

The Swafield to Knapton B1145 Road Safety Initiative

Framework Document

Swafield & Bradfield Parish Council Knapton Parish Council

Overview

Following the tragic death of Alfie Brown on 11th of August as he cycled home on the B1145 after visiting his friends in Knapton, this Framework Document reflects the aspirations of the parishes of both Swafield and Knapton to reduce the speed limit on the B1145 between the two villages for the safety and well-being of our residents and road users.

Our Aim

- to avoid further loss of life**
- to improve road safety for tourists, locals, walkers, cyclists, domestic and commercial vehicles using the B1145 between Swafield and Knapton
- to increase the public's confidence to be able to walk, cycle, ride or drive safely on our roads
- to safely manage the increased - and increasing - volume of fast-moving traffic using this route
- to address the question of vehicle speed on the B1145 main road that serves our parishes by reducing the speed limit
- to mitigate the risk of road accidents involving vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians

Introduction

Starting its journey some 52 miles away in Kings Lynn, the B1145 is a main route for traffic from Norwich to the North Norfolk Coast. It passes through Norfolk's second largest built up area, North Walsham, before winding its way through the small village of Swafield and then gradually narrowing with Swafield Parish on one side and Knapton Parish on the other as it passes through Knapton Green and Knapton before finally reaching Mundesley.

B1145 Road Safety Initiative

The result is significant volumes of traffic using this narrow winding road between Swafield and Knapton.

The parishes of Swafield & Knapton recently carried out a joint SAM2 traffic monitoring exercise to measure traffic levels along this stretch of highway to access the coast during February and March of last year and Trunch contributed aggregated monthly figures for the same period.

The SAM2 results clearly showed the volume of cars travelling in one direction using this section of the B1145 to be 60,000 and 45,000 respectively. This would suggest that the total volume of vehicles during these periods was around 120,000 and 90,000 respectively, and this during a time of year which is obviously not an acknowledged holiday period.

A recent survey substantiated resident's concerns that these figures will substantially increase over the summer months.

The new housing developments in and around Norwich, particularly those north of the city stretching out to North Walsham and in North Walsham itself, will further naturally increase the number of vehicles using this road as residents and the associated trade vehicles make their way towards the coast.

As well as the general increase in holidaymaker's cars and caravans visiting our beautiful area, we have also seen many more walkers and cyclists now using this narrow twisty road. People can often be seen walking on the left-hand side of the carriageway thereby not face on-coming traffic, contrary to the Country Code, which makes them less aware of vehicles approaching from behind and increasing the risk of accidents with drivers that do not see them until the last minute as they round a bend, a risk which is increased with larger vehicles and higher travelling speeds, especially after dark.

These problems are exacerbated by the roadside verges and hedges that have grown and extended onto the road due to them seldom being cut, making it even more difficult for drivers to see oncoming traffic and to allow room for two vehicles to pass safely.

"Officers have also been asked to investigate potential pilot areas for rural zonal 40mph speed limits, and it is to be hoped that these will in future be able to make our County even more welcoming for residents and visitors to explore by walking and cycling as well as using their cars. "

David Harrison

*Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport Development and Waste
Norfolk Speed Management Strategy*

Proposal Considerations

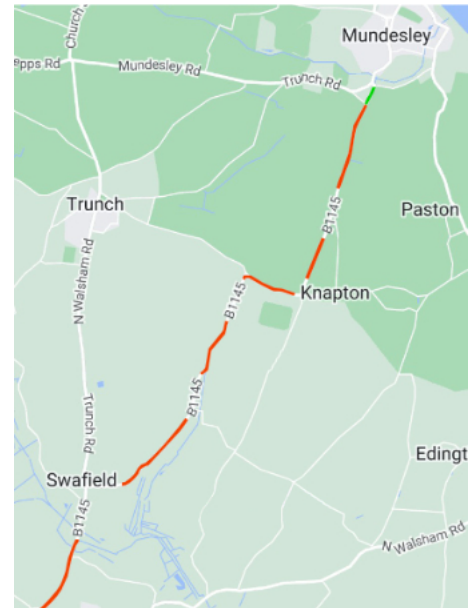
Tourism

Over the last 4 years tourism numbers on the North Norfolk coast have significantly increased year on year as the warmer climate and increased travel costs encourage more people to holiday locally. More people are using campervans and caravans and opting for a "staycation" rather than going overseas.

