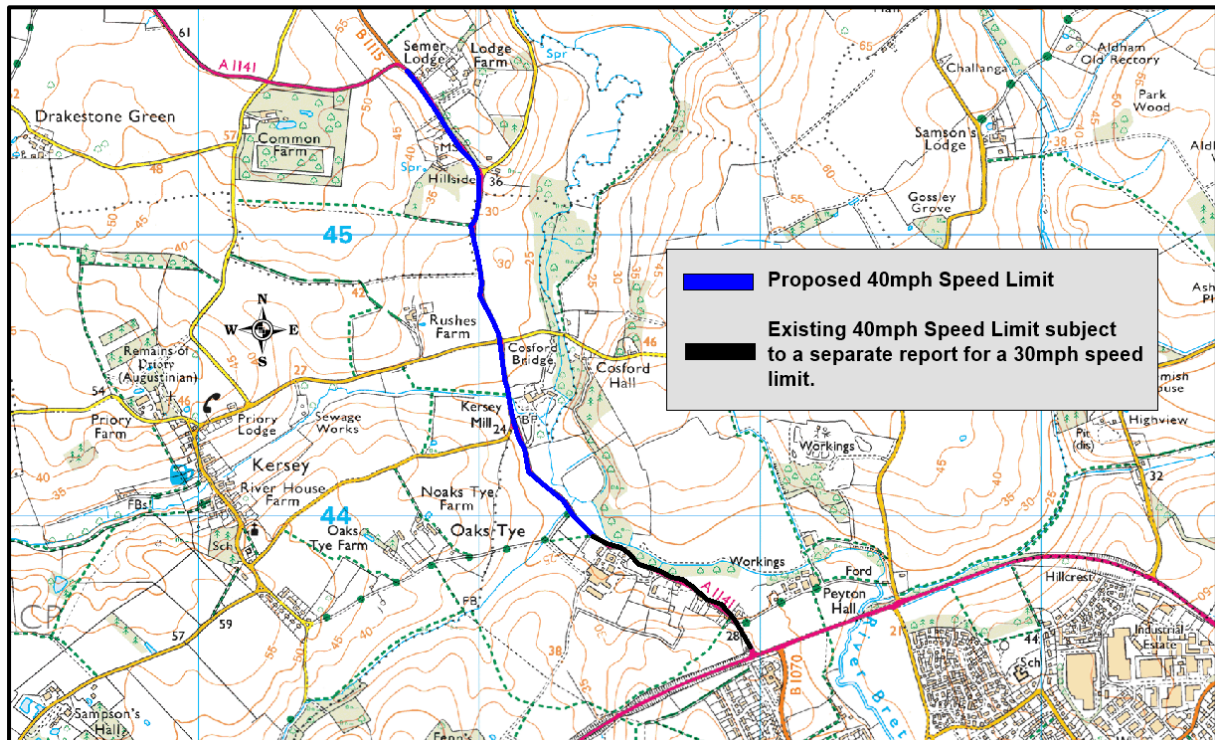


A1141 Semer / Kersey / Hadleigh 40mph Speed Limit Report

Introduction

Concerns have been raised by the Local County Councillor, Robert Lindsay, the Parish Councils of Semer and Kersey and the two communities, about speed and safety of the A1141 between its junction with B1115 in the north and where it joins the 40mph speed limit on Stone Street in Hadleigh in the south. There is a separate report covering Stone Street, Hadleigh as there is a wish to reduce the 40mph speed limit to 30mph.

There is a hope that the speed limit through this section can be reduced to 40mph to improve safety along the section. Suffolk County Council has agreed to prepare a factual report on the issues to enable a formal decision to be made.



Road Description

The A1141 which takes signed traffic between the A1071 in Hadleigh in the south to Lavenham and B1115 Stowmarket to the north.

The section of the A1141 to be considered is the section commencing just south of its junction with B1115 to a point where it joins the current 40mph speed limit at Stone Street, Hadleigh, approximately 1.8 kilometres in length. The access to Kersey Mill is located directly off the A1141 and likely to have slow turning traffic as tourists seek Kersey Mill as a destination.

There are 12 sweeping bends and four junctions with several accesses to residential properties on the section of A1141 being considered. County Councillor Lindsay has

previously funded additional warning signs and road markings along this route to try and improve safety along the route.

Being predominately rural there is likely to be slow moving agricultural traffic as well as general traffic along the route.

