

(1)

NORDELPH VILLAGE

AN IN-DEPTH ROAD SAFETY REPORT

To include

Part one: Village speed limits

Part two: Engineering Projects

Includes reference to government policy

on

village road safety

village heritage

social needs

Submitted to

NORDELPH PARISH COUNCIL

(Note: The opinions expressed in this report are those of the author:)

Desmond H Andrew, Parish Councillor

NORDELPH: AN IN-DEPTH ROAD SAFETY REPORT

Introduction

Often, in-depth safety reports are triggered off by an incident. This in turn becomes the catalyst which flushes out much more serious failings existing within our community - I am obviously meaning our **road safety standards at Nordelph.**

Road safety standards hinge around legislation, government policy and their published guidelines and local authorities interpretation. Unfortunately, there is a tendency for local authorities to 'cut and paste' those parts which either bring in more central funding or are less intrusive to their perceived needs. There are however, other elements which have a direct bearing on the standards we must strive to meet: **Environmental needs.** We must protect our heritage and maintain our villages to a standard that Great Britain is renowned for world wide. Norfolk fens are particularly important for our national heritage, hence the reason our village is within a conservation area. **National heritage is included in government policy.**

Social needs.(social inclusion) Nordelph is located within a farming community. This means the periphery of the village is less dense in population. However, these parishioners still need safe access on foot to their village. **Social inclusion/exclusion is high on the list of government policy.**

This report addresses those points at issue, and puts forward suggestions which, in view of the author, would enhance our environment, unite the community and establish a more acceptable standard of safety for the old and infirm, the children of our community, and those visitors / tourists who come to Nordelph to enjoy peace and tranquility of a typical fenland village.

This is a two part report:

Part One

Part one addresses the problems of vehicle speed limits throughout the village.

Part Two

Part two deals with civil engineering works necessary to address the **dangerous** access to our local Post Office and an enhanced access point by way of a footbridge across Well Creek. This footbridge would improve the conservation area of our village, enhancing the heritage of a typical fenland village. At the same time it would improve access from Birchfield to our local Post Office. The footbridge may be eligible for Heritage funding via **defra**. Also included in this section is a suggestion for a feasibility study to make a cycle way from Nordelph to Downham Market along the bank of Well Creek.

If the speed limit along Silt Road up to and including Neatmoor is not radically changed, then an adequate pathway for the pedestrian /cyclist / horse rider needs to be considered. Such a proposal is included under part two.

- References: (A) A Speed Management Strategy For Norfolk - Published by Norfolk County Council.
 (B) Traffic Advisory Leaflet 1/04 - Village Speed Limits - Published by Department of Transport. (a copy of this advisory leaflet is included in this report.)
 (C) Tomorrow's Roads - Safer for everyone: The first three year review - Published by Department of Transport (extracts are used in this report)
 (D) Norfolk's Local Transport Plan 2001/02 - 2005/06 Published by Norfolk County Council (Planning & Transportation)
 (E) Press coverage of three accidents within the UK
 (F) Statistics for Great Britain of those killed and seriously injured on our roads for 2004, statistics issued by Department of Transport. A full report for 2004 is available at:
http://www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft_transstats/documents/downloadable/dft_transstats_038554.pdf
 (G) **defra** Rural strategy 2004

Authentication

Although the author does not profess to be a specialist in road safety, prior to retirement his experience was as follows :-

A member of The Institute of Occupational Safety and Health.

A member of The International Institute of Safety Management.

Close liaison with RoSPA via departmental membership.

Regional Safety Officer within government service.

Lecturer on health and safety within government departments / establishments.

PART ONE

VILLAGE SPEED LIMITS

Nordelph was designated a conservation area in October 1978. The draft character statement published by the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk clearly shows the unique features of this outstanding fenland village. The black and white photograph shown below and included in their report clearly depicts the peace and tranquility for which our village is renowned.



Sustainable Countryside: The government policy is clearly defined in the publication issued by **defra -Rural Affairs: Rural Strategy 2004**. The following is an extract from the overview of this publication:

“Rural Strategy 2004 sets out the Government’s new approach. It identifies three key priorities for rural policy, and explains our modernised delivery arrangements.