This area of income is vital to the North Norfolk economy. The total Tourism value for North Norfolk in 2020 was £237,339,241.00. Day trips were 4,115,000 and overnight trips 285,600, of which, 968,000 were coastal visits. ([Economic impact of tourism 2020](#))

With increased tourism and a warmer climate comes additional road usage:

- increased public transport links to cater for Holiday makers
- increased number of delivery lorries servicing the shops and sites trying to cater for the increased number of people
- increased walkers and cyclists using the roads to explore



B1145 Road Safety Initiative

We believe the problem is that many of the roads in North Norfolk are not able to safely support such an increase in road usage at the existing speed limits due to their (aging) construction, narrow winding carriageways and encroaching verges, which leads onto the issue of road safety.

RTAs

In Swafield alone there have been **fourteen** recorded accidents between May 2019 and September 2023, plus at least one requiring the Air Ambulance for an accident that took place on a blind bend in Knapton Green. Please see the addendum at the end of this document for details.

“More deaths occur on rural roads than on urban ones. In 2019, there were 931 fatal accidents on rural roads compared to 627 on urban roads”

ROSPA – Road Safety Factsheet, March 2021

Quality of Life and Well-Being

Schemes are being set up to enable people of all ages and abilities to be able to cycle and walk round the Country safely and Norfolk County Council is in the process of developing a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) for Norfolk to allow this.

Fear of traffic can affect people’s quality of life in villages...

Moving traffic, particular at higher speeds, gives rise to severance and affects the quality of life in communities. A balance must be struck between the needs of the community and the needs of motorists, particularly where roads are the main traffic routes in the County.

NCC Norfolk Speed Management Strategy

Environment

We are in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which we need to maintain and protect. Our residents are concerned about the environmental issues from noise pollution from heavy vehicles, air pollution from emissions from cars, vans, buses and HGVs etc. along with damage to both eco and biodiversity locations.

The emissions of both carbon dioxide and nitrogen oxide increase with the speed of traffic along with noise and vibration. At lower speeds, drivers are less likely to vigorously accelerate and if vehicles are more constant in their speed, pollutants such as particulates are lowered.

NCC Norfolk Speed Management Strategy (March 2014)

Central Government and Local authorities are looking to lower their carbon footprint so it’s important to consider the benefits of reduced speed limits throughout the area. **Imperial College London**'s research into the impact of 20mph speed limits suggests *“they have no net negative impact on exhaust emissions”* whilst at the same time, the results indicated *“clear benefits to driving style and associated particulate emissions”*.

North Norfolk District Council forecasts that by 2040 the population of North Walsham will increase by approximately 5000. (NNDC Local Plan 2016-2036). Many of these new residents and tourists will add to the already heavy use of the route through Swafield to Mundesley on the B1145 and through Trunch to head to the Coast, as they are the most direct routes from North Walsham. Yet there appear to be no plans to improve or expand the existing road infrastructure in the surrounding areas to cope with this increase.

Efficient transport systems are essential to the economy and vibrancy of Norfolk. Road traffic is essential to move people and goods for business, pleasure and work. The economic health of the county relies on the reliability and effectiveness of the road network, and correct speed management helps to address this.

Effective speed management is part of creating a safe road environment and helps to ensure the road is suited to the functions it supports. It can enhance an area, making residential areas more accessible to the vulnerable road user and more suited to walking and cycling.

NCC Norfolk Speed Management Strategy (March 2014)

B1145 Road Safety Initiative

In June 2019, **Norman Lamb MP** wrote to Tom McCabe at County Hall arguing vociferously on behalf of the Parish Council that this section of the B1145 “*is completely inappropriate for a 60mph speed limit*” and highlighting the problems being caused by increased volumes of traffic due to building developments.

Please read his letter in full at the end of this document.

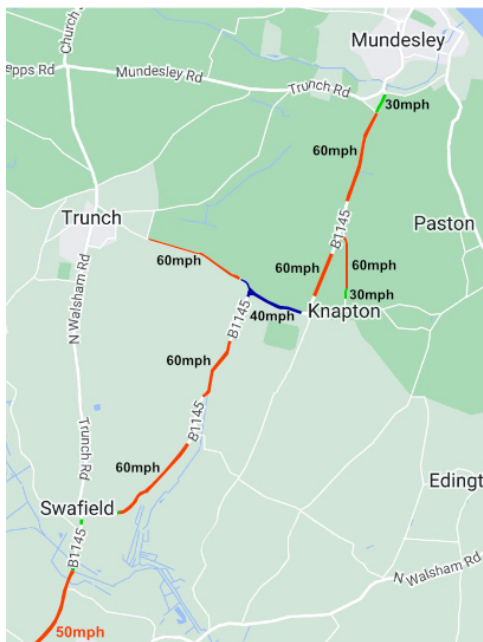
Speed Limit Reductions

“40mph should be considered where there are many bends, junctions or accesses...”

