

Forward Plan reference number: Not Applicable

Report title: Proposed 20mph Speed Limit, Saffron Walden Town Centre	
Report to: Councillor Lee Scott, Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport	
Report author: Paul Crick, Director for Highways and Transport	
Date: 11/04/2022	For: Decision
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County Divisions affected: Saffron Walden	

1. Everyone's Essex

- 1.1 Everyone's Essex sets out four strategic aims and twenty commitments for Essex County Council to deliver over the next four years. As part of the delivery of a 'high quality environment', the changes to speed limits in Saffron Walden Town Centre were developed to make walking and cycling more attractive for residents, encouraging a shift away from short car journeys. This will help to create a better environment and encourage visitors and residents to the Town centre creating custom for local businesses to help boost the economy.
- 1.2 To make the alterations to the highway, Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) are required. Essex County Council (the Council) has formally advertised the implementation of a 20mph speed limit on the roads listed below within Saffron Walden town centre, in the District of Uttlesford (the Proposal). Following public consultation of the Proposal, 12 objections have been received. The Cabinet Member is now asked to decide as to whether the proposal should be implemented.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To approve the introduction of the 20mph speed limit on the roads identified in paragraphs 3.1 and 3.2 within Saffron Walden Town Centre as formally advertised and set out under Appendix 1.

3. Background and Proposal

Background

- 3.1 Following the Governments emergency response to the Covid-19 pandemic the roads below had a temporary 20mph speed applied for 18 months on 27 July

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2020, replacing the existing 30mph speed limits by virtue of street lighting. This temporary speed limit was extended for an additional 6 months on request to the Secretary of State for Transport and will now expire on 27 July 2022. Following further consultation with elected representatives and the Local Highway Panel it was considered appropriate to undertake the full public consultation to consider making these limits permanent. In order to promote active travel and encourage sustainable forms of transport.

- High Street B184 (in part) - From its junction with Castle Street southwards to its junction with Gold Street
- East Street B184
- Fairycroft Road
- Cross Street
- Butcher Row
- Church Street
- Common Hill B1052
- Emson Close
- George Street B184
- Hill Street B184
- King Street
- Market Hill
- Market Place
- Market Row
- Market Street

3.2 In addition to the above sites following that detailed consideration the scheme was widened to include a proposed 20mph speed limit on the following roads in Saffron Walden Town Centre:

- Audley Road B184
- New Road
- Castle Hill B1052 (in part) - From its junction with Common Hill northwards to its junction with Castle Street
- Gold Street
- Margaret Way
- Gibson Way
- Gibson Gardens
- Gibson Close
- Abbey Lane
- Farmadine
- Farmadine Court
- Newcroft
- Tanners Way
- Elm Grove
- Church Path

3.3 B184 High Street, George Street, Hill Street and East Street and Fairycroft Road are all classified as being Priority 1 (PR1) routes in the Essex functional

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hierarchy. Audley Road, Common Hill, B1052 Common Hill, B1052 Castle Hill and Church Street are PR2 routes so also considered to be main distributary roads in the Essex Road network whilst everything else is classified as a Local Road.

- 3.4 Under current policy Highways Practice Note (HPN) 040 “20mph Permanent Speed Limits and Zones in Urban and Rural Areas”, 20mph Speed Limits are not permitted on PR1 routes and only on PR2 routes where existing mean average speeds are 24mph or under following Cabinet Member Approval via a CMA. Approval to undertake the statutory order making process for 20mph Speed Limits on lengths of road classed as PR1 /PR2 in the county route hierarchy was given by the Leader of Council on CMA FP/142/08/21 “Active Travel Fund 2”: https://cmis.essex.gov.uk/essexcmis5/Decisions/tabid/78/ctl/ViewCMIS_Ddecision_Details/mid/422/Id/8818/Default.aspx
- 3.5 In Essex, the current practice on the implementation of speed limits is based on the Traffic Management Strategy (2005) and Essex Speed Management Strategy (2010) (which are both currently being reviewed), places a significant importance on the movement of vehicular traffic that no longer fits with the current national and local ambitions for more sustainable travel. Whilst the proposal is not consistent with these strategies which are currently under review, the schemes are in line with the Council’s objectives and support a number of the Council’s strategic ambitions as set out in Section 4 below. To deliver the schemes and create safer, greener environments traffic speeds need to be reduced in locations where schemes promote walking and cycling and aim to create healthier environments for people.

