

Introduction

1. On behalf of its residents, Great Melton Parish Council (GMPC) requests that the national speed limit currently applicable to all roads within the village of Great Melton, is reduced, as set out in the map at Annex A. The speed limit reduction is proposed in order to:
 - a. reduce the legal speed of through-traffic, which currently may legitimately travel in accordance with the national speed limit for single carriageway roads (60mph), to a limit which is commensurate with the level of risk associated with roads in Great Melton, and by doing so;
 - b. reduce the physical risk to residents in a rural setting where there are no paths, trods or pavements, and road conditions are poor;
 - c. reduce the risk of road traffic accidents; and
 - d. ensure compliance with the Norfolk Speed Management Strategy.
2. During consideration of the basis for the presentation of this proposal, which included a survey of the views of the residents and users of the amenities of Great Melton (with particular reference to the patrons of three local liveryies), support for GMPC has been expressed by Cllr Margaret Dewsbury (Norfolk County Councillor for Hingham Division), Cllr David Bills (Norfolk County Councillor for Humbleyard Division) and Mr Adam Mayo (Highway Engineer South (S2), Norfolk County Council), who has personally witnessed the circumstances which have culminated in the submission of this proposal.
3. GMPC shall be grateful if Norfolk County Council (NCC) would consider this request as a matter of priority. (Only recently (October 2022) a serious accident occurred which resulted in two individuals requiring hospital treatment.)
4. Members of GMPC are available to meet NCC representatives in order to discuss this proposal and facilitate a site visit.

Recommendation

5. The speed limit within the village of Great Melton should be reduced from the national speed limit, as applicable to single carriageway roads, as per the map attached at Annex A.

Background - The Case for Change

6. Statistics published by the Department for Transport (DfT) in 2022, indicate that rural roads are more dangerous than urban roads or motorways, accounting for 57% of fatalities despite only accommodating 43% of traffic movements.

7. Fatalities on rural roads are ten fold greater than on motorways and motorcyclists and cyclists are two to three times more likely to be fatally injured on a rural road than on an urban road.¹
8. Draft guidance published by the DfT in 2012 for public consultation, indicated that a reduction in speed limit should be considered where there is substantial development or a considerable number of horse-riders, pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists. The situation in Great Melton satisfies the latter criteria.
9. The majority of traffic flowing through Great Melton is not residential traffic. A road built at the time of the '**Inclosure Act**' of 1832 as a local distributor road for village residents has, over the past twenty years, become an arterial feeder road. As a result the village suffers from a distinct 'rush hour' twice daily.
10. **Great Melton provides a popular and well used route for walkers, runners and cyclists from within the village and further afield. The village is also the location for three liverys and the roads are used by many riders to exercise horses.** The roads are also regularly used by the village farming community to move heavy (HGV class) and wide farming equipment to and from fields.
11. **Over the past 10 years there has been and continues to be significant growth in residential and other properties in the surrounding towns and villages, particularly in neighbouring Hethersett and Little Melton, as well as Wymondham.** As a direct result, Great Melton has seen a significant growth in new traffic, which finds it easier to use Great Melton as a cut-through, rather than use the surrounding B roads which, by classification, are designed to be used by domestic and other traffic. **By virtue of their subsidiary classification the roads within Great Melton are subject to the national speed limit and, therefore, offer traffic from outside the village an alternative, speedier route along poorly maintained and narrow roads at the expense of the safety of parish residents.**
12. GMPC has recently obtained residents' views on speed limits within Great Melton. **100% of respondents supported the case for a reduction in speed.** Worryingly, it is clear from responses that some **residents have ceased walking in the road and/or cycling, owing to concerns for their safety.** The current national speed limit of 60mph is, therefore, negatively impacting the wellbeing of residents.
13. **Having the national speed limit apply in a village such as Great Melton is at odds with Government Policy²** which states: '131) Fear of traffic can

¹ <https://www.brake.org.uk/get-involved/take-action/mybrake/knowledge-centre/road-design/rural-roads>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/setting-local-speed-limits/setting-local-speed-limits>

affect people's quality of life in villages and it is self-evident that villages should have comparable speed limits to similar roads in urban areas. **It is therefore government policy that a 30 mph speed limit should be the norm through villages.'** The Leader of South Norfolk District Council was quoted in the South Norfolk house magazine as saying "local roads are for local people" and that inconvenience should be kept to an absolute minimum.