[Setting speed limits.GOV sec 7.2](#)

We are proposing the following change to the speed limit.

- Swafield Village - *unchanged*
from the Swafield Bridge to where The Street meets Knapton Road – current speed limit of 30mph to remain unchanged through the village.
- Swafield to Knapton Green - REDUCED**
from where The Street meets Knapton Road to Knapton Green – current speed limit of 60mph to be reduced to 40mph.
- Knapton Green to Knapton - *unchanged*
current Speed limit of 40mph to remain unchanged
- Knapton to Mundesley - *unchanged*
funded by the Road Safety Community Fund (RSCF), the current 60mph limit is being reduced to 50mph in 2024



B1145 current speed limits



B1145 proposed / agreed speed limits

Fewer Speed Limit changes

This proposed speed limit change is more in keeping with Highways current view that constantly changing speed limits are confusing for drivers because it reduces the number of speed limit changes from four to three all the way from Swafield Bridge to Mundesley.

Current / Agreed Speed limits on B1145

- 30mph through Swafield
- 60mph from Swafield to Knapton Green
- 40mph from Knapton Green to Knapton
- 50mph from Knapton to Mundesley

Speed Limits AFTER Proposed changes

- 30mph through Swafield
- 40mph from Swafield to Knapton Green
- 40 mph from Knapton Green to Knapton
- 50mph from Knapton to Mundesley

The route through the two parishes

Swafield and Bradfield Parish

The tiny village of **Swafield** with its narrow main street is located on one of the primary routes that access the coastal area of North Norfolk with up to 50,000 vehicles passing through the village every month.

Swafield and Bradfield Parish Council feels that in the light of a number of route hazards it must be proactive and take action to manage and maintain the traffic flow and vehicle speeds through the village to enhance road user safety and protect the wellbeing and safety of its small community, who endure noise and pollution on a minute-by-minute basis.

Hazard Example 1

Whilst within the 30mph zone, exiting The Loke onto The Street or the Mundesley Road is extremely dangerous as there is a blind corner which forces drivers to pull out onto oncoming traffic using the bypass from North Walsham to see if it is safe to join the carriageway.

The following two photos were taken standing at the point where the Loke meets the B1145 and they show the lack of visibility when exiting The Loke onto the B1145. A car must edge into the road to see this view.



Hazard Example 2

As vehicles from North Walsham travel towards Mundesley & Trimmingham to access the coastal road, they approach the village at the junction of Mundesley Road and The Street.

Here they must cross the historic Swafield Bridge, a narrow flint bridge which acts as a natural gateway forcing vehicles to slow down and give way to each other. Given that there are no safe areas to pull into, as the picture shows, this is particularly difficult when faced with a large vehicle or HGV.

This structure has been hit by vehicles on numerous occasions over the years, each one causing horrendous and major traffic issues for the surrounding areas and the residents of Swafield, most recently by a speeding vehicle which caused considerable damage to the bridge raising concerns for its safety. The expensive, necessary repairs again causing the inevitable traffic delays for all road users on this busy stretch of road.



*Swafield Bridge looking towards N. Walsham.
Note the narrowness of the bridge*

Road Front Properties

Residents have frequently complained about the speed and pollution along The Street and the noise generated by the large thunderous HGV lorries, buses, caravans, motor homes, delivery and farm vehicles which use this route. A resident’s brick wall has been hit several times, each time requiring expensive repair.

Many of the houses on The Street are directly road facing and there is little distance between the road and their homes. Exiting their homes has become an increasingly dangerous and hazardous exercise which causes grave concern to our older and less abled generation.

Residents are now unable to walk safely along The Street to the local butchers’ shop as there are no footpaths or streetlights.

Several residents have been caught by the wing mirrors of passing vehicles and have been injured.



Bradfield Road

From The Street you can turn left to access Bradfield Road safely. However, exiting the Bradfield Road onto The Street is intimidating and potentially life threatening because the visibility splay is not sufficient to allow safe turning either left or right from Bradfield Road onto The Street.

The oncoming traffic from the Knapton Road heading towards Swafield needs to be kept slow to allow safe egress from the Bradfield Road.



Exiting Bradfield Road onto The Street



View of the junction approaching from N Walsham

In the seven months from February 2022 until the beginning of September, the SAM2 recorded 331,954 vehicles utilising the road infrastructure in Swafield on a one-way journey.

That is over 10, 700 vehicles every week!

