

**Forward Plan reference number:** Not Applicable

<b>Report title:</b> Proposed 30mph and 40mph Speed Limits, B1052 Little Walden Road, Saffron Walden	
<b>Report to:</b> Councillor Kevin Bentley, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure	
<b>Report author:</b> Andrew Cook, Director for Highways and Transport	
<b>Date:</b> 23 December 2019	<b>For:</b> Decision
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<b>County Divisions affected:</b> Saffron Walden	

## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 Essex County Council (the Council) has formally advertised its intention to implement a 30mph speed limit on B1052 Little Walden Road, Saffron Walden, to replace the extent of the existing 40mph speed limit. In addition, a 40mph buffer speed limit has also been proposed on B1052 Little Walden Road to replace part of the road that remains derestricted (the Proposal). As an objection has been received to the Proposal, the Cabinet Member is now asked to decide whether the Proposal should be implemented.

## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 To approve the implementation of the proposed 30mph and 40mph speed limits on B1052 Little Walden Road, Saffron Walden as advertised and set out in Appendix 1 of this report.

## **3. Summary of issue**

- 3.1 Little Walden is a small village located approximately 3 miles north east from its nearest town, Saffron Walden. There is one major road running directly through it, B1052 Little Walden Road which is a Priority 2 (PR2) route in the Essex Functional Route Hierarchy.
- 3.2 There is currently a 40mph speed limit in place throughout the extent of B1052 Little Walden Road which lies within the village area of Little Walden, where it then changes to National Speed Limit of 60mph at each end.

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- 3.3 Throughout B1052 Little Walden Road, the road width is considerably narrow and there are several properties and other amenities which either directly front the carriageway or lie very close to it. The road takes a 90 degree 'L' shape turn right in the middle of the village, and it should also be noted that there is no pedestrian footway at either side of B1052 Little Walden Road.
- 3.4 Concerns were initially raised by Saffron Walden Town Council regarding the inappropriate speed limit within the village, which according to the Essex Speed Management Strategy (as outlined in paragraph 3.10) meets the criteria for a 30mph speed limit.
- 3.5 This Proposal was then taken through Essex Highways' validation process for consideration as to whether the scheme should be commissioned through the Uttlesford Local Highway Panel, where subsequent speed surveys were taken in October 2016.
- 3.6 Three speed and volume surveys were undertaken at the following locations:
- 1) North - approximately 90 metres east of Petts Lane.
  - 2) Middle - approximately 85 metres south of Petts Lane.
  - 3) South - approximately 400 metres south of Petts Lane.
- 3.7 All surveys were conducted between 04 and 10 October 2016. The results of the speed surveys below indicate that although the mean speeds are not exceeding the posted speed limit of 40mph that a 30mph limit would be more reflective of how drivers perceive they should be driving within the Village.

Site	Location of survey	Speed limit	Direction of Travel	Mean average Speed	Volume of Traffic
1	90 metres south of Petts Lane	40	Eastbound	34.5mph	9,181
			Westbound	35.0mph	8,417
2	85 metres south of Petts Lane	40	Northbound	31.2mph	10,060
			Southbound	30.3mph	9,335
3	400 metres south of Petts Lane	60	Northbound	38.9mph	10,272
			Southbound	39.2mph	9,602

- 3.8 The map extract below shows the approximate location of where each of the above surveys were undertaken:

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- 3.9 Following the results of the speed surveys, it was subsequently proposed to amend the existing 40mph speed limit in the village to 30mph, in addition to installing a 40mph buffer zone at the south side of the village (the Proposal).
- 3.10 The proposed 30mph speed limit is in keeping with the guidance laid out in the Essex Speed Management Strategy (ESMS), where a 30mph limit in rural areas 'Should be the norm in villages', where a 'village' is defined as being 11 or more properties within an extent of at least 350 metres.
- 3.11 Based on the recommendation that a 30mph limit is the most appropriate speed limit for the village, it would therefore follow suit that a 40mph speed limit is the most appropriate for a buffer zone on the south side of the village. This will ensure a more gradual reduction in vehicular speeds on approach to Little Walden. The extent of this 40mph buffer has been designed to cover some of the properties outside the village down to Stonebridge Farm, and the three cottages that lay in-between. This is also in keeping with the ESMS, where an intermediate speed limit/buffer may be appropriate where there are outlying houses beyond the village boundary.
- 3.12 It is expected that driver compliance to the revised limits would be achieved, as the average speed results for survey sites 1 & 2 (within the village) are all at 35mph and below. The 40mph buffer zone is also expected to contribute to driver compliance, as it should reduce vehicular speeds for northbound vehicles on approach to Little Walden.

## **Consultation**

- 3.13 From the 8 to 30 August 2019, Essex Highways formally advertised the Proposal.

- 3.14 The Proposal was advertised on the Essex Highways website and in the local newspaper, the Saffron Walden Reporter. Public notices were displayed around Little Walden, residents near the affected the area were sent a letter of consultation while several other key stakeholders were also contacted, explaining to them the reasons the scheme is being proposed.
- 3.15 John Moran, County Member for the Saffron Walden Division of Essex County Council stated that he was “fully supportive” of the Proposal.
- 3.16 Essex Police were supportive of the Proposal, however raised a particular concern relating to whether driver compliance will be achieved at the proposed 30mph at the eastern end and particularly for eastbound vehicles travelling away from the village, where the environment is much more rural.
- 3.17 In response to Essex Police, it was explained that when looked at it would have been unsuitable to introduce a section of 40mph buffer at the north eastern end of the village as it would not be long enough to satisfy requirements for the speed limit length, so it was therefore felt best to replace the entire extent of existing 40mph with the proposed 30mph limit.
- 3.18 A total of 5 responses were received from residents. 4 of them expressed their support, while there was 1 objection.
- 3.19 In addition, 2 of the residents in the support also suggested that there should be a 40mph buffer speed limit in place to the north eastern end of the village. One of them also queried why the proposed 30mph speed limit does not extend to the three outlying cottages south of the village (these are located approximately where speed survey 3 was taken).
- 3.20 In response to these residents, the rationale stated in section 3.18 of this report for not including a 40mph buffer at the north eastern end of Little Walden was used. It was also explained that the proposed 30mph speed limit does not extend out as far as the cottages because this would fall outside of policy, in particular the guidance laid out in the ESMS. This is mainly due to the lack of any property frontage between the village of Little Walden and the outlying cottages, so that a 40mph buffer was felt most appropriate at this location.