14. **GMPC also views the current national speed limit as being non-compliant with the Norfolk Speed Management Strategy** of NCC, as the roads are clearly being used as through-routes, whereas the priority should be to protect the local community and local access. **The speed limit is also higher than in similar village locations, such as X and Y (please see photos at Annex B).**
15. Whilst there has been no loss of life due to accidents, **GMPC is of the view that it is only a matter of time before a serious accident occurs and is concerned that it should take pre-emptive action.** In October 2022 a farm tractor and car collided on a straight section of road, resulting in both parties needing hospital treatment for broken bones. Whilst GMPC believes that the car was travelling in compliance with the current national speed limit, in doing so it was quite evidently travelling too fast for the nature of the road and without due consideration for the fact that farming equipment regularly crosses roads or emerges from fields at low speed.
16. There have been many instances where the current speed limit, coupled with the road type has resulted in lives being placed at risk. The following are examples:
 - a. Two vehicles passing each other in opposite directions within the national speed limit caused a resident to fall and sustain significant bruising, due to the speed, close proximity of one of the vehicles and resulting draught which resulted in a loss of balance.
 - b. Residents on foot are regularly forced onto unsuitable verges to avoid collisions with traffic. Indeed, vehicles seem to assume they have a right of way, noting the verges are often overgrown and, even when cut, do not provide a safe place to retreat from oncoming traffic.
 - c. Residents report their experience of the risks associated with their emergence from private driveways, with regular near misses due to the oncoming speed of vehicles (again within the speed limit, but travelling too fast for the nature of the road and type of residential area).
17. **The current national speed limit has stopped residents from walking along their village roads.** Residents do not allow children to walk or cycle to their local school in Hethersett. Residents have simply stopped walking in the village due to the speed of traffic. It leaves no alternative other than to use

cars for short journeys, which is against Government policy aimed at encouraging less use of cars and greater use of cycling and walking.

18. The **Local Transport Plan 4 Strategy 2021-2036 (LTP4)** published by NCC includes **Objective 4: 'Enhancing Norfolk's Quality of Life'**, which refers to the desire to improve the health of residents by improving air quality and encouraging active travel options to improve health and fitness. GMPC supports this desire, but the facilitation of inappropriate driving practices, discourages the adoption of more active travel choices, and does not benefit air quality.
19. The **'Government Cycling and Walking Policy for England July 2020'** emphasises the Government's wish to see a step-change in walking and cycling in the coming years. Sharing roads unsuited to the national speed limit curtails such ideas for many residents of Great Melton, especially given an ageing population, whose physical and mental wellbeing is best served by regular healthy exercise.
20. GMPC notes that the UK population aged 65 and over, increased by 37% in rural areas and just 17% in urban areas between 2001 and 2015. This sector of society will increasingly be encouraged to consider the acquisition of e-bikes for their environmental and health benefits; unsafe roads will not encourage their adoption. Contrary to the perception of the Great Melton community, **LTP4, Objective 6: 'Improving Transport Safety'** states that the aim is to improve the safety of the transport network in order to **reduce casualties and help people feel safe when using any mode of transport**.
21. The status quo regarding the concern residents and users of the amenities of Great Melton have for their safety as pedestrians, cyclists or horse-riders is unsustainable and may be considered discriminatory. The **'Government Cycling and Walking Policy for England July 2020'** states that **'increasing cycling and walking can help improve air quality, combat climate change, improve health and wellbeing, address inequalities and tackle congestion on our roads. This policy aims to create connected, healthier and more sustainable communities.'** The community of Great Melton shares this vision and ambition; however, the retention of unsustainable and unsafe speed limits significantly impairs the likely achievement of these objectives within this community.
22. GMPC notes that NCC is developing **'Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs)'**. GMPC believes that these should be considered for all areas of development growth, the impact of which is particularly notable in Great Melton, as a consequence of the neighbouring developments in Hethersett, Little Melton and Wymondham.
23. At the September 2022 meeting of Norfolk Road Safety, Cllr Peter Markham of GMPC raised the issue of speed limits on rural roads through villages with no traffic calming measures (and, therefore, no ability to monitor traffic speed against a rational speed limit). **Councillor Martin Wilby** - until January 2023,