Whilst there is some evidence of leisure cycling along this route there are no warning signs to advise drivers that they may expect cyclists in the road ahead,

There are two signed footpaths within the section with no footways and walkers using the footpaths currently must walk along the edge of the road or step onto the adjacent verge along a road subject currently to the national speed limit.

The extent of the requested 40mph speed limit on A1141 is approximately 1.8 kilometres in length.

Traffic Survey

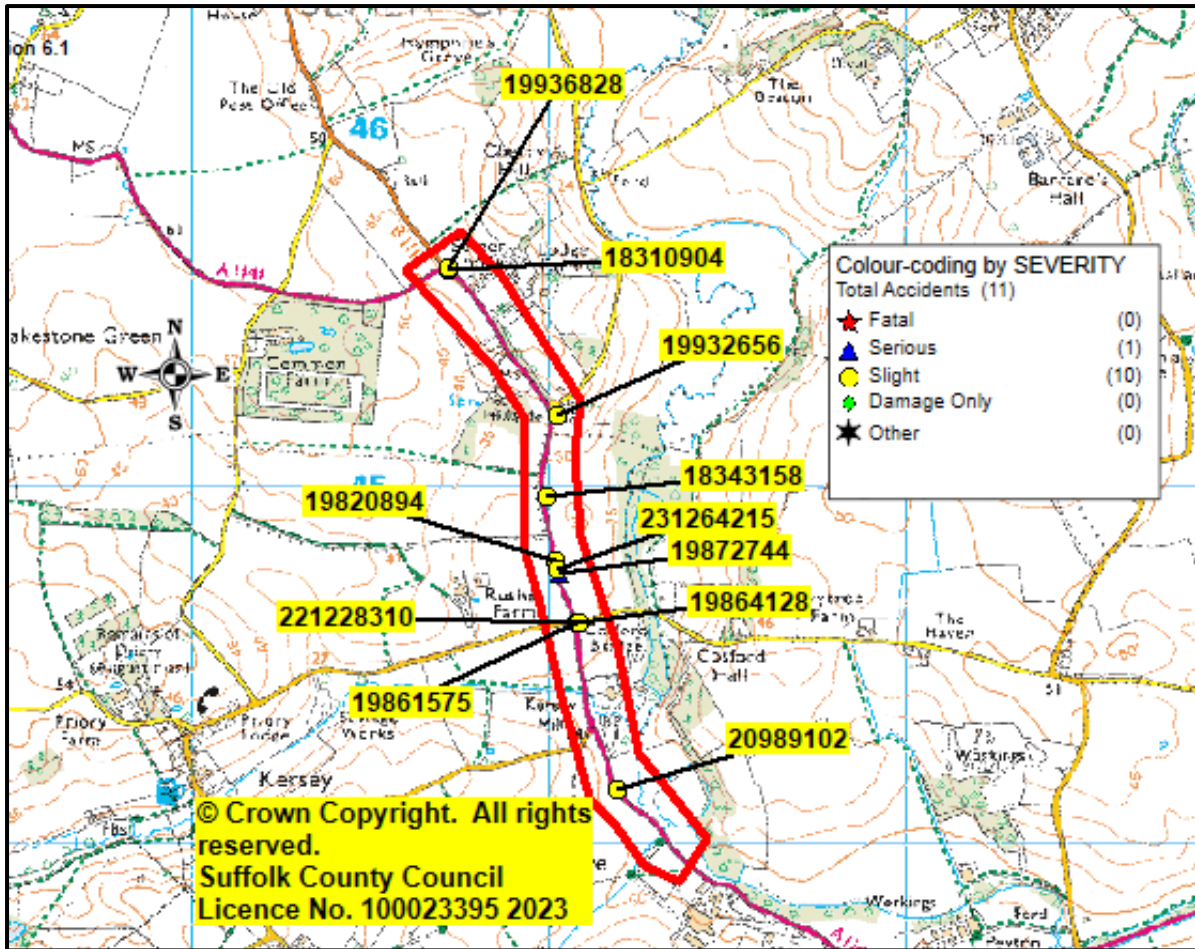
A Traffic survey was undertaken between Thursday 22 June 2023 and Wednesday 28 June 2023. Below is the table summarising the speeds and volumes of traffic reported:

