

Reduction of speed limit on Tutttles Lane, Wymondham

Wymondham is a small town with a growing population. There has been a large amount of new housing in recent years which has lead to an increase in traffic. Wymondham is home to three primary schools and two secondary schools, all of which have expanded in recent years to accommodate the growing population. Alongside the provision of new housing estates, the infrastructure in and around Wymondham needs to change and adapt to the changing needs of the population.

One road in particular, Tutttles Lane (B1135) is of particular concern. For a lot of people, it is used as a ring road to pass between Dereham and access the A1. But for many residents it is the main road used to access Wymondham High School, Robert Kett Primary and Ashleigh Primary. It is currently split into two parts, Tutttles Lane West and Tutttles Lane East. Tutttles Lane East became a 30mph speed limit for part of the road after the Whispering Oaks housing estate was built, however the remainder of the road is 40mph.

This is a residential road and has seen an increase in traffic over recent years due to the increasing population of Wymondham. Many residents have raised concerns about the speed limit along Tutttles Lane. These concerns have previously been dismissed by a highways officer without a full consultation. Dept of Transport guidance states "Traffic authorities are asked to: keep their speed limits under review with changing circumstances". We believe that the changing circumstances as detailed below warrants a full investigation into lowering the speed limit to 30mph. We ask Norfolk County Council to carry out a consultation into the reduction of the speed limit along the entirety of Tutttles Lane (B1135) to 30mph.

Increase- in housing

There has been a significant increase in the number of houses in Wymondham, and with that comes an increase in the number of cars. We believe that a 40mph speed limit is not appropriate for the volume of traffic that now drives along Tutttles Lane. The volume of traffic will continue to increase as new houses are continually being built in the Wymondham area. Norwich Common and Tutttles Lane East have already been reduced from 40 mph to 30 mph because of the increased development in north Wymondham. The same reduction needs to occur along the entirety of Tutttles Lane.

Changes to school structures

All three primary schools (Ashleigh, Robert Kett and Browick) have changed structure in recent years and have expanded. Many parents dropping off pupils at Robert Kett use Hewitts Lane and are finding it increasingly difficult to exit onto Tutttles Lane, particularly during peak time. We believe a 30mph speed limit would make the junction of Hewitts Lane and Tutttles Lane far safer. The Wymondham High school buses (provided by Semmence) also use this junction and they have informed us "getting into and out of Hewitts Lane would be easier if the traffic was moving slower". Many parents feel the 40mph limit makes it unsafe to cycle or walk to school; therefore a 30mph limit may result in an increase in the number of families walking to school.

Access to "Paws to Play" field

A new dog exercise field has opened off Tutttles Lane, with access via a small track near the Melton Road junction. As a result there has been an increase in the number of cars driving down the track and also the number of dog walkers crossing the road. Many users have reported that it is increasingly difficult to cross the road safely.

Bus routes

A number of bus routes travel along Tuttles Lane. We have spoken to one of the companies, Konectbus, and their network Manager informed us: "I have had personal experience of driving buses on our number 6 and 9 routes that service Tutti es Lane and turning out of the side roads, Lime Tree Avenue and Melton Road can both be awkward on Tuttles Lane approach. If the speed of the main road traffic is less it does tend to give time to pull out where a gap in the traffic allows. As a bus operator any reduction in speed can affect our timetables but in the case of Tutti es Lane reducing the speed limit to 30mph would not give us any concerns."

Vehicle use

A number of "low loaders" and agricultural machinery use Tuttles Lane. Residents have told us that they feel vulnerable walking or cycling along the road when these vehicles pass by at 40mph.

Increase to travel time

We have calculated that a speed limit reduction would result in an increase of travelling time of less than 50 seconds.

National guidance on speed limits

We are aware that drivers have expectations about speed limits based on several factors, one of the biggest being street lighting. Tuttles Lane is a residential road with regular street lighting, and many turnings off the main carriageway. All these are factors suggestive of a 30mph limit, and a 40mph limit is actually misleading.

In 2013 the Department of Transport issued guidance on the setting of speed limits

(https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/63975/circular-01-2013.pdf)

Department of Transport guidance is:

"It should be assumed that, unless an order has been made and the road is signed

to the contrary, a 30 mph speed limit applies where there are three or more lamps throwing light on the carriageway and placed not more than 183 metres apart (Older legislation specifies 200 yards; later legislation specifies 183 metres. These are equivalent measures)."