NCC Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Infrastructure - **assured the meeting that NCC was aware of the speed problem, that NCC was keen to address this issue and that Great Melton was due for assessment of traffic safety measures in 2023.**

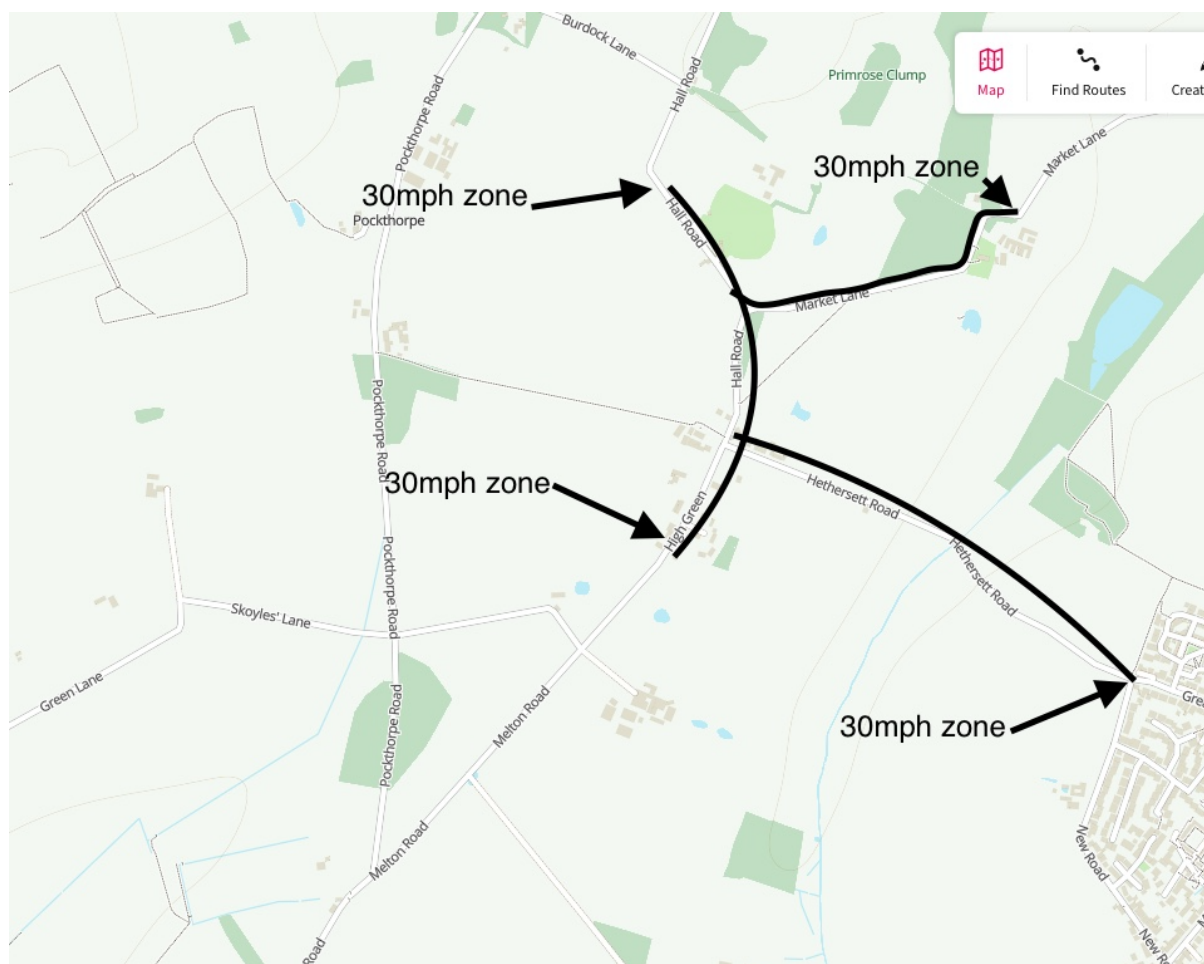
Next Steps

24. Great Melton Parish Council shall be grateful for the favourable consideration of Norfolk County Council for this request. We look forward to the result of your deliberations.

25. Copies of this paper have been sent to **XXXXXX**

Annex A

Map showing Recommended Speed Limits



Annex B

DN: List to be inserted