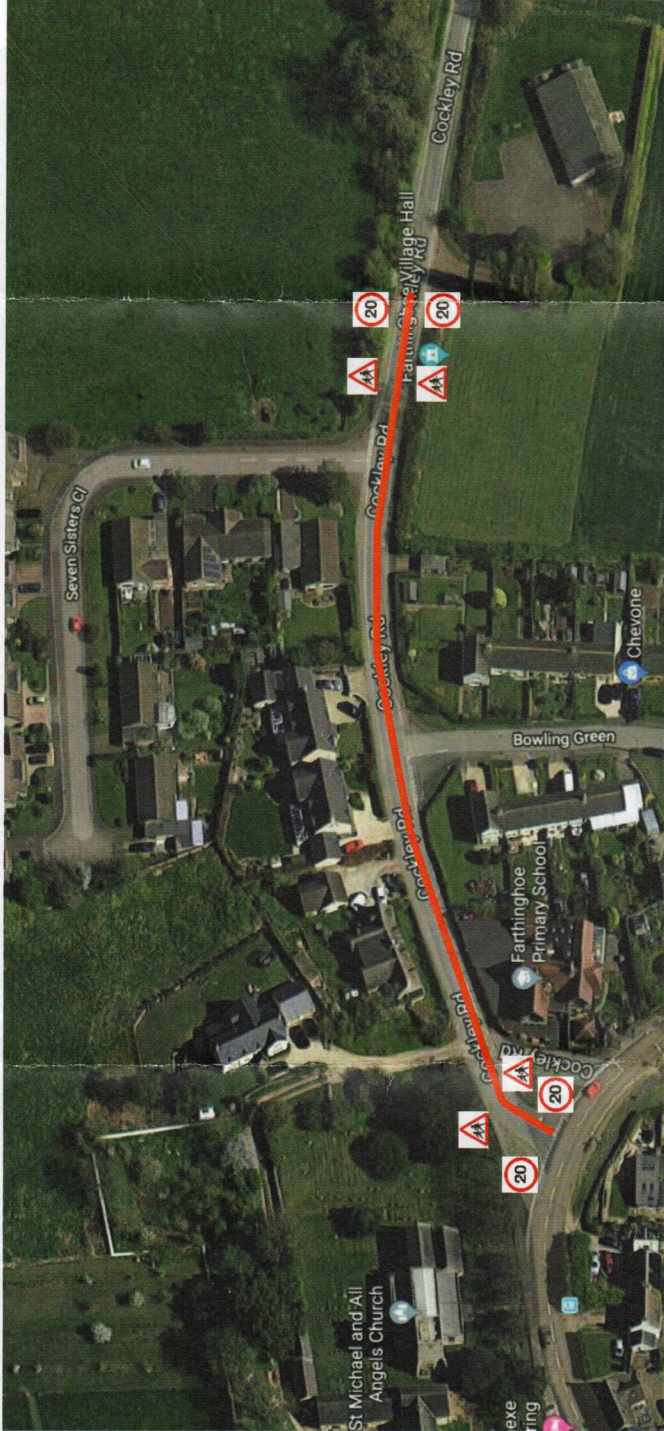


FIGURE 4 – DIVERSION ROUTE

20mph and School Children Signs – Cockley Road, Farthinghoe

Minimum 750mm signs



Minimum 750mm signs

20mph and School Children Signs – Cockley Road, Farthinghoe

20mph and School Children Signs – Helmdon Road, Greatworth

Minimum 750mm sign