The street lights along Tuttles Lane are less than 183 m distance apart. We would argue that based on street lights, the speed for Tuttles Lane should be 30mph and that 40mph actually goes against driver expectations.

Department of Transport guidance for 40mph roads is:

"Roads suitable for 40 mph are generally higher-quality suburban roads or those on the outskirts of urban areas where there is little development. They should have good width and layout, parking and waiting restrictions in operation, and buildings set back from the road. These roads should, wherever possible, cater for the needs of non-motorised road users through segregation of road space, and have adequate footways and crossing places. Alternatively, traffic authorities should consider whether there are convenient alternative routes available."

We argue that Tuttles Lane is not a road with "little development" as it has houses on both sides of the road, at varying points, plus roads/junctions along it.

We believe that the criteria overwhelmingly shows that Tuttles Lane should be 30mph along the entirety of the road, and that a 40mph limit can no longer be justified.

Accidents

A freedom of information request made to Norfolk Police in March 2019 detailed nine road traffic collisions on Tuttles Lane West in the last five years. Four of these involved personal injury, two of which were serious. Since we obtained the data in March 2019 we have been made aware of at least two other collisions which required police attendance. We believe that, when comparing year on year, it is likely that the data will show an increase in the number of collisions due to the increase in the volume of traffic travelling at a speed which is not appropriate for the surroundings.

We are also aware of a number of incidents that have occurred which were not reported to the police but have involved damage to vehicles. However, these accidents have still involved insurance claims and damage to cars, which we feel is an alarming number of accidents for what is only a few kilometres of road.

Police

The police are supportive of speed reduction measures and are assisting the setting up of a community speedwatch group. They have also carried out more speeding checks along the road as a result of complaints from residents about the speed of traffic.

Support from residents

There are many local people in Wymondham who support the lowering of the speed limit. It was shared online (<https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/make-tuttles-lane-30mph>) and in local shops and received over 180 signatures. A number of signatories also left comments in support (see below). We believe that this shows that there would be support from the local community in adhering to a new 30mph speed limit.

"I live on Tuttles Lane and believe this would have a positive impact to improve safety. By reducing the limit hopefully the chance of accidents occurring could be reduced but should an accident occur if speeds are lower hopefully there will be less chance of serious injury or loss of life. For walkers the proximity of vehicles doing 40mph only a few feet from you can feel intimidating and by reducing the speed of vehicles it would improve the area from a quality of life perspective for pedestrians."

"We live on Tuttles Lane West and have 3 children and a dog. Therefore we regularly walk along the road and the noise is deafening! We also struggle to have our windows open at the front of the house! Not to mention the difficulty exiting the driveway and the worry I have for my children walking to school. This would be a great move forward for the road, the residents and the overall safety of everyone."

"The road is now dangerous, more especially with the recent increase in the number of wide "Fast Tractors" and trailers now frequently using the road."

"As a resident of Tuttles Lane I have experienced numerous 'near misses' when exiting our driveway due to the speed of traffic. It is becoming increasingly dangerous and drivers are both aggressive and abusive. As a keen cyclist it is noticeable that Tutt/es Lane is far too dangerous to use for cycling."

"I find getting out of Barnham Broom Road on the corner with Tutt/es Lane dangerous particularly in the mornings. A friend was knocked off their bike turning right by a van going too fast and not seeing them in time due to the corner."

"We live off Mil/way and it is difficult to pull out in to Tutt/es Lane with people going 40+ and you can't see that far down since Tutt/es Lane isn't straight. Our son goes to a childminder who lives on Tutt/es Lane as well, same problem coming out of her drive."

"I grew up on Tutttles Lane West and lived there for 20 years (moving away in 2015). It's well known that users of the road drive well above 40mph limit on a daily basis and the authorities have done nothing for years. It is, quite frankly, a miracle that more people have not been killed. The current situation is downright dangerous for those who live on Tutt/es Lane, especially young families with children."

"Living near the corner of Barnham Broom Rd it is not safe to exit my driveway. I constantly hear drivers with their "foot on the gas". This is a residential area, have some respect for those that live here!"

Summary

All the above evidence suggests that a 30 mph limit is now appropriate for the entire length of Tutttles Lane and we request that Norfolk County Council carry out a full consultation before implementing the speed reduction.

Clare Suter

Dr Elizabeth Orton