	North Bound			South Bound		
	Volume	85 th percentile	Mean	Volume	85 th percentile	Mean
Thurs 22 June	2637	42	36	2730	38	33
Fri 23 June	2767	42	36	2763	38	34
Sat 24 June	2060	41	36	2116	38	34
Sun 25 June	1983	41	36	1931	38	33
Mon 26 June	2409	42	37	2454	39	34
Tues 27 June	2494	42	37	2581	39	34
Wed 28 June	2480	42	37	2582	38	34
5-day Average	2557	42	37	2622	38	34
7-day Average	2404	42	36	2451	38	34

The 85th percentile speeds (the maximum speeds that 85% of the traffic are travelling at or lower) show they are already around 40mph. This suggests that drivers have already judged that the correct speed for this route is around 40mph.

Collision Data

Injury collisions were checked for the five-year period between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2023. 11 injury collisions were recorded (1 serious and 10 Slight).



18310904 – On the 23 June 2018, Vehicle 1, a car, travelling northwest, as Vehicle 2, a car, was travelling in the opposite direction. Either Vehicle 1 or Vehicle 2 has crossed the central line and collided head-on. Both drivers state it was the other that had crossed the line and two independent witnesses state differing opinions. Driver of Vehicle 1 and Driver of Vehicle 2 sustained a Slight injury.

18343158 – On 15 October 2018, Vehicle 1, a car, was travelling along the carriageway and braked because the vehicle in front braked. This caused Vehicle 1 to then slip on mud at the road edge and swerve onto the bank. Vehicle 1 then swerved onto the opposite side of the road into the path of Vehicle 2, a car, and there was a collision. Driver of Vehicle 1 and Driver of Vehicle 2 sustained a Slight injuries.

19820894 – On 10 February 2019, Vehicle 1, a car, was driving along a wet/damp road. Driver has reacted to steering wheel judder and in doing so has lost control. Vehicle 1 has mounted a verge and rolled over. Driver of Vehicle 1 sustained a slight injury.

19861575 – On 20 June 2019, Vehicle 1, a car, was waiting at the junction and started to move off. Driver saw a vehicle so stopped. Then pulled out without checking the road a collided with on-coming Vehicle 2, a car. Passenger in Vehicle 1 sustained a slight injury.

19864128 – On 24 June 2019, Vehicle 1, a car, was travelling along the carriageway, stopped at the junction to check both ways. Both ways appeared clear, so Vehicle 1 moved off colliding with on-coming Vehicle 2, a car. Vehicle 2 saw Vehicle 1 and braked but was unable to avoid the collision. Driver and passenger of Vehicle 1 and driver of Vehicle 2 sustained slight injuries.

19872744 – On 11 July 2019, Vehicle 2, a car, was travelling along main carriageway. They have slowed / stopped due to Vehicle 1, unknown, travelling in opposite direction. Wing mirrors have collided, parts of which have entered Vehicle 2 causing injury to the driver. Vehicle 1 has failed to stop. Driver of Vehicle 2 sustained a serious injury.

19932656 – On 11 December 2019, the Driver of Vehicle 1, a car, was travelling too quickly approaching a bend. Driver pushed the brake too quickly causing the car to swerve on the damp conditions of the road. Driver of Vehicle 1 sustained a slight injury.

19936828 – On 31 December 2019, Vehicle 1, a car, has approached a junction and turned right into the path of Vehicle 2, a car. Vehicle 2 has braked but could not stop in time. Several local people on the scene who all agree it is a difficult junction with limited visibility and an accident blackspot. Driver and passenger of Vehicle 1 were not local and would not have known this. Driver of Vehicle 2 has sustained a Slight injury.

20989102 – On 29 September 2020, the driver of Vehicle 1, a car, has lost concentration or looked down briefly. This has led to the vehicle going up a mud bank and hitting a tree and rolling onto its side. The driver of Vehicle 1 has sustained a Slight injury.

221228310 – On 9 October 2022, Vehicle 1, a car, has been heading north towards Bildeston, when Vehicle 2, a car, has exited the junction. Vehicle 2 has made it two thirds into the road without the driver of Vehicle 1 being able to see them. Vehicle 2 has stopped in the road and Vehicle 1 has collided with them being unable to avoid a collision due to on-coming traffic. Driver and Passenger of Vehicle 2 sustained Slight injuries.

