

Levington and Stratton Hall Parish Council

Report – Speeding

Parish Council Meeting 2nd Nov 2022

Cllr John Ross

In July 2022 I reported to the Parish Council on the issue of speeding in the parish, identifying two sites, Church Lane - the bend alongside the church, and Bridge Road - the straight piece of road from Red House Walk to the right-hand bend heading north.

In Sept 2022 I reported to the Parish Council on the information I acquired from attending the County Road Safety Conference hosted by the PCC.

I have recently had the benefit of a neighbouring Parish sharing a 3-month SIDs dataset, supported by a lengthy conversation with their Lead Councillor to understand their context.

In this report I provide an update on our speeding issue, applying the information from the Road Safety Conference and the neighbouring Parish to contextualise proposals for next steps.

Context – a neighbouring village with SIDs

It is useful to start with the context and learning from a neighbouring village which has two SIDs installed. The topography is that the village sits on a main road with a 30mph limit. A quite different context to our village, a greater volume of traffic and greater opportunities for a) speeding and b) higher top speeds.

Before installation of the SIDs the Parish Council instructed a road improvement survey as part of their initiative to improve road safety. This cost £12,000. They then installed two SIDs at a total cost of £7,000. Of their £19,000 spend they secured funding contributions of £5,000, thus the Parish Council bore a cost of £12,000.

This village has shared their SIDs readings for a 3-month period – bear in mind the existence of a SID might have a preventative affect. Analysis of the data shows:

SID 1

- 52606 vehicle speed readings
- 21111 readings of 35mph (10%+2+1) or more – 40%
- 8166 readings of 40mph or more – 16%
- 2007 readings of 45mph or more – 4%
- 348 readings of 50mph or more – 0.7%
- 7 readings of 60mph!

SID 2 (facing opposite direction):

- 41451 vehicle speed readings
- 24022 readings of 35mph (10%+2+1) or more – 58%

- 11068 readings of 40mph or more – 26%
- 3018 readings of 45mph or more – 7%
- 478 readings of 50mph or more – 1%
- 5 readings of 60mph!

Headlines: 50% of vehicles exceeded the enforceable speed limit threshold.

I have discussed the matter with the Lead Councillor.

It is not known what level of speed enforcement support this situation attracts from the police; it is not thought to be much. The Parish Council has been told their situation isn't any more dangerous than any other 30mph limit.

In relation to the installation of the SIDs, it has been complex and costly. There are requirements for where the SID posts can be located – at least 100m inside the speed zone, and the bureaucracy relating to having the posts installed is lengthy. There are also requirements for the operation of the SID – they are not a permanent feature; they cannot be left in place for longer than a month at a time followed by leaving the road unchecked for a period. Additionally, there are servicing requirements such as battery charging and downloading the data captured.

The Lead Councillor does consider the SIDs to have a speed reduction affect on some drivers. Standing by the SID and listening to engine tone does evidence the impact on some drivers, perhaps the unintentional speeder. The Parish opted for a design that provides positive messaging – red/green face and a thank you message.

The Parish Council are not presently considering other speed management options such as traffic calming or 20mph limits/zones.

Police speed survey of Levington and Stratton Hall Parish

The speeding issue in Levington is located at 2 sites (see July report):

1. Church Lane, the bend alongside the church
2. Bridge Road, the straight piece of road from Red House Walk to the right-hand bend heading north.

Since raising the concern with Suffolk Police, they have conducted a 7-day speed survey with the deployment of SDR. The details are:

- 7 days - 02/08/22 to 09/08/22
- Two routes - Bridge Rd o/s Henry's end from Felixstowe Road (Route 1) and Church Lane (Route 2)
- Total number of vehicles 4611 (Route 1 1882 and Route 2 2729)
- Average speed was 24.1
- 498 vehicles were over the speed limit - 10.8%
- 102 were over 35mph - 2.2%

Headlines: 2.2% of drivers exceeded the enforceable speed limit threshold.

Police assessment – This data is a lower average compared to data obtained in 2012. It equates to an average of 14 vehicles per day at a speed to be able to prosecute (35mph and above). At 2.2% of the

total this unfortunately does not meet the criteria for the Safety Camera Team to implement regular speed van enforcement.

What does the information acquired mean for the two issues of concern for our parish?

Site 1 – Church Lane, the bend alongside the church.

- A 30mph road with an advisable 20mph displayed on the triangular warning sign located at Trickers Wood. The issue defined as an inappropriate use of speed rather than an excessive use of speed.

This is neither a 20mph limit nor a 20mph zone.

At the July meeting we agreed the solutions for this site are going to be of an increased signage / traffic calming type, a Highways rather than police responsibility.