The Government’s three priorities for rural policy are:

Economic and Social Regeneration - supporting enterprise across rural England, but targeting greater resources at areas of greatest need.

Social Justice for All - tackling rural social exclusion wherever it occurs and providing fair access to services and opportunities for all rural people.

Enhancing the Value of our Countryside - protecting the natural environment for this and future generations.

These priorities will inform the Government’s rural policy for the next three to five years and the modernised delivery arrangements that will drive progress forward. This Strategy sets out the specific action that will be taken.”

The parishioners of Nordelph are the custodians of our village, and in consequence, must use every endeavour to ensure that outside influences do not change the peaceful and tranquil environment of our community. To this end, speed limits have a profound effect on village life, restricting safe passage within our village for many of our citizens.

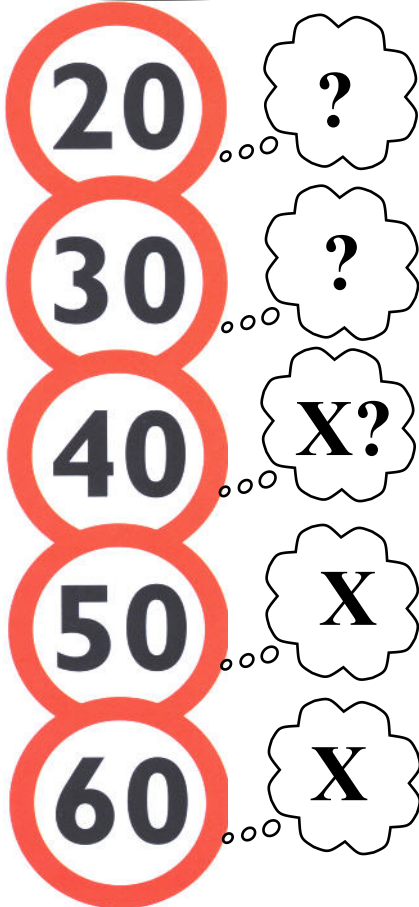
It is imperative that the government policy on village speed limits, Traffic Advisory Leaflet 1/04, published by Department of Transport, is used to determine safety standards within the village, together with adequate logical and meaningful reasons for changes in existing speed limits.

NORDELPH ROAD SAFETY REPORT

If only I could walk safely to bingo



SETTING A VILLAGE SPEED LIMIT THE WAY AHEAD



One would think that decisions with regard to speed limits within villages would be a straight forward application of government standards with a common sense approach by all counties to standardise this central procedure throughout the UK. Unfortunately this has not been the case. Even the criteria on what defines a village differs from one county to another. Over the years, different counties have set their own criteria, some of which have got involved with central government with trial periods to set standards and Norfolk County Council participated in these trials. However, NCC are still using their guide dated March 2001 - A SPEED MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR NORFOLK - published by Norfolk County Council in association with Norfolk Constabulary.

The Department for Transport have now issued **Traffic Advisory Leaflet 1/04** in an attempt to standardise maximum speed limits through villages to 30 mpg. This advisory leaflet does resolve many issues, but there still exists variables which tend to dilute the need to reduce speeds. Both the council and the police have an extremely difficult decision to make when balancing safety - on the one hand they have to ensure that traffic is running smoothly through villages when traffic flow is high. On the other, they must make adjustments to ensure that the safety standards, quality of life and the heritage of our villages are not unduly affected by fast moving traffic. Councils tend to resist reducing speeds due to pressure put on them from commercial interests, drivers and even the police. This pressure has a tendency to over-ride the interests of the village, directly affecting the quality of life of parishioners. There is also a tendency to limit the length of the village, cocooning the inhabitants into a 'safe zone'. This, unfortunately can split village communities, isolating those who would find walking into

Nordelph without any pathway / pavement, walking in the gutter of the road whilst vehicles are travelling at 60 mph, as a suicidal activity.

Because of the foregoing, it is almost obligatory for Nordelph parish council to submit a factual account, demonstrating the need both from the social and safety aspects of village life, to reduce the Maximum speed limits and to improve safe access for all, hence the submission of this 'in depth' safety report.