231264215 – On 14 January 2023, Vehicle 1, a car, went round a bend a little too fast for the road conditions causing the rear end of the vehicle to slide out. This caused the driver to lose control of Vehicle 1 and slide sideways and hit Vehicle 2, a car. Driver and passenger of Vehicle 1 sustained Slight injuries.

County Councillors Comments:

County Councillor Mick Fraser

I have no objections for this proposed change in speed limit for the A1141. If granted, this will extend and compliment the current 40mph limit on Stone Street and may reduce the current traffic hazard posed there by speeding vehicles heading south towards Hadleigh.

County Councillor Robert Lindsay

I agree with your judgement that the road meets the criteria in the four areas you suggest.

Regarding existing speeds and compliance, and in response to the slight reservations expressed by the police, it is worth noting that there was a live, if unofficial, trial of a 40mph limit on that stretch of road, because a local resident put up 40mph signs along the stretch without permission just after Christmas. The signs were in place for a week or so until Highways removed them. As a resident of Bildeston, I had cause to drive that route several times during that period. The signs came as a surprise to me. Yet it was noticeable that the change of limit, registered by my satnav as the official limit, did not seem at all unreasonable to me as a driver on that stretch of road and in fact 40mph felt like the **maximum** speed you could achieve and still be safe.

Excess speeds may not have been mentioned as causes of 9 of the 11 accidents recorded in the five-year period. But my view and that of residents is that accidents would not be so frequent, nor so severe, if the speed limit were lower. For example, "failing to look properly when emerging from a junction" was cited as a cause in a number of accidents. There are many blind bends and blind accesses on that road – particularly the junction opposite Ivytree Lane that leads to Kersey – so that "looking properly" is practically impossible when entering a 60mph limit zone and therefore measures to bring down speeds are essential.

I quote below from Richard Pearce, director of Trident Marketing, who is resident and runs his offices there by the A1141:

"Using Trident Marketing as an example, we have 16 members of staff and many clients who have to navigate onto Overgang Road with very little visibility around the bend on Union Hill – and cars do not slow down. It is terrifying."

Mr Pearce goes on to mention that since the end of March 2023 (the last date from which the official accident data was taken):

"I can recall multiple accidents since March 2023 including three motorbikes in a ditch, another car in a ditch, a damaged and abandoned car at the Ivytree Lane junction, and a builder's van getting hit as he pulled out on Union Hill. Not to mention the two incredibly serious accidents closer to Hollow Trees Farm, one of which involved a school bus. Understandably, many incidents are not reported due to fear of prosecution – but that does not mean that people don't sustain injuries and vehicle damage."

I am more than confident that adequate compliance will be achieved with signs alone, without the need for any other engineering.

Regarding your areas of uncertainty:

- Settlement has shops, school, public house, filling station etc

There is the Woodlands Nursery for pre-schoolers at Kersey Mill which has 60 children aged 1 to 4 on its books. Kersey Mill has expanded as a significant retail centre in recent years and is now home to at least 23 businesses including the Millers Kitchen

café, open seven days a week. All of these businesses – flower boutique, physiotherapy, cakes, hair and beauty, craft shop, charity shop - are retail, relying on members of the public visiting. Separately, there is “Water Babies at Semer” at Letts swimming pools further up the hill on the east side of the road. It offers swimming classes to very young children and is therefore another public destination, generating visitors.

- Significant development on both sides of road, but not necessarily continuous, with some development in depth, overall frontage exceeds 500m in length

I agree that there is no stretch of continuous frontage of more than 500m length on this road. But the criteria state that the development **does not necessarily have to be continuous**. The stretch of the A1141 from the turn off to Ash Street – Overgang Road – to the Letts swimming pool site is 400m. Within that stretch are homes on the left and right all the way along, as specified by Semer Parish Council in its response, some are set back from the road and some are spaced quite far apart. Nevertheless, to a driver this does constitute a significant amount of development and does slow them down, as witnessed by average speeds from the survey. The remainder of the stretch under consideration has lower density development but there is no stretch where there are not sharp blind bends or exits from businesses or houses. So, there is no part of that road that would encourage drivers to speed up.

- Some pedestrian / cycle activity throughout the day with possible peaks associated with schools or community facilities

As mentioned already, there is a nursery for pre-schoolers at the Kersey Mill site, with children coming and going at peak times every weekday.

There is also a school bus stop at Letts swimming pools and about eight children who live on Union Hill walk every school day along the road up to the bus stop to catch the school bus and return and walk the route every evening from school.