The Proposal

- 3.6 The initial temporary 20mph speed limit on the roads listed in section 3.1 above were introduced on 27th July 2020 and was funded by national government using the Emergency Active Travel Fund grant received in the financial year 2020/21. The grant was to support the delivery of adjustments to roads, footways and cycleways so as to enable residents to better comply with social distancing measures by giving more space to cyclists and pedestrians.
- 3.7 The 18-month Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO) currently in force was due to expire on 27th January 2022, however it has been extended for an additional 6 months with the consent of the Secretary of State for the Department for Transport until 27th July 2022 to allow sufficient time to deal with representations made during the permanent order consultation. At which time, without a permanent order being made the roads will revert to their previous status with a 30mph speed limit by virtue of street lighting.
- 3.8 Following the introduction of the TTRO there is strong desire from the County Councillor for Saffron Walden Division and the Saffron Walden Town Council to make the limit permanent. This was also discussed at the June 2021 Uttlesford Local Highway Panel and there was unanimous support for funding the works involved in making the Temporary 20mph Speed Limits permanent. The introduction of a permanent 20mph speed limit also includes the additional roads

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listed in section 3.2 of this report which were not initially subject to the TTRO, to ensure consistency within the town centre.

- 3.9 The consultation plan showing the Proposal in detail can be seen under Appendix 1. All of the areas marked green on the plan are considered to be areas where pedestrian footfall can be expected to be significant. In addition to being in the town centre, East Street and B1052 Castle Hill both lead to local primary schools.
- 3.10 The Council does not hold speed survey data for the sites prior to the implementation of the temporary 20mph speed limit to understand if the signage has had an impact but we do have data obtained on the PR1 and PR2 routes in April 2021 following the implementation of the TTRO with the results summarised as below:

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Automatic Traffic Counts - Saffron Walden Town Centre					
Date	Location	Posted Speed Limit	Direction of Travel	Average Daily Speed	Average Daily Volume
Apr-21	Bridge Street 35 N of junction with Freshwell Street	30mph	Northwest bound	24.9mph	4,984.0
			Southeast bound	22.6mph	5,094.0
Apr-21	B184 High Street 40m N of junction with Raynhams	30mph	Northwest bound	21.8mph	5,856.0
			South bound	19.3mph	3,215.0
Apr-21	B184 High Street 50m N of junction with Gold Street	30mph	North bound	26.6mph	2,814.0
			South bound	21.9mph	8,083.0
Apr-21	B184 Audley Road (one way westbound)	30mph	East bound	N/A	N/A
			West bound	26.9mph	4,813.0
Apr-21	B184 East Street 45m West of Chaters Hill	30mph	East bound	17.4mph	4,488.0
			West bound	23.4mph	3,806.0
Apr-21	B1052 Common Hill 50m N of zebra crossing	30mph	North bound	20mph	5,277.6
			South bound	20.1mph	4,033.9
Apr-21	Church Street 30m East of junction with Museum Street (one way westbound)	30mph	East bound	N/A	N/A
			West bound	21.1mph	4,948.0
Apr-21	B184 Hill Street (one way eastbound)	30mph	East bound	18mph	5,568.0
			West bound	N/A	N/A