## **Objections**

- 3.21 The one objector, requested a full copy of the speed survey results (referenced in section 3.8 of this report) so that he could assess them as the main basis when before providing his objection and subsequent reasoning. While an in depth analysis was provided, the main basis for his arguments against the Proposal were:
- The proposed 30 and 40mph speed limits are unnecessary, if it is felt there is still the need to include a buffer zone to the south of the village then it should be set at 50mph not 40mph as proposed.

- The majority of drivers are already travelling at speeds within the legal limit so there is a lack of a speeding issue. It was felt that the Proposal would therefore 'criminalise' many drivers who are currently going at appropriate speeds.
- The lower limits would be widely ignored if implemented, unless rigorously and expensively enforced by the police. This would lead to increased driver frustration and risky behaviour.
- The speed limits will not change the physical layout or appearance of the driver environment, which is the greater influence on driver's speed choices – shown by the average speeds of the survey at site 2 (within the village centre) being lower than 1 (just outside the centre).

3.22 The objector's full response has been included under Appendix 3 of this report, as it was specifically requested that the Cabinet Member would be able to have a full sight of his graphs and analysis, before making a final decision.

3.23 In response to the objector, it was explained that implementation of the proposed 30mph speed limit is in keeping with the guidance laid out in the ESMS, whereby Little Walden is classified as a 'village' and therefore warrants a 30mph speed limit which 'should be the norm in villages'. It was also explained that the importance in reducing the speed limit within the village can largely be attributed to the pedestrian environment, particularly the fact there is a lack of footway within the village meaning pedestrians are having to walk on the carriageway itself or the narrow grass verges adjacent to it.

3.24 The full letter of response sent to the objector can be seen under Appendix 4 report.

## **4. Options**

### **Option A – Continue with the Proposal as advertised**

4.1 This option would support the recommendations made by Essex Highways engineers, and the views of local councillors and the Uttlesford Local Highway Panel. If implemented, then it may help ensure average speeds throughout the village are at a level which is more suitable for drivers, residents, pedestrians and anyone else who may be affected such as cyclists. This is particularly important, when taking into consideration the lack of pedestrian footway within the village. Implementation of the buffer zone may also help prevent vehicles approaching the village at unsuitably high speeds, especially upon entering the 90-degree bend in the middle of the village.

This option, is therefore the recommended option, however it would not satisfy the objector.

### **Option B – Abandon the scheme**

This option, would satisfy the objector who feels that there are no changes needed to the current speed limits.

However, this option would go against the wishes of Essex Highways engineers, the Uttlesford Local Highway Panel, local councillors and potentially many residents living in the village of Little Walden. Keeping the 40mph speed limit within the village would be more unsuitable, considering residents are walking on the carriageway itself in order to access local amenities due to the lack of footway within the village.

## **5. Issues for consideration**

### **5.1 Financial implications**

- 5.1.1 This scheme is funded by the Uttlesford Local Highways Panel 2019/2020 budget with an allocation of £11,000.

### **5.2 Legal implications**

- 5.2.1 The Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 gives the Council a statutory duty to exercise its traffic functions to secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of traffic of all kinds, including pedestrians and to provide suitable and adequate parking facilities. So far as practical the council is also required to have regard to:

- (a) the desirability of securing and maintaining reasonable access to premises;
- (b) the effect on the amenities of any locality affected so as to preserve or improve the amenities of the areas through which the roads run;
- (c) the importance of facilitating the passage of buses and their passengers.

- 5.2.2 Justifiable speed limits assist with the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of traffic and pedestrians. Whilst there appears to be no real legislative requirement to hold a public inquiry in view of the objections received the decision to make the order may be subject to judicial review, whilst judicial review is a risk, there have been clear and reasoned considerations put forward by ECC as to why it is still going to make the order. These clear and reasoned considerations ought to have alleviated objector concerns

## **6. Equality and Diversity implications**

7.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:

- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful
- (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

7.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).

7.3 The equality impact assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

## **7. List of appendices**

- 7.1 Appendix 1 – Proposal Drawing
- 7.2 Appendix 2 – Site Photos
- 7.3 Appendix 3 – Full Objection
- 7.4 Appendix 4 – Response to the Objector
- 7.5 Appendix 5 – Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

## **8. List of Background papers**

- 8.1 Essex Speed Management Strategy

<b>I approve the above recommendations set out above for the reasons set out in the report.</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Councillor Kevin Bentley, Cabinet Member for Infrastructure</b>	16/01/2020

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**In consultation with:**

<b>Role</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Director Highways and Transportation</b> <b>Andrew Cook</b>	09/01/2020
<b>S151 Officer</b> <b>Nicole Wood</b>	Consent not needed
<b>Director, Legal and Assurance (Monitoring Officer)</b> <b>Laura Edwards on behalf of</b> <b>Paul Turner</b>	23/12/2019
<b>Head of Network and Safety/Traffic Manager</b> <b>Liz Burr</b>	19/11/2019
<b>Head of Design</b> <b>Vicky Presland</b>	19/11/2019