Note 1

This section of the report is divided into three distinct areas, (A) (B) & (C), dealing purely with speed limits. Engineering proposals are covered in part two.

Note 2

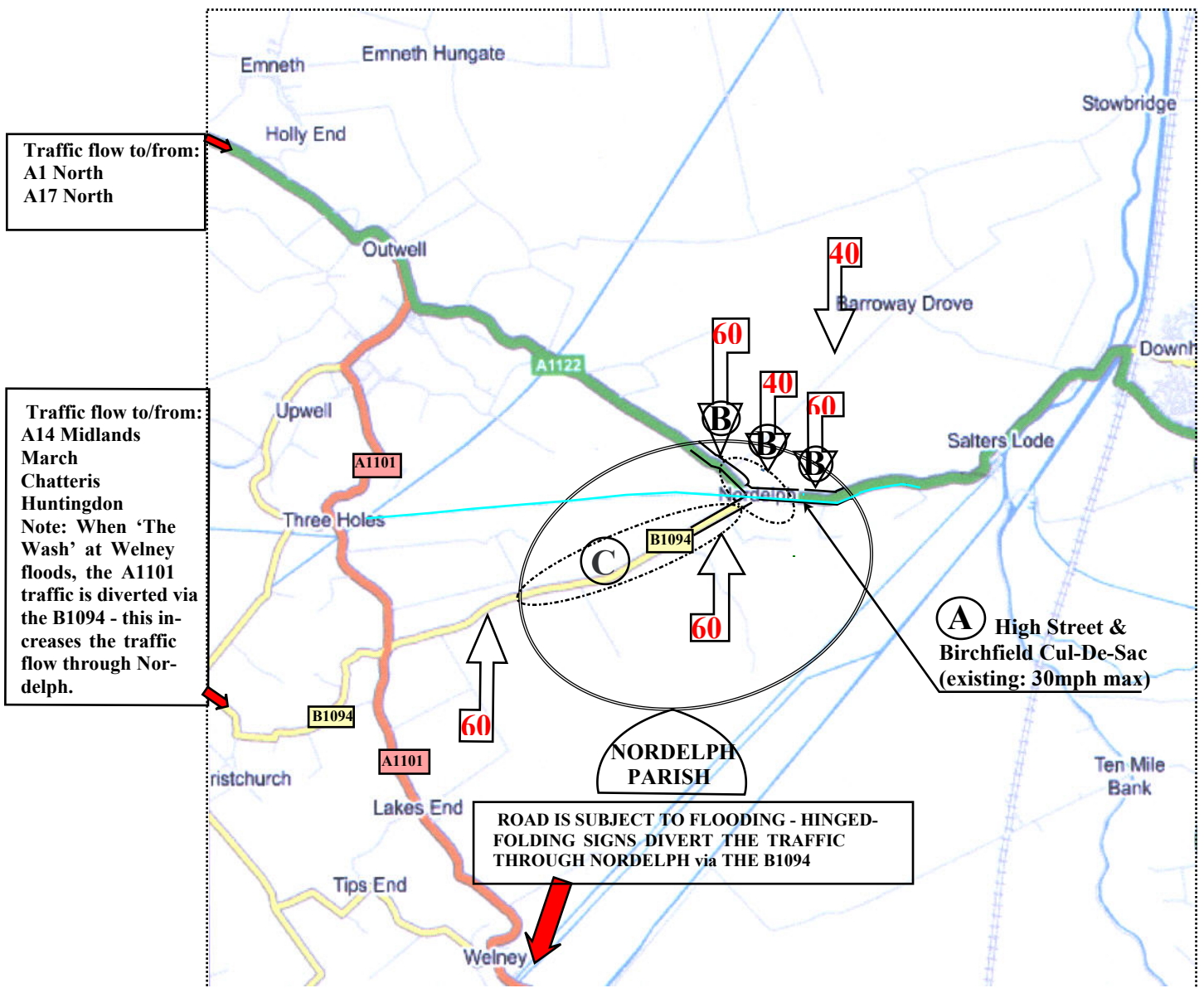
This report is not based on actual traffic flow or actual speed checks; **it is based on the continuous observation of those who live in the village twenty-four hours a day, the villagers who have actually experienced the dramatic changes in village life due to traffic expansion. This is far more accurate and realistic than a 'snapshot' test with a radar or laser gun.**

LOCATION OF AREAS (A) (B) (C)

AREA (A) Covering Nordelph High Street leading also to Birchfield (cul-de-sac). This part of Nordelph is occupied by approximately 40% of the population. New housing has been developed from the High Street to Birchfield over the last few years with planning permission having been submitted for additional development. Nordelph Village Hall is also located within this zone. Access to this area is from the junction to Silt Road (B1094) adjacent to the bridge, which in turn, joins to the A1122.