In addition, there is a café/restaurant open seven days a week and several studios used for regular Pilates classes, physiotherapy etc, every day at Kersey Mill. This site in itself creates peak movements.

- Some provision for pedestrians / cycles or acknowledged need and possible warning signs

This road is very popular with cyclists, there are cycle clubs in Hadleigh, Sudbury and Boxford that regularly cycle in pelotons of up to 20 along Union Hill. I am told it is popular because the steepness of the hill presents a rare challenge to Suffolk cyclists.

Residents who live on the road inform me there are also leisure cyclists every day – not part of clubs - and even people who use a bike for transport on the road. This number would increase if the speed limits were seen to be more appropriate for the condition of the road.

Routes through Semer and by Kersey Mill are suggested by various websites such as Komoot, OS Maps and the Stowmarket & District Cycling Club.

Cycling's popularity is evidenced by the presence of Huffers café in Hadleigh, a well-known spot for cyclists with a cycle rack outside, and Café Como in Brent Eleigh, whose owner tells me she relies on cyclists for her trade (she is open for cakes and coffee only in the mornings).

Cycling from Brent Eleigh, through Monks Eleigh and down to the A1141 to Hadleigh is a very popular route for cyclists from Hadleigh and Sudbury and Boxford.

In terms of signage, evidence of need for cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders is the Quiet Lane designation for the turn off from the A1141 up Overgang Road. Pedestrians coming or going to the footpaths off the road would feel far safer if the speed limit was in keeping with the road.

In summary: I note that the county council's policy statement on these criteria say that they are "criteria to be considered". It rightly does not state that all eight criteria have to be met to the letter. The most important factor, surely, is that compliance will be sufficient so that police will not need to do any more enforcement than they do for an existing 40mph limit. This concern is met by the speed survey - whether mean or 85th percentile speeds are taken into account. You cannot drive faster than 40mph on that road without risking your own life.

NB Dept of Transport advice – "Setting local Speed Limits" dated January 2013, is that **mean** speeds should be used to determine local speed limits, **not** 85th percentile.

The mean speeds found on the survey of the A1141 were 36mph going north and 34mph going south. The formulas in Annex A of the DfT guidelines suggest that if mean speeds are 34mph within a village like Semer with a 60mph limit, the speed limit should be reduced to 30mph, and that change would bring about a reduction in mean speeds to 32.1mph using signs alone. There is a strong argument therefore to reduce the speed limit to 30mph, not 40mph.

The Stone Street section of the A1141 near Hadleigh, immediately south of this section, has now secured approval for a change of limit from 40mph to 30mph. This change will work to improve compliance with the proposed 40mph speed limit in the section further north and likewise, a new 40mph limit will help compliance with the 30mph limit to the south.

Town and Parish Council Comments:

Kersey Parish Council

Kersey Parish Council has long had concerns about the speed of traffic on this section of the A1141 and has worked with multiple County Councillors over the years to find ways to improve road safety with little success. This is a dangerous section of road with several junctions, blind bends and hills where visibility is poor. There are several homes and businesses, including Kersey Mill with many commercial units and a preschool nursery which have access directly onto the highway. The road is used by cyclists for transport and leisure. There is no footway and there are public footpaths which start/end at the A1141. The 'South Suffolk A' cycling route crosses the A1141 at

the Kersey crossroads (road junction from Kersey to Ivy Tree Lane). The road is also used by agricultural traffic.

In response to the summary regarding the Suffolk speed limit policy criteria at the end of the document the Parish Council provides the following comments:

- Settlement has shop(s), school(s), public house, filling station etc.

There are several houses and businesses along this section of road, there is also a Children's nursery at Kersey Mill. Kersey Primary school is very nearby, located on Mill Lane. Parents and staff who do not live in Kersey use both junctions from Kersey onto the A1141, both of which have poor visibility due to blind bends and would be safer if the speed was reduced.

- Significant development on both sides of road, but not necessarily continuous, with some development in depth, overall frontage exceeds 500m in length

Whilst there may not be continuous development along the length of this section of the A1141 when the homes and multiple businesses along this section are taken into consideration along with the blind bends and many junctions there is an obvious need to reduce the speed limit.