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- 3.11 From 25 November to 17 December 2021, Essex Highways formally advertised the Proposal as set out in Appendix 1.
- 3.12 The Proposal was advertised on the Essex Highways website and in the local newspaper, the Saffron Walden Reporter. A letter drop encompassing the affected area (approximately 1394 properties) was sent out to residents and local businesses inviting them for their comments, explaining the proposed changes and included a copy of the plan.
- 3.13 The consultation documents were also sent to several statutory consultees, following this the below comments were received:
- Essex Police noted their support for the Proposal.
 - County Councillor Paul Gadd noted his strong support for the Proposal.
 - Saffron Walden Town Council made no comment.
- 3.14 A spokesperson on behalf of the Confederation of Passenger Transport Essex expressed their opposition to the Proposal, asking that the 20mph Speed Limit be re-considered. The nature of their comments is summarised below:
- Whilst it is unlikely buses will often exceed 20mph on these routes, it would be unpreferable for buses to be penalised in those instances.
 - 20mph speed limits are negatively impacting bus running times.
 - Such delays may have a detrimental impact on running costs and commercial viability of bus services.
 - Longer service times may discourage groups with lower mobility from using passenger transport as they are less able to choose active travel options such as cycling/walking, which is contrary to the Council's strategy
- 3.15 In light of the speed survey data shown under section 3.10 of this report, many of the roads which proposed to be included within the 20mph speed limit were already indicating mean speeds of around 20mph when the roads had a 30mph speed limit by virtue of street lighting. Therefore, the risk that the new speed limit will be exceeded is considered low, subsequently so too is the subsequent impact on bus running times.
- 3.16 In total, 75 responses were received during the formal consultation. 52 of these were comments in support of the Proposal and 12 objections were received. In addition, the other 11 people who made comment did not formally object but raised general concerns/suggestions.
- 3.17 The most common point of objection raised was that if implemented, the proposed 20mph scheme would have a detrimental impact by slowing down traffic speeds. This would then contribute to an increase in congestion within the town, as well as on pollution.
- 3.18 In response to this point, again due to existing speed survey data held it is not anticipated that the scheme will have a significant impact on vehicle speeds as they were already low before the temporary 20mph speed limit was

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implemented. Therefore, anticipated impacts on congestion and pollution are also expected to be minimal. In addition, a sign posted lower speed limit is hoped to provide other road users such as pedestrians and cyclists with a heightened sense of safety when travelling within the town centre, which may encourage sustainable active travel and offset vehicular congestion.

- 3.19 The most common point of objection, raised by 7 of the objectors, was that the 20mph speed limit will slow down traffic within the town. This would result in additional levels of congestion as well as pollution.
- 3.20 Again, given the existing average speed survey data it is not thought that the proposal would have a significant impact on traffic speeds, therefore the anticipated impacts on congestion and pollution are also thought not to be significant.
- 3.21 Another common point of objection, raised by 6 of the objectors, was that the proposed 20mph speed limit is an unnecessary use of public resources as many vehicles would struggle to reach 30mph in many of the roads included anyway. Particularly due to the narrow widths of some of the town centre roads.
- 3.22 In response to this point, while the 20mph speed limit may not cause a significant impact on traffic speeds, it is hoped it will improve the perception of safety for non-motorised road users such as pedestrians and cyclists. This would be beneficial in encouraging people to use more active modes of travel in the long term. In addition, the permanent 20mph speed limit would be formalising an arrangement which has been in place since the start of Covid measures. Many people may have become accustomed to this speed limit so it could be counterproductive to remove this and give the signal to drivers they can drive faster.
- 3.23 One of the objectors, stated that the 20mph speed limit should be applied across the whole of Saffron Walden. However, this is not thought to be reasonable as this may strongly oppose the Council's policy and is likely to be adhered to due to the nature of some of the roads.
- 3.24 One of the objectors as well as two of those who commented, suggested that South Road should be included within the proposed 20mph speed limit area. The rationale for this is that South Road has two primary schools and a nursing home situated along it, so the lower speed limit would be more appropriate.
- 3.25 The main reason South Road was not included was because the scheme was designed to primarily focus on the roads within vicinity of the town centre, whereas South Road extends further outwards from the town in comparison to some of the other roads currently included.
- 3.26 As mentioned, there were 11 additional people who made comment during the consultation. These were not formal objections and many of these were in support of the scheme in principle, however raised some general suggestions or concerns. These comments are summarised below:

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- 20mph speed limit should be extended south westwards along High Street/Audley End Road past Saffron Walden County High School
- 20mph speed limit should be extended on South Road
- High Street, Audley Road, Castle Street, Hill Street, East Street and Butcher Row should be excepted from the proposals
- 20mph speed limit should be extended on High Street between its junction with Gold Street and Debden Road

3.27 The objections and officer responses can be seen in full under Appendix 2, the Objection Report.

4. Links to our Strategic Ambitions

4.1 This report links to the following aims in the Essex Vision

- Develop our County sustainably

4.2 Approving the recommendations in this report will have the following impact on the Council's ambition to be net carbon neutral by 2030:

- A sign posted lower speed limit is hoped to provide non-motorised road users such as pedestrians and cyclists with a heightened sense of safety when travelling within the town centre, which in the long term may encourage sustainable active travel and subsequently offset vehicular congestion.