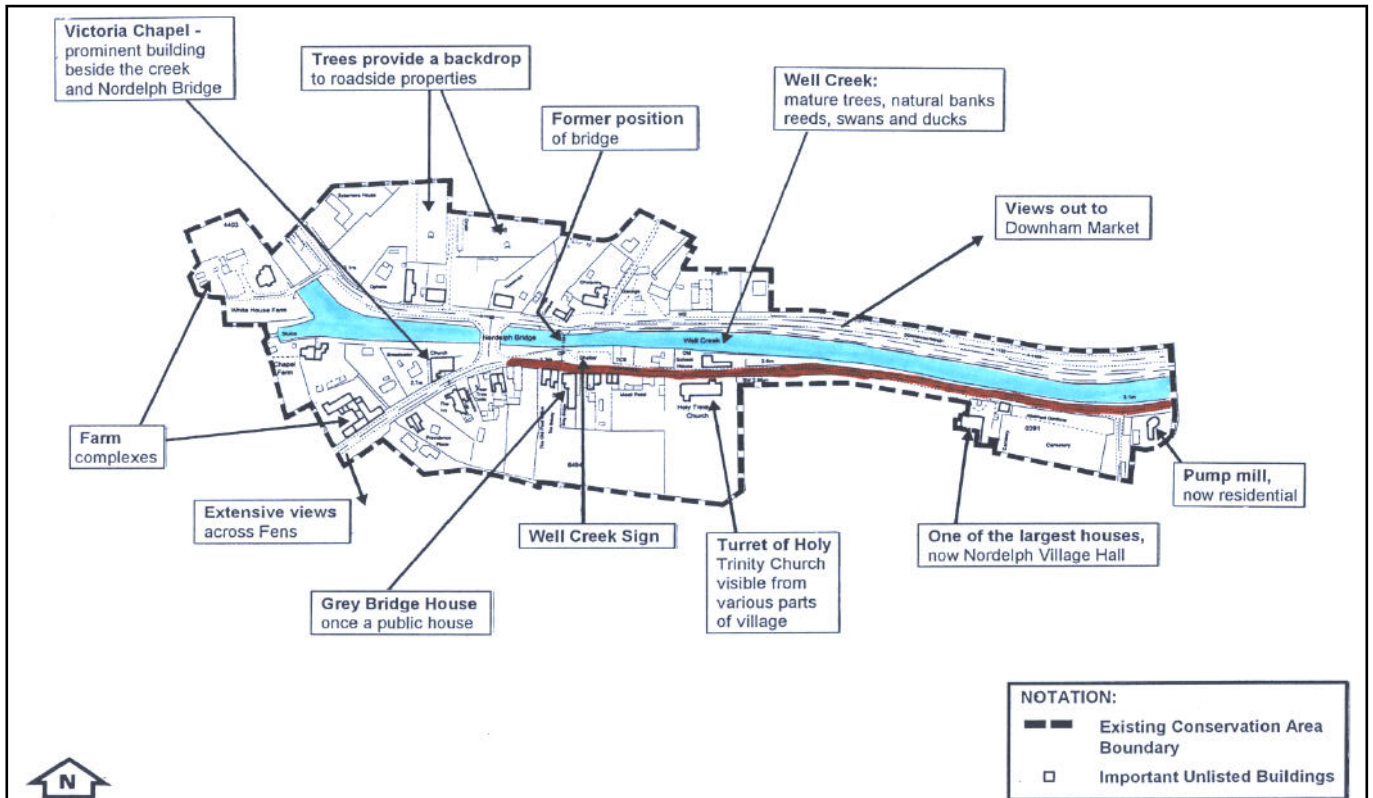
AREA (B) Covering Nordelph on the A1122, plus over the bridge on the B1094 up to and including Coronation Avenue. New and existing housing at Barroway Drove Road junction to the A1122 (Wisbech end to the village) New housing is in progress close to the 40 mph sign at the Downham Market end of Nordelph. The Post Office, which is located about half a mile towards Downham Market from the bridge, is also included in this zone. Approximately 30% of the population is located in this area.