- Collision History

The accident data included in the report covers covid lockdown periods when there was far less traffic than usual. Of course, this data does not account for the many near misses which occur due to poor visibility when pulling out at junctions. As mentioned in some of the accident data a reason for an accident was said to be failing to look properly when emerging from a junction, but in reality, when there is limited visibility due to a blind bend there is not time to see fast moving vehicles before they are almost at the junction. Reducing the speed limit would really help make the road safer for users joining or crossing the A1141.

- Some pedestrian / cycle activity throughout the day with possible peaks associated with schools or community facilities and Some provision for pedestrian / cycles or acknowledged need and possible warning signs.

As mentioned before, Kersey Primary school is not far away, located on Mill Lane. Kersey Primary School is considering walking the children down to the Nursery at Kersey Mill to put on a performance of their school play, however road safety and the speed of traffic on the A1141 may mean this is not currently a safe option and so not possible. There are residents in Kersey who cycle to work and would therefore use the A1141 at peak times. The 'South Suffolk A' cycling route crosses the A1141 at the Kersey crossroads (road junction from Kersey to Ivy Tree Lane) which is a junction with very poor visibility due to the blind bend. Kersey residents use facilities at Kersey Mill and would be more likely to choose active travel if they knew the A1141 had a reduced and safer speed limit so crossing the road was not so dangerous. With the popularity of electric bikes it is becoming a viable option for more people to choose to cycle to Hadleigh to use the facilities but some are put off by the danger of fast moving

vehicles on the A1141. The need to make a safer cycling route from Kersey to Hadleigh has already been acknowledged in the LCWIP.

Kersey Parish Council was unanimous in supporting the introduction of a 40mph limit on the A1141 along with a 30mph limit for the Stone Street section as this would greatly improve safety for all road users. Active travel needs to be encouraged, anything to make this section of road safer will help.

Semer Parish Council

In regard to the request of a 40mph speed limit on the A1141/B1115 road through Semer in which the following properties:

- Hill House
- Tudor House & Tudor Cottage
- The Old Post Office
- Semer Cottage
- The Village Hall
- Letts; Business and House, the pool of which is used for private lessons especially Water Babies for mother's with babies and young children generating more traffic on and off the road.
- Semer Lodge
- Home Park
- Three Lodge Cottages
- Sunnyside
- Cosford House
- Hillside
- Cosford Rise- Trident Marketing on the junction of Overgang Road creating more vehicle movement.

All these properties have concealed or partially concealed entrances, some being affected by their proximity to bends and brows of the hills as well.

The nature of the roads in Semer make it attractive to cyclists particularly clubs and triathletes, Watson's Hill is annually used for time trials. The new Highway Code for passing cyclists can create tailbacks which can be alarming for motorist to come upon after a bend. One thing which hasn't altered over the years is the motor cyclist's usage of the road, particularly at weekends and fine weather mornings, the road becomes 'an unofficial racetrack'.

It should be realised that the road in its entirety is a succession of bends and hills many of which give little if any visibility of oncoming traffic especially at speed.

The type of traffic has not only increased in volume of numbers but also in size some of the large HGV's do struggle to pass one another in places, agricultural vehicles are part of the area, but these too go faster and are larger than previously.

The road edge opposite Tudor House was eroding and subsiding towards a steep drop due to usage.

The quiet lanes signs are 'interesting' it seems to acknowledge that the locals like to enjoy the vicinity, however in order to access these 'Quiet Lanes' the main routes have to be crossed. Semer bridge is regularly crossed by horse riders from various yards in the immediate area but there are no speed limits or warning signs for horses any more than there are for children at Letts. In reference to this it should be realised that there is no pavement or off-road path anywhere in Semer which makes it extremely difficult and at times dangerous for all.

Semer Parish Council strongly support the need for a 40mph speed limit through the Parish in order to make the road safer for everyone.

Hadleigh Town Council

Hadleigh Town Council support this request for a reduction in the speed limit to 40mph for the A1141 from the junction with the B1115 and Stone Street, Hadleigh. We feel it would be of benefit to all users of this road.

Police Comments:

I have given this some thought in an attempt to provide a considered response. Looking at the location and applying SCC criteria I think it is fair to say that there is not a clear argument either for or against this request.

The number of collisions at face value appears to warrant further consideration. With excess speed only mentioned in two of the eleven collisions, other causes (failing to look properly when emerging from a junction, loss of concentration/control) are the majority and may or may not be addressed with a reduced limit. As stated in your own policy, ***the relationship between speed and likelihood of collision as well as severity of injury is complex*** and whilst yes, ***there is a strong correlation***, this is not a given and so some further investigation may be of value.