At the Sept meeting I reported on the difference between a 20mph limit and a 20mph zone:

- Limits – sections of road where the legal limit is 20mph. These are legally designated as such; acquiring designation is complex and most 20mph sections of road are not designated.
- Zones – sections of road which are defined as 20mph zones. This is most 20mph usage. The overriding factor for zones is that they should be self-managing, ie, by their design they should naturally limit the opportunity for a road user to travel at more than 20mph; traffic calming / road design.

20mph limit - from all I have learned the likelihood of securing a 20mph limit here is slim. But if we did, it would realise an increase in signage only. We know from the police they do not enforce 20mph limits.

In keeping focus on success being a reduction in speed of some road users, these factors taken together raises questions regarding whether a 20mph limit would provide any benefit to our issue. I think it would not.

Proposal 1: The Parish Council does NOT proceed with seeking a 20mph limit for site 1

20mph zone – we have already received police advice that the speed issue at this location is a Highways rather than a Police issue - designing out speed rather than enforcing it.

Creation of a self-managing zone appears a solution more likely to achieve a reduction in speed than a 20mph limit.

I think we should challenge our thinking on two questions:

1. Are we supportive of a self-managing zone being installed outside the church, something like the situation shown in the pictures:



2. Do we consider that the problem we are seeking to address is sufficiently significant that Parish Council funding should be used to install such measures?

Progressing with this option will require a detailed survey to be undertaken. Changes of this nature often result in other unintended consequences, for example, as vehicles slow and then speed up there is an increase in emissions and noise. There may be other factors to consider, for example disruption to the drainage of rainwater. We know the cost of the survey in the neighbouring Parish was £12,000.

Proposal 2: The speeding issue at site 1 is exceptional rather than frequent. The deployment of public funds to progress further with the idea of a 20mph zone is NOT justified.

Site 2 – Bridge Road, the straight piece of road from Red House Walk to the right-hand bend heading north.

- A 30mph road with it being a derestricted (60mph) road after/before the village. The issue is defined as an excessive use of speed – more than 30mph, in both directions.

As they pledged, Suffolk Police has conducted a speed survey to evidence the extent of the issue. As we predicted, we do experience speeding vehicles, but to such a low volume as to not meet thresholds for enforcement – a 98% compliance level.

The best option for achieving an actual reduction in speed will be physical changes to the road – traffic calming. This is easy to conceptualise for vehicles entering the village, but not so easy for vehicles travelling up Bridge Rd exiting the village.

Traffic calming options are likely to be challenged as this section of road is a bus route and the major road into the village for emergency vehicles (see pictures above).

I think we should challenge our thinking on the same two questions noted in the section above:

1. Are we supportive of a self-managing zone (30mph rather than 20mph) being installed in this section of road, something akin to the situation shown in the pictures above?
2. Do we consider that the problem we are seeking to address is sufficiently significant that Parish Council funding would be used to install such measures?

Proposal 3: The speeding issue is defined as 98% compliant, it is exceptional rather than frequent and does NOT justify the deployment of the public funds required to further consider traffic calming measures.

Conclusion

I'm keen to provide what I think is a realistic context from all the information gathered so far:

- We live in a village where we occasionally have vehicles travelling at what could be considered inappropriate speed, whether that is in excess of the 30mph speed limit or not.
- Our village benefits from being off the beaten track, it's not a thoroughfare, it has natural traffic calming features, bends before the village, narrow lanes, signage.
- In the wider County perspective, there are communities with significant problems, and these are our competition for scarce resource.
- The evidence shows our issue is NOT sufficient to meet enforcement thresholds.
- The only resolution in our gift is implementation of traffic calming measures. We know from the experience of a neighbouring parish with a significant speeding issue by comparison, most of the cost of measures deployed must be met from Parish Council funds.

During our conversations thus far, we have been keen to contemplate that installation of SIDs would help improve safety. The evidence from a neighbouring Parish that installed two SIDs at a cost of £7,000, is they still experience half of all vehicles travelling through the village in excess of the enforcement threshold.

Proposal 4: The existence of SIDs installed in a neighbouring parish has not proven to reduce the occurrence of speeding to an acceptable level, thus the installation of SIDs at Parish Council expense is NOT good value for money.

We could consider our motivation to install SIDs is to capture data relating to our issue. SIDs do provide a data source, however, the police are clear that they do not use SID data as evidence (for reasons such as calibration), so the data collection would be for our use only. The challenge this poses in my view is one of balance of cost verses reward.

Proposal 5: In the whole context of the speeding issue in our Parish, the expenditure of public funds to progress the speeding concern further is NOT justified.

END