AREA (C) This area extends from Coronation Avenue adjacent to the existing 40 mph sign up to and including Neatmoor, a distance of one and a half miles. Silt Road continues out of the village up to Lotts Bridge junction. Existing housing from the village up to Neatmoor is approximately 25, with about ten on byroads leading to Silt Road.



AREA ①

HIGH STREET AND BIRCHFIELD ROAD (CUL-DE-SAC)



The above plan shows the conservation area of Nordelph with the High Street and Birchfield Road marked in brown. The High Street is entered from Silt Road adjacent to the humped back bridge. You will note at this point that Well Creek is some metres from the road but as we walk into and along Birchfield Road the only barrier from Well Creek is a single rail fence. There are no pedestrian paths within this area. The road varies in width which is no problem for **slow moving vehicles**.

New housing has been built within the conservation area and planning permission has been approved for further development.

This very picturesque area of Nordelph is visited by tourists wishing to share the tranquility of this beautiful fenland village. Children play 'free range' in this quiet zone and tend to forget that traffic has priority even within this cul-de-sac. This could cause problems with fast moving traffic. We do have those odd drivers who think the speed limit of 30mph means they have every right to attain this speed whatever the road conditions. This could have disastrous results if left unchecked. For this reason, and to maintain that peaceful environment for both the local residents and visitors, and to give children a safer place in which to play, the speed limit would be more appropriate if set to a maximum of 20mph. Other traffic calming measures would not be appropriate as they could spoil this otherwise peaceful zone. The preservation of our wildlife and their habitats would also benefit from a reduction in speed along this quiet stretch of the village.