Swafield to Knapton Green

The B1145 Knapton Road from Swafield to Knapton is currently a 60mph limit and the road is no longer suitable for this speed as it is generally narrow, albeit within the parameters allowed for white lines, apart from one section just before Swafield. Here, the road narrows to a point just after, and then just before, blind bends and there are **NO** white lines which we believe may be contrary to requirements for a 60mph limit.

- throughout its route to Swafield the road twists and turns constantly with sharp bends, including two 90-degree bends
- when two HGV's or a bus meet, they have difficulty passing one another due to the width of the vehicles, the narrowness of the carriageway and the sharpness of the bends, occasionally resulting in a vehicle having to reverse to create space to pass
- there are no streetlights on this road making it dangerous to walk or cycle on after dark, especially in the shorter hours of daylight in the winter months
- there are many properties interspersed on both sides of the road with entrances close to blind bends, making exiting them risky at best with the increased volume of vehicles, all of which can legally travel at 60mph
- the overgrown verge vegetation adds to the above problems by forcing the available sight line to creep further into the road, mainly high hedges not cut back as they would have been done in the distant past



On the 13th June 2023 a car took out the railings outside the rectory on Knapton Road

Knapton Parish

Currently, as the B1145 enters Knapton Green the speed limit is 40mph and continues to be so until it exits Knapton towards Mundesley. We see no reason to change this.

As it leaves Knapton towards Mundesley, it has become unofficially known as “the Knapton Straight” and vehicles see it as an opportunity to finally put their foot down. As part of an agreement with Highways last year, funded by the Road Safety Community Fund (RSCF), the current 60mph limit is being reduced to 50mph in 2024

Conclusion

Although we are obviously concerned for our local environment and the protection and conservation of North Norfolk village life, our primary concern is for our resident's health and safety having just lost one young life.

The demographics of our area show that the average age in our area is higher than most other areas around the country, many having lived here since the 2nd World War. In all that time the road infrastructure hasn't greatly changed (the Knapton to Mundesley road was straightened in the 1960s, *over half a century ago*) but the sheer volume of vehicles using our roads, their average size, the width of their wheelbases (particularly heavy vehicles) and their weight have all increased substantially over the last 40 years and this combination has created problems that simply weren't so major 70 years ago.

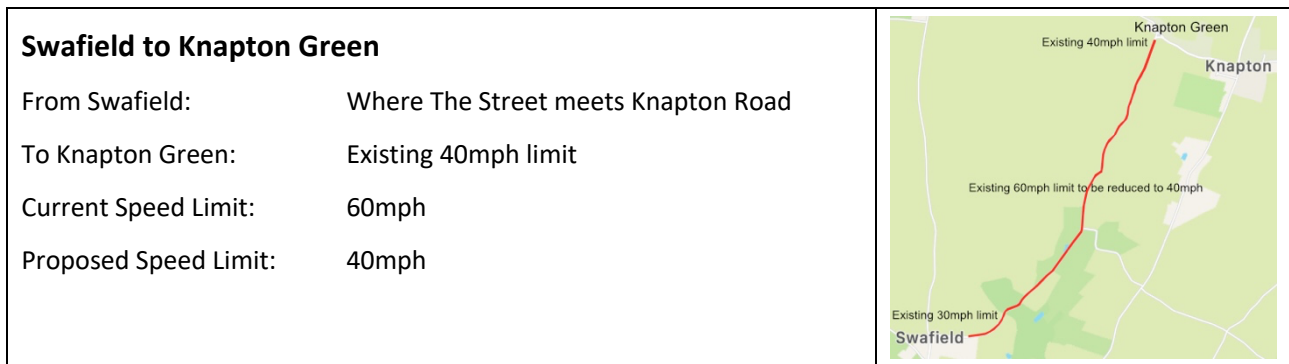
We have attempted to highlight the road issues and route circumstances for this section of the B1145, including;

- the additional width of vehicle wheelbases, particularly those of HGVs and Buses, is problematic on the narrow sections of road causing potholes on a more frequent basis, further increasing the risk to life when travelling at speed, particularly for two wheeled users,
- the additional weight of vehicles is adding to the problems highlighted above,
- 60% of road deaths are on rural roads, ([ROSPA report](#)),
- faster speeds mean higher emissions
a report from Bend, Oregon, suggests that if driver behaviour improves – less braking, smoother travel – fuel economy could increase and lead to less pollution.

Monitoring



Both Swafield and Knapton Parish Councils would like to have the ability to locate their SAM2 cameras where they deem fit along these stretches of road, subject to normal Highways restrictions, so that we can monitor and manage the vehicle speeds along the stretches of road where vehicle speeds are known to exceed the proposed limit.

