

Memorandum for Inclusion on Agenda
Item 52.3 for Consideration by Council

Suffolk County Council - Proposed Speed Limits

Councillor Keith Robinson, who represents both SCC (Oulton) and ESC (Oulton Broad) has proposed 30mph and 40mph speed limits as per the attached matrix for all roads in the Lothingland triangle west of the A47. This matrix was shown at a meeting last year of Oulton Parish Council. Cllr Robinson stated at a Northern Parishes meeting at Corton on 21st May 2019 that the proposals have been submitted to Suffolk Highways.

It is well proven by accident statistics that the best solution to improve road safety is to improve the standard of the road itself. For instance, the new A146/B1136 roundabout at Hales has significantly enhanced safety at that junction. For decades, Suffolk County Council has imposed speed limits as a cheap solution to road safety and traffic management, rather than investing in highway improvements.

If memory serves correctly, one of the reasons that Sanyo gave for closing its video factory in Lowestoft was that the blanket imposition of extensive 30/40mph speed limits on all main roads through every village in the county, added to general traffic congestion, meant that its drivers were no longer able to complete deliveries to depots inland within their allotted hours. From personal experience, in the undersigned's days as a ship surveyor 40 years ago, he could reach Felixstowe dock gate in 1hr 15mins in a Vauxhall Viva; nowadays, it takes that time to pass Martlesham, which in effect would mean adding half an hour to his working day.

Given that Norfolk County Council has reduced the speed limit between St Olaves and Haddiscoe from 50mph to 40 mph, the imposition of the proposed 30/40mph limits over Lothingland would mean that traffic from north Lowestoft to Norwich travelling on the shorter, B1074 route via Somerleyton to avoid Oulton Broad, will be restricted to 40mph maximum for all of the nine miles to the junction of the A143/B1136 to Hales on the far side of Haddiscoe village. Therefore besides commuters, all delivery vans, couriers, postmen, etc will take an extra few minutes, thus collectively rendering town and national productivity even worse than it already is. Drivers in Lowestoft suffer enough delays in traffic.

It is known that it is difficult to attract businesses to Lowestoft because of its remoteness, which is also a deterrent for recruiting teachers and doctors to the town. It is imperative for the economic regeneration of Lowestoft that the road infrastructure inland be improved, not restricted. For instance, straightening the bends between Oulton and Somerleyton, and adding a roundabout at Blundeston, would significantly enhance the B1074, also in consideration of additional pressure from new housing developments at Woods Meadow and Blundeston Prison.

Taken to its ultimate conclusion, SCC Highways could subsequently impose 40mph speed limit over all minor roads in the county. Because none of the roads in the Lothingland matrix actually transit through LTC wards, it is not certain that Council will be invited to consult on the proposals. Therefore it is requested if Council could consider this issue, and recommend that Lowestoft Town Council be proactive to object formally to Suffolk County Council over the imposition of additional speed limits in the Lothingland area.