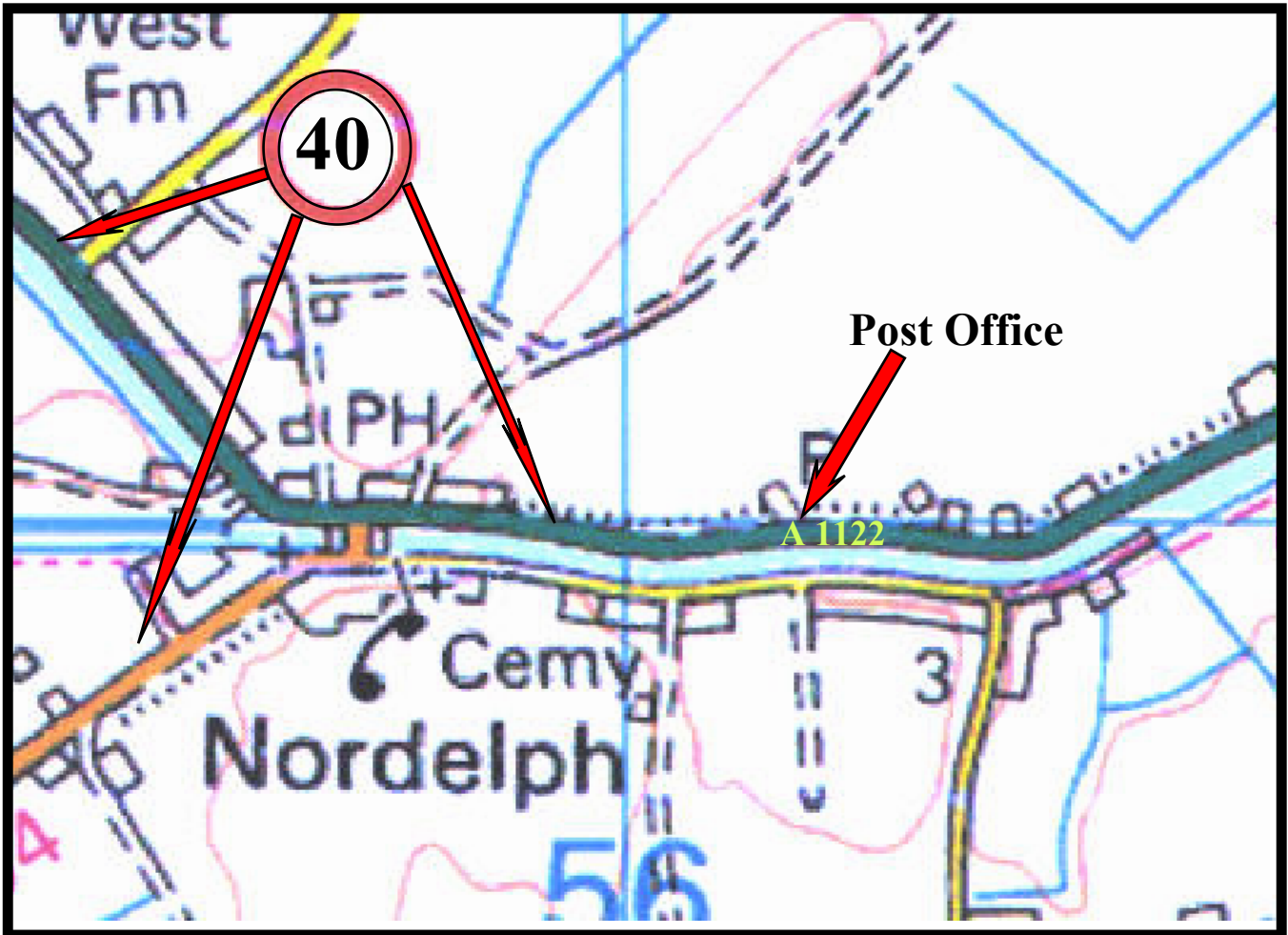
Entry into High Street
From Silt Road



Birchfield Road

AREA ②

FROM CORONATION AVENUE TO THE BRIDGE & THE WHOLE OF A 1122 WITHIN THE VILLAGE BOUNDRY



Existing 40 mph signs are located at the junction of Coronation Avenue and Silt Road (B1094), North of Barroway Road on the A1122 and approximately 200 yards from the bridge towards Downham Market also on the A1122. The areas outside these signs on both these roads are at the national speed limit of 60 mph. The only pathway existing within the village suitable for the pedestrian is on one side only from Coronation Avenue - over the bridge turning left towards Wisbech and terminating at Barroway Road. The bridge itself does have a pathway on both sides for its short distance; this does continue for a short distance towards the old bridge foundation slab.

The following hazards are discussed in conjunction with supporting photographs, starting at the Wisbech end of the A1122, approaching Nordelph at the junction of Barroway Road.



Although the driver on the LHS will, at this point, see the Nordelph sign and the speed limit sign (from 60 mph to 40 mph), heavy vehicles may not be able to reduce speed adequately for pedestrians crossing. This is the only dropped kerb provided on this new pathway. A view of this is shown on the next page clearly indicating how disconcerting it is for the pedestrians who wish to cross at this point. Older villagers would just not attempt it. There is **no** 'buffer zone' between the village speed limit and the national speed limit at this point.



This photograph is taken on Barroway Road, looking at the junction of the A1122. The pathway to the village is on the other side of the A1122. The path on the right terminates just around the corner with a dropped kerb for pedestrian crossing.

There are fifteen houses requiring access at this point, several of which have been newly erected. In consequence, there will inevitably be an increase of the younger age group within this area.



This photograph shows the dropped kerb and the national speed limit / speed limit sign. Well Creek is located beyond the bank. This new pathway was cut into the bank in an attempt to give pedestrians safer access to the village - Sadly, this did not resolve this issue. However, a 30mph speed limit with a 40mph buffer zone extending towards Wisbech would go a long way towards introducing a more acceptable safety standard. The following photograph clearly shows the problem.



The cars seen in the distance are entering the village from Wisbech. The pathway is clearly shown on the **opposite side** from the houses, with Well Creek beyond the bank.