4.3 This report links to the following strategic priorities in the emerging Organisational Strategy 'Everyone's Essex':

- A high quality environment
- Health wellbeing and independence for all ages

5. Options

Option 1 – Implement the scheme as advertised

5.1 This is the recommended option. This would have the benefits already described but would not meet the requirements of the objectors. The Cabinet member's role is to balance the competing interests and decide whether this is in the public interest. It is important to note that the majority of people who commented were in support of the scheme, while many who objected or provided feedback did not object to the scheme in principle and wished the speed limit proposal would go further.

Option 2 – Abandon the scheme

5.2 This option would mean that when the existing temporary 20mph speed limit expires on 27th July 2022 then the majority of the roads included within the

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Proposal would revert to their previous status with a 30mph speed limit by virtue of street lighting. This would not achieve any highway benefits compared to the current situation but may satisfy most of the objectors. Most comments received during the consultation were from those in support so they would find this option unfavourable. By implementing the proposed 20mph speed limit the Council will be formalising an arrangement which has been in place since July 2020 as part of the Covid measures. Many motorists may have become used to the 20mph speed limit so if this is removed it may be counterproductive to indicate that they can now drive at faster speeds. Therefore, this is not the recommended option.

Option 3 – Alternative proposal

- 5.3 As an alternative to the proposal, we could extend the proposed 20mph speed limit to include South Road, a suggestion raised by one of the objectors and two other members of the public who commented on the Proposal. This may achieve the benefit as being a more suitable speed limit with regard to the presence of school children and elderly pedestrians, due to the presence of the schools and a care home on South Road and could represent a compromised proposal. However, this would go against the initial rationale of including roads within the vicinity of the town centre.
- 5.4 If this option is chosen the proposal would need to be re-designed and the subject of further consultation which would bear additional costs and delays that would be unfavourable for the Council. However, given the time limit for the existing proposal of 27th July 2022 it is not feasible that any alternatives will be suitably considered as a separate scheme. In addition, if any objections on alternative schemes are raised then they too would need to be considered by the Cabinet Member, which are not unlikely given the existing level and nature of objections to the current proposal. Therefore, this is not the recommended option.

6 Issues for consideration

6.1 Financial implications

- 6.1.1 It is estimated the cost of this speed limit will be £13,500 and will be funded by the Uttlesford Local Highway Panel 2021/2022 capital budget, as broken down below:
- Review of extent/Design/TRO - £8,000
 - Implementation - £5,500.

6.2 Legal implications

- 6.2.1 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.

6.2.2 Justifiable speed limits assist with the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of traffic and pedestrians.

6.2.3 Whilst there appears to be no real legislative requirement to hold a public enquiry, in view of the objection received, the decision to make the Orders may be subject to judicial review, whilst judicial review is a risk, there have been clear and reasoned considerations put forward by Essex County Council as to why it is still going to make the Orders. These clear and reasoned considerations ought to have alleviated objector concerns.

7 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 Equalities Comprehensive Impact Assessment indicates that the proposals in this report **will not** have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

8 List of appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1 – Plan
- 8.2 Appendix 2 – Objection Report
- 8.3 Appendix 3 – Equalities Comprehensive Impact Assessment

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<p>I approve the above recommendations set out above for the reasons set out in the report.</p> <p>Councillor Lee Scott, Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport</p>	<p>Date 29/06/2022</p>
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In consultation with:

Role	Date
<p>Director Highways and Transportation</p> <p>Paul Crick</p>	<p>21/06/2022</p>
<p>S151 Officer</p> <p>Nicole Wood - Executive Director for Finance and Technology</p>	<p>Consent not needed</p>
<p>Director, Legal and Assurance (Monitoring Officer)</p> <p>Susan Moussa on behalf of Paul Turner</p>	<p>13 June 2022</p>
<p>Head of Network and Safety/Traffic Manager</p> <p>Liz Burr</p>	<p>29 April 2022</p>
<p>Interim Head of Design</p> <p>Julia Johnson</p>	<p>4 May 2022</p>