The speed data retrieved is of interest. Whilst I am uncertain where this data was captured, it does imply that the motorist has already identified a more appropriate speed to travel at, as opposed to seeing the existing speed limit as a target speed. This data suggests that compliance may be achieved although again I am uncertain where this data was captured.

Much within the existing policy is given to the need for a speed limit to be self-explanatory and provide a constant message. The limited development within the extent of the scheme may prevent this message being obvious to the motorist. As an A class road some further thought may be needed if this scheme gets approval.

Summary for Consideration (40mph)

Suffolk Speed Limit Policy gives guidance on where speed limits less than the national levels should be considered. For a 40mph limit to be considered the following should be considered, officer comments are inserted below:

➤ **Settlement has shop(s), school(s), public house, filling station etc.**

Kersey Mill is a retail outlet and generates visitors. There are no schools, public house or filling station within the section being considered. Officers are not sure if this is sufficient justification to state that this criterion has been met.

- **Significant development on both sides of road, but not necessarily continuous, with some development in depth, overall frontage exceeds 500m in length**

Whilst there is some development along this route and some development in depth, this does not exceed 500m in length and therefore officers do not believe that this criterion has been met.

- **Collision History**

There have been 11 injury collisions in the five-year period, some of which can be attributed to travelling too fast for the conditions of the road. Officers therefore believe that this criterion has been met.

- **Existing traffic speeds**

With the 85th percentile speeds north bound being 42mph and south bound 38mph, it suggests that drivers have already identified the appropriate speed for this section of road. If a 40mph speed limit is introduced, the current speeds suggest that there will be a reasonable compliance with the speed limit.

- **Many junctions, bends and accesses**

With 4 junctions, 12 bends and 15 accesses along this route, Officers believe that this criterion has been met.

- **Some pedestrian / cycle activity throughout the day with possible peaks associated with schools or community facilities.**

There is evidence that cyclists will probably use this route and with the public footpaths signed off the route there is potential evidence of pedestrian use. There is, however, no evidence that there are possible peaks associated with schools or community facilities. Officers are unsure if this is sufficient justification to state that this criterion has been met.

- **Some provision for pedestrian / cycles or acknowledged need and possible warning signs.**

Officers acknowledge with the public footpaths off this route that there is a likelihood that pedestrians will be using the public footpaths, however, there are no footways and there are no warning signs to advise drivers to expect pedestrians in the carriageway. Officers are unsure if this is sufficient to state that this criterion has been met.

- **Lengths of road that more closely fit the conditions for a 50mph speed limit but where the standard of road / forward visibility is more appropriate to 40mph.**

The route being considered has an elevation change, a few junctions, some on bends and restricted forward visibility in places, suggests why drivers are

identifying a reduced speed already for this section. Officers believe that this criterion has been met.

Conclusion

The Local County Councillor and the Parish Council's along the route support a reduction of the current national speed limit down to 40mph for safety reasons. Officers are unsure if sufficient of the criteria can be met to fully justify a 40mph speed limit, however, the 85th percentile speeds suggest that there would be reasonable compliance. Paragraph 21 of the Policy states that there may be specific local circumstances where it would be beneficial to introduce lower speed limits which do not fully meet the relevant criteria.

Officers consider it is a finely balanced decision between accepting that it does not fully meet the criteria or approving the request for a 40mph speed limit based on paragraph 21 of the Policy to make the route safer. With obviously limited development visible to drivers along the route, any reduced speed limit would need to be backed by low-cost speed reduction measures to give drivers additional clues to the appropriate speed as suggested by the Police.

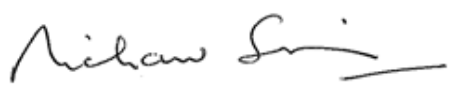
FORMAL DECISION OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER AND THE HEAD OF TRANSPORT POLICY

Councillor Richard Smith MVO and Graeme Mateer reviewed the report and made the decision set out below:

Decision made:

Agree to TRO the along the A1141 Semer/Kersey/Hadleigh.

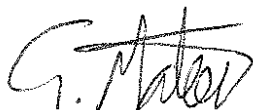
Signature of the Cabinet Member for Economic Development,
Transport Strategy and Waste.



Date:

20/10/2023

Signature of the Head of Transport Policy



Date:

20/10/2023