A Coherent Strategy for Alkham Valley Road – Based on KCC's Own Approach

Over a number of years, Kent County Council has identified a series of individual measures to address safety and traffic conditions on Alkham Valley Road. While these have been considered separately through the Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) process, taken together they form a **clear and coherent strategic approach** to managing the route.

The issue is therefore not a lack of solutions, but the absence of an integrated framework within which to apply them.

---

1. Managing Approach Speeds (Gateway Treatments / Build-Outs)

KCC's earlier proposals recognised that **high approach speeds into the village are a primary risk factor**.

The introduction of:

- physical gateway features
- carriageway narrowing / build-outs
- visual and geometric changes to the road environment

would:

- reduce vehicle speeds on entry
- signal a transition from rural route to village environment
- discourage use of the route as a high-speed through corridor

Importantly, these measures can be delivered using **non-illuminated, rural-appropriate design**, consistent with current regulations and National Landscape objectives.

---

2. Addressing the Pinch-Point (Marquis Gap) – Controlled One-Way Working

The constrained section between the Marquis of Granby and Forstall Cottage is a **fixed geometric constraint**.

KCC's historic proposals to:

- narrow the carriageway
- introduce priority working (give-way control)

would:

- formally manage vehicle movements through the pinch-point
- resolve two-way passability conflicts
- reduce the need for centre-line overruns
- create space for **safe pedestrian movement** through the currently unprotected section

This transforms an unmanaged hazard into a **controlled and predictable traffic environment**.

---

3. Creating a Defined Low-Speed Core (20mph Zone)

By combining:

- reduced approach speeds, and
- controlled movement through the pinch-point

these measures naturally establish a **self-enforcing low-speed environment** within the village core.

Given that:

- residential frontage density already exists, and
- recorded mean speeds are already within 20mph compliance levels

this enables the introduction of a **20mph zone**, where:

- compliance is engineered through design, not reliant on enforcement
- minimum length constraints become secondary to the physical characteristics of the road

---

4. Establishing a Transitional Buffer (30mph Through South Alkham)

To support this arrangement, reducing the speed limit to **30mph through South Alkham (west of the village)** provides a necessary **buffer zone**.

This:

- smooths the transition from higher-speed rural conditions into the village
- reduces braking and acceleration differentials
- supports overall speed compliance
- reinforces the hierarchy of road function

---

5. Supporting Vulnerable Users and PROW Crossings

Taken together, these measures:

- reduce vehicle speeds at key crossing points
- improve driver awareness
- create predictable traffic behaviour

This directly improves safety for:

- pedestrians (including those currently forced into the carriageway)
- equestrians
- users of Public Rights of Way crossing the road

The result is a route that functions as a **shared rural corridor**, rather than a vehicle-dominated through-route.

---

6. Alignment with National Landscape Objectives

A coordinated approach:

- reduces traffic speed, noise, and dominance
- avoids unnecessary urbanisation (e.g. lighting)
- improves accessibility and enjoyment of the landscape

This directly supports the duty to **conserve and enhance the Kent Downs National Landscape**, rather than working in tension with it.

---

7. The Core Issue: Fragmentation vs Strategy

Each of these elements has been:

- previously identified
- technically understood
- in some cases, formally proposed

However, when considered in isolation through the HIP process, they have been:

- deferred
- discounted
- or treated as impractical

When viewed together, they form a **practical, proportionate and policy-aligned strategy**.

Conclusion

The solution for Alkham Valley Road does not require new or untested interventions.

It requires:

- **reframing existing, well-understood measures as a single coordinated scheme**
- moving from an issue-by-issue approach to a **strategic, route-based response**

This integrated approach:

- manages speed
- addresses physical constraints
- protects vulnerable users
- and aligns with environmental and policy objectives

In short, it delivers what the current fragmented approach cannot:
a safe, functional, and appropriate role for Alkham Valley Road within its rural and National Landscape context.

Alkham Valley Road - "From Rat-Run to Managed Rural Corridor"

Strategic Objective

Transform Alkham Valley Road from an **uncontrolled through-route** into a **managed rural corridor**, aligned with village character, safety needs, and National Landscape duties.

CURRENT CONDITION (ISSUE)

High-speed approaches
→ Vehicles enter village at 40–50mph

Unmanaged pinch-point (Marquis Gap)
→ Two-way conflict, HGV overruns, no pedestrian space

Fragmented speed environment
→ No effective transition → inconsistent compliance

Vulnerable users exposed
→ Pedestrians, equestrians, PROW crossings at risk

Outcome:
Unclassified rural road functioning as a **high-speed cut-through**

PROPOSED INTEGRATED APPROACH (KCC-ALIGNED MEASURES)

1. Gateway Treatments (Village Entrances)

- Build-outs / narrowing
- Rural design (non-illuminated)
- Visual + physical speed reduction

Effect:
✓ Reduces entry speeds
✓ Signals change of environment

---

2. Managed Pinch-Point (Marquis Gap)

- Priority working (give-way system)
- Single-lane control through constraint
- Integrated pedestrian space

Effect:
✓ Resolves HGV passability conflict
✓ Protects pedestrians
✓ Creates controlled traffic flow

---

3. 20mph Village Core (Engineered Zone)

- Supported by physical calming
- Based on existing frontage density + compliant speeds

Effect:
✓ Self-enforcing low-speed environment
✓ Removes reliance on enforcement
✓ Addresses safety at source

---

4. 30mph Buffer Zone (South Alkham)

- Reduced from higher rural speeds
- Transitional approach into village

Effect:

✓ Smooth speed reduction
✓ Improves compliance
✓ Reinforces Road hierarchy

HOW THE ELEMENTS WORK TOGETHER

Gateway → Slows entry
↓
30mph Buffer → Prepares drivers
↓
20mph Zone → Maintains low speed
↓
Pinch-Point Control → Enforces behaviour + protects users

KEY OUTCOMES

✓ Speed reduction at source (not signage-dependent)
✓ Safe passage through constrained section
✓ Improved pedestrian & PROW crossing safety
✓ Reduced attractiveness as a through-route
✓ Protection of rural character and tranquillity
✓ Alignment with National Landscape duty

CORE MESSAGE

This is not a set of isolated measures.
It is a **single, coherent traffic management system**—
largely based on solutions already identified by KCC.

IMPLEMENTATION PRINCIPLE

Move from:

Fragmented HIP decisions

to:

Integrated, route-based strategy