The houses are located much lower than the road. It can be seen that the road itself forms the boundary. It would be foolhardy to stand on the edge of the roadside waiting for the traffic to pass before crossing over to the pathway. Older people find this road too fast to even attempt to cross over to the pedestrian pathway, and to manoeuvre a mobility vehicle for the disabled would be utterly impossible with traffic moving at 40 mph and no dropped kerb. The elderly are completely hemmed in.



This photograph is taken from the pathway looking towards the village. With the blind corner, it is little wonder that the older residence find their lives restricted with fast moving traffic suddenly appearing.

Imagine a HGV traveling at 40 mph, carrying steel rods, heading towards Downham Market - the road slightly wet - as he turns the bend he is confronted with the following



..... A school bus slowly emerging from Silt Road at an angle to avoid bottoming on the humped back bridge, onto a road where the speed limit is at 40 mph..... If they met that HGV coming around the blind bend - the bus full with school children - could the HGV stop in time? We must ensure that tragic accidents such as this are completely eliminated from happening within our village.



There are other slow moving vehicles which can pose a problem at this junction. Care has to be taken to avoid bottoming on the humped-back bridge - this, in conjunction with the sharp turn can cause vehicles to shed their loads.

Our village is in an agricultural environment - we are used to dealing with slow moving vehicles but unfortunately its the through traffic which creates most of the village traffic problems, and we have the scars to prove it



I feel sure that the visual scenes shown so far will give ample reasons for speed reductions within our village. This however does not cover all aspects of speed reduction. Our Post Office is located half a mile from the bridge along the A1122 towards Downham Market. This is shown on the map. We have no suitable pathway to our post office and the speed limit of the village does not as yet extend to this point. 60mph traffic is far too dangerous for pedestrians walking along the side of the road.....



This photograph shows the national speed limit sign as traffic heads towards Downham Market. The bungalow in the distance is Nordelph Post Office. Nordelph boundary is some 200 yds past the Post Office.

There is **no** safe access to Nordelph Post Office for the pedestrian. It would be impossible to walk on the RHS of the road due to the high bank. It would be more appropriate for a 30mph speed limit be introduced up to and including the Post Office with a 40mph buffer zone beyond this point and extending to the village boundary.



Backtracking to Nordelph bridge and entering Silt Road, but looking back towards the bridge, the existing 40mph speed limit is located just prior to coronation avenue. Many children reside in this avenue and are frequently seen playing on Silt Road (B1094). They come out of the avenue, as children do, without a care in the world, completely oblivious to their environment. If we move further up Silt Road with the camera still pointing towards the village but in the existing 60mph unrestricted zone, it is quite obvious that motorists tend to think that 60mph means just that.....



..... A straight approach to Nordelph. No pathways, vehicles speeding in both directions. Walking along this road at peak times with high sided vehicles passing in opposite directions can be an absolute nightmare. The verges are tidy at this point but become useless even to stand on as we move further away from the village towards Neatmoor. Road safety along Silt Road up to Neatmoor is covered under section **(C)**.

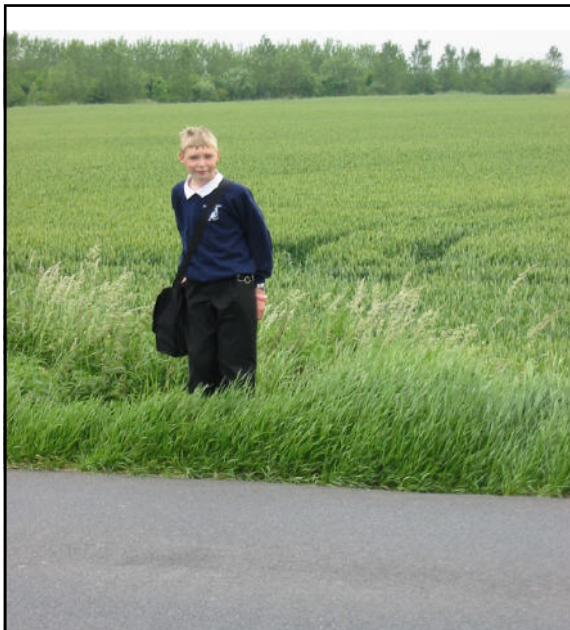
As with all main village routes, it is considered that the 40mph speed limit should be changed to 30mph and moved further out of the village with a lead - in speed limit of 40mph.

