

The Parish of Stoke St Mary

The need for a 20 mph speed limit



This is Ash Road but it could be any part of the parish.

We all understand the need for traffic to move through our villages and Hamlets. We use the roads ourselves. 94% of the household in the parish have access to a car – because they have to. There is no public transport and using the roads for any other purpose is hazardous.

Our roads are for all users and, in our village and hamlets, that includes children, old people, dog walkers, ramblers, cyclists, horse riders and animal movements (sheep and Alpacas).

30mph may well be right for an urban environment with well-lit streets and pavements. For our rural settlements it is not fit for purpose.

The Village of Stoke St Mary

During lockdown we saw what was possible when traffic was only generated locally.

- Many people cycle and more walk. Half the households appear to have a dog which is walked on the roads.
- There are over forty horses in seven establishments within the village of Stoke St Mary and more in the rest of the parish. There is only one bridleway so they use the roads for exercise.
- The children in the village have to walk on the roads to the playground or play in the roads.
- We have limited community facilities, but are forced to drive to the Church, the chapel, the village hall and the pub, as there is no footpath, which is simply wrong.

The village is fed by three roads:

- Ash Road towards Thurlbear and West Hatch, which after the Thurlbear turn becomes a steep sunken track 3 metres wide with frequent blind bends and inadequate passing places.
- Stoke Road towards Henlade, another 3 metre wide track with frequent blind bends and inadequate passing places. **For both of these roads it is impossible to pass cyclists or horse riders legally (with a 2 metre gap).**
- Stoke Road towards Shoreditch and Taunton. This road opens up as traffic leaves the village but closes to the same 3 metre track towards Shoreditch (Broughton Lane) and narrows to 4 metres beyond the Shoreditch turn.

The “main” road through the village is lined with houses and has one pavement 30 metres long by the village hall. It is not lit except for a couple of lights along Pattons.

The new A358 is forecast to increase traffic through the village by a third. Currently the 30 mph limit is largely obeyed except as traffic leaves the village towards Taunton. This is the road mainly used as a cut through to South Taunton.

We want to reclaim our village by replacing the current 30 mph with a 20 mph limit and extending the coverage modestly to include the houses at the edge of the village

Haydon

Haydon is sliced in half by a continuous flow of traffic using the road as a cut through from the A358 to South Taunton.

There is no other local road, apart from the A358 currently, **which carries more traffic than the Haydon Road** (the same road serves Lower Henlade, part of Ruishton CP). According to National Highways there are 4,400 daily movements through Haydon. The traffic is forecast to increase when the new road is built.

It is difficult to overstate the impact this has on the community. The road is a 5 metre wide track with inadequate passing places. Faced with three blind bends, traffic through Haydon is usually below 30 mph except as it approaches and leaves the hamlet but there are frequent minor accidents. There is no pavement or lighting in Haydon. Walking the dog is hazardous in Haydon.

Ideally traffic should be diverted away from Haydon (and Lower Henlade). If that is not possible then it needs to be calmed and discouraged. A 20 mph limit is the start of that.

Shoreditch

Shoreditch has a significant number of non-motorised users AT RISK on these narrow, yet busy roads through the hamlet. These include:

- 77 registered on the electoral role in Shoreditch.
- A large number of elderly residents, particularly living in Broughton Park Homes.
- Schoolchildren trying to access the schools along South Road. Local authority assessments have deemed the walk as 'too dangerous', such that they fund taxi transport.
- Vulnerable adults/carers/nurses accessing the Cygnet Residential Home on Orchard Portman Road.
- Both Lemon Tree Nursery and Orchard Portman church cannot be reached safely on foot.
- Cyclists accessing the Blackdown Hills AONB.

This leads to severance of the Shoreditch Community from walking and cycling to access Taunton. The 99 'bus stop' at the top of the hill cannot be reached for many, as it is too dangerous to walk on the public highway. Currently the speed limit in the hamlet is 40mph and the national speed limit on Broughton Lane leading to Stoke St Mary.

There are a wide variety of hazards and dangers on the roads in Shoreditch:

- Narrow section of road such that two cars are unable to pass. This was previously recognised, as a "SLOW" road marking did exist until it was covered over when the road was resurfaced 5+ years ago.
- Sharp blind bends.
- Several residential properties (12 in total), with driveways and a light industrial site, all having poor visibility to traffic.
- There are no pavements (or alternative footpaths) and no verge, so all pedestrians must use the public highway.

The increase from 30 mph to 40 mph and then National Speed Limit on Broughton Lane implies that both roads are suitable for a higher speed when clearly this is not the case. It may have been the situation that these speed limits were selected when Shoreditch was mostly farm buildings, but all of these have now been converted to residential homes. Additionally, there has been a substantial increase in traffic through Shoreditch to avoid the heavily congested A358, when accessing all the schools, colleges and business in south Taunton. The Automatic Traffic Count from Sep/Oct 2017 highlighted a significant Mon-Fri average daily traffic flow of 3,850 vehicles.