

# Traffic Calming – a Report to Thurlaston Parish Council

## 1. Background

At Thurlaston Parish Council's September 2019 meeting a resident reported that a vehicle had been seen speeding along Biggin Hall Lane, at a speed well in excess of the 20mph limit.

Traffic speeding continues to be an ongoing issue particularly along Main Street.

The Parish Council has been asked to consider whether additional measures can be taken to calm traffic, in addition to the 20mph limit invoked in 2015.

This report summarises Warwickshire Police policy on 20mph zones and methods that could be considered to try and enforce compliance.

The document is for reference by the Parish Council. It does not make recommendations.

## 2. National & Local Authority Guidance

The Department of Transport provides guidance with regard to setting speed limits. Important factors include:

- (a) History of collisions; including frequency, severity, types and causes;
- (b) Road geometry and engineering (width, sightlines, bends, junctions, accesses and safety barriers etc.);
- (c) Road function: strategic, through traffic, local access etc;
- (d) Composition of road users: including existing and potential levels of vulnerable road users;
- (e) Existing traffic speeds;
- (f) Road environment: such as level of road-side development and possible impacts on residents.

There are two different categories of 20mph limits, the first is called a 'zone' which is designed to be 'self-enforcing' due to traffic calming features (where necessary) that are introduced at the time of implementation. Any motorist, when driving off from being parked in the area, should know that they are within a 20mph zone as they cannot enter the area without passing the 20mph zone signs.

The second type is called a 'limit' and consists of just a 20mph speed limit change indicated by the speed limit (and repeater) signs. This is the current situation in Thurlaston.

The County Council has found that 20mph speed limits are more likely to be observed in villages than on rural roads with few or no frontages.

## 3. Traffic Calming Options

Whilst the 20mph speed limit may have helped to reduce overall speeding within the village, residents still feel the limit is regularly being flouted. During September 2019 Council members consulted Warwickshire Police with a view to reviewing the situation.

Options:

### (a) Traffic Speed Monitoring & Recording by a Group of Residents.

Residents will give their time to monitor traffic speeds using a RADAR style monitor. Such groups are overseen and trained under the auspices of the national *Community Speed Watch* (CSW at <https://www.communityspeedwatch.org/>) supported by the Police.

Vehicles exceeding the speed limit are referred to the Police with the aim of educating drivers to reduce their speeds. In cases where education is blatantly ignored and evidence of repeat or excessive offences are collated and prosecution may follow.

Organising CSW activities efficiently is often a difficult and time-consuming task. Volunteers receive appropriate training, and are supported by a neighbourhood policing team. However monitoring is a community commitment, and requires coordination, covering issues such as:

- Who runs the scheme locally?
- Who is trained and available when?
- Who wants to work from which site(s)?
- Who collects the equipment, gets the offence records logged, checks the accuracy?

In terms of implementation, monitoring locations need to be identified, risks assessed and deemed acceptable, operators will have training, equipment booked, collected and checked.

While penalties can't be issued, police officers will act if speed watch volunteers repeatedly report a vehicle to the police. Each force is different, but, typically, police will act after two reports of a vehicle speeding. In such a case the owner of the vehicle will be sent an official letter reminding them of the law.

Funding for RADAR type equipment has to be sourced by the community. Costs vary depending on the level of sophistication of equipment (eg some log incidents directly onto a tablet or similar device, some are tripod mounted and less confrontational). In addition high-viz jackets will need to be provided, probably at a cost to the Parish Council.

The official Warwickshire Police stance on CSW is:

- Speeding must have been identified as a PACT (Police and Communities Together) or Community Forum priority.
- Active speed enforcement operations must not already be underway in the area by Warwickshire Police, West Mercia Police or the Safer Roads Partnership.
- There must be at least six volunteers in each CSW scheme.
- Speed checks must be conducted by at least three volunteers.
- The area must have a 30 or 40 mph speed restriction.

Given the overheads of operating a CSW village scheme it is unlikely to be viable, and notwithstanding this Thurlaston Parish Council would need to make a judgment whether such ad hoc monitoring would actually make any difference to long term speed limit enforcement.

#### **(b) Speed cameras**

Warwickshire Police do not normally prosecute within 20mph restricted areas.

They have previously been considered as part of Thurlaston neighbourhood safety scheme, and cameras with automatic number recognition were deemed to be too expensive for the community to purchase and support.

#### **(c) Chicanes**

A chicane normally consists of a raised kerb and bollard in one half of the road, with a sign to explain the vehicle traffic priority. If there is no priority, *Give Way* markings and hatching are made on the approach to the chicane.

Chicanes do not cause any vehicle passenger discomfort and allow cyclists to bypass them.

Emergency vehicles may be able to travel faster around them compared with speed humps or cushions.

They may be considered by some as eyesores especially in rural settings, and arguably may be dangerous during night time where there are unlit roads.

#### **(d) Speed Humps**

Speed humps have a short rounded top which is typically 75mm high. The ramps either side are painted with white arrows to make them more obvious to motor vehicle drivers. The aim of the speed hump is to slow motor vehicle traffic to a safe speed, as the ramps become uncomfortable for vehicle drivers if they are driven over too fast.

Buses, cyclists and emergency vehicles may need to slow down. They may cause difficulties for large farm vehicles and appliances.

#### **(e) Speed Cushions**

Speed cushions are designed to be slightly wider than a car, so car drivers need to slow down and drive over the centre of the speed cushion to reduce discomfort. Clearly some drivers will simply ignore the cushion.

Speed cushions may create noise and vibration which is heard and felt in residences nearby. A greater distance between speed cushions and residences will reduce this problem.

Research suggests vehicles are likely to travel at around 17mph over a speed cushion. If there is a series of speed cushions, vehicles are likely to travel at 22 mph between them.

#### **(f) Vehicle Activated Speeding Signs (VASs)**

VASs are electronic street side signs which only become visible when approaching vehicles are exceeding a certain speed. The signs normally display the speed limit.

They do not discomfort or delay drivers; they are relatively low cost, may continue to have a positive effect over time. They can be solar powered with batteries, and so are low maintenance.

#### **(g) DIY Streets**

DIY Streets is a concept developed by Sustrans which encourages communities to generate ideas for the improvement of their street. Example opposite.



The concept aims to make the street less car dominated, and more community focussed. Typically, this involves creating a 'community feel' in the street, with artworks in the road and plants or trees.

Wooden flower beds or tree plant pots (planters) are placed in the road to calm vehicle traffic. DIY Streets can also incorporate physical traffic calming measures, such as chicanes or narrowing, however this would significantly increase costs.

Such schemes must be maintained by the community. A drawback therefore is the uncertainty of securing on-going maintenance of planters etc.

Schemes must be discussed with Highways engineers at an early stage. Art work must conform to certain colours, and must not conflict with existing road markings.

Such a scheme was considered by the village about ten years ago.