SILT ROAD (B1094), FROM CORONATION AVENUE TO NEATMOOR

Imposing a speed limit throughout the length of the village along Silt Road (B1094) is probably the most contentious part of this report, particularly as the periphery of the village at Neatmoor is less dense in population. Some drivers may consider these long lengths of straight road ideal for speeding, but couple this with the deceiving slow bends, many have found themselves ditched in the storm drains that exist close to Neatmoor, some have hit telephone poles and, in the case of the author, not all of them stop when they seriously injure a cyclist.



This road poses many problems for those who have to endure speeding traffic whilst cycling to the village. Many children use this road during the holidays and at weekends to cycle to Lotts Bridge and back. Horse riders tend to use it on Sunday morning when the traffic is low. For many, this road has become a no-go area because of the speeding traffic - a restriction which the village must not accept - yet another example of the fragmentation of village life. This is a text book example on what central government is trying to avoid. Our village must be allowed to breathe - not be herded like cattle into a 'safe zone'. We need to reverse the trend from motorists demands for speed to an environmentally safe community for the whole village.



At Neatmoor, a youngster waiting for the morning school bus, standing on a slab. If he moves back from the road to avoid two high sided vehicles passing he would drop four feet across stinging nettles into the field behind him



Again, at Neatmoor, a lady of eighty waiting for a bus in the same spot. Note the open country. When high winds are blowing the traffic problem with high sided vehicles becomes a significantly higher risk.

The traffic flow on this road varies from a trickle to a continuous flow at peak. It is noted from living on this road that when Welney Wash is flooded and the traffic is diverted along Silt Road - Nordelph - Downham Market (this puts an extra ten miles on their journey) - drivers probably say a few choice words and speed along Silt Road to try and make up the difference.

The village needs to have a speed limit no greater than 30mph, the sign being moved from Coronation Avenue to Thorpe Terrace and a long buffer zone of 40mph starting at Squires Drove. It would improve the safety of youngsters using this road if the 40mph speed limit started at Lotts Bridge.

Summary.....

PART ONE

VILLAGE SPEED LIMITS

SUMMARY

AREA (A): (i) Reduce the speed limit in the High Street and Birchfield cul-de-sac from 30mph to 20mph.

AREA (B): (i) Wisbech end - Move the speed limit sign further away from the pedestrian crossing to a suitable point towards Wisbech.
 (ii) Wisbech end - Reduce the speed limit into the village from 40mph to 30mph.
 (iii) Wisbech end - Create a 40mph buffer zone.
 (iv) Downham Market end - Move the speed limit sign to encompass the Post Office within the village speed limit.
 (v) Downham Market end - Reduce the speed limit into the village from 40mph to 30mph.
 (vi) Downham Market end - Create a 40mph buffer zone.

AREA (C): (i) Silt Road - Move the speed limit sign from Coronation Avenue to Thorpe Terrace.
 (ii) Silt Road - Reduce the speed limit into the village from 40mph to 30mph.
 (iii) Silt Road - Create a 40mph zone from Squires Drove to the new 30mph sign located at the new position of Thorpe Terrace. It would be a safer undertaking if the whole of Silt Road from Thorpe Terrace was reduced to a 40mph zone - perhaps then, the parents of our children in the village would feel more relaxed about letting their children cycle safely within the countryside.

Note one: The changes indicated above are those issued by central government to meet their policies on Road Safety, The Countryside, our heritage and social Justice.

Note two: Food for thought :The TV advert: Depicting a child having been knocked Down, and the words spoken “ Hit me at 40mph and there is an 80% chance that I will die ... Hit me at 30mph and there is an 80% chance that I will live.” There is no further need to elaborate ... These words say it all.

Note three: Statistics issued by central government for 2004 indicate that there were 34,351 persons killed and seriously injured on our roads, of these, 3,221 Were fatal. That is equal to the inhabitants of over SIX villages the size of Nordelph being annihilated on a yearly basis.

<p>KEEP OUR VILLAGE SAFE</p> <p>REDUCE SPEED AND SAVE LIVES</p>