Parish Map showing the proposed Speed Limit reductions



Addendum

RTA's Swafield from Nov 2019 to 2023

Date	Informant	Location	Description	vehicles	people	Injuries	Evidence
15-May-19	T Payne	Knapton Rd near Straithern Farm	This morning a Fiat Punto was driving down the road, overturned and crashed into a telegraph pole, taking down phone and broadband for any resident or business north of Straithern Farm. I spoke to one of the police officers attending the accident. He said that he has attended several accidents on Knapton Rd and that in his opinion the road should not be at the national 60mph limit as there are too many sharp bends. Reported to Ed Maxfield & Norman Lamb.	One			
25-Aug-19	T Payne & https://www.norfolk.police.uk/26-08-2019/knapton-serious-collision-appeal	Knapton Road on approach to Knapton Green	There were multiple police cars, a helicopter and ambulances in attendance. The road was closed for several hours. Luckily there were no fatalities although there was one very serious injury.			One serious injury	
18-Nov-19	ClIrs T Payne and Charlie Silvester	Knapton Road - Near 30 mph sign	skid near bend car in ditch L plate	One	unknown	unknown	
5th Dec 2019	ClIrr C Silvester	Swafield Bridge over canal	white van went into landrover on bridge driving towards Knapton. Damage to bridge wall. Landrover rolled	two	one in Landrover, two in van	hip and leg injury to van driver	
Nov or Dec 2019	T Payne	The Street, Swafield	vehicle took out front wall of property opposite Swafield Village Hall	Unknown	Unknown	None reported	
Nov-20	T Payne	Knapton Road - near BT post	Car hit pole	One	Unknown	None reported	car overturned
Nov-20	C Silvester	Knapton Road - near BT post	Car hit pole	One	Unknown	None reported	car slipped on road near to post
02.11.22	T Payne	Knapton Rd - Swafield Hall & Straithern Farm	Fire Engine called	Unknown	Unknown	unknown	None
07.11.22	Charlie Silvester	Swafield Bridge over canal	4x4 hit bridge and ended up in ditch	Assumed one 4 x 4	Unknown	unknown	PHOTOS - Charlie
09.06.23	T Payne	Knapton Road	Car overturned on bend after the Rectory	Traffic diverted via Trunch	Unknown	unknown	Unknown
13.06.23	T Payne	Knapton Road	Car took out the Rectory railings	Police had to clear up	Unknown	unknown	
Mid-June	T Payne	Trunch Junction/on Swafield bend	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	unknown	Unknown
11-Aug-23	T Payne/BorisK	The Street, Swafield	Death of child caused by driver of Ford Ranger	One plus bicycle	One death	Death	Car hit cyclist
05-Sep-23	M Short	Knapton Road - Knapton	Road closed by police due to accident	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown



The Rt Hon Norman Lamb MP

Member of Parliament for North Norfolk

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NR1 2DH

*Please quote our reference in all
correspondence with this office*

Our Ref: NL41695-JK

3 June 2019

Dear Tom,

Re: Swafield Highways Issues

I write following a meeting I have had at Swafield Village Hall with members of the parish council and with local County Councillor, Ed Maxfield.

We discussed the following issues.

Parish councillors highlighted the fact that the volume of traffic going through the village has increased significantly over recent years. They are particularly concerned that with new developments planned for Mundesley, North Walsham, Trunch and Trimmingham, the volume of traffic will increase further. Ed Maxfield also pointed out that as the North Norfolk coast becomes more popular, the number of holidaymakers visiting the coast will continue to increase. When the parish council undertook a vehicle count last summer, the number of vehicles peaked at over five hundred and thirty in one.

Swafield has a narrow main road running through the village with no footpath at all. This means that school children and other local residents take their life in their hands as they walked down the main road. You have to walk down this road in order to get into North Walsham and many school children in particular have to use this route.

The parish council has been looking at options for how you could create a path to take pedestrians off the most dangerous pinch points on the road. There are two particular areas which they are concerned about. The worst is the stretch of road approaching the bridge over the canal. The other is close to the Village Hall just before the turn off to Trunch.

We would very much appreciate the opportunity to meet with Steve White on location so that we can discuss possible solutions with him. I should say that he was incredibly helpful in addressing similar concerns in Trunch and I know that they now have a plan for introducing village gates there. We would very much appreciate his engagement with Swafield. Is it possible for us to fix up a mutually convenient date for us all to meet at

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Swafield to look at this issue?

The second issue that we discussed was the speed limit through the village and on the stretch of road between Swafield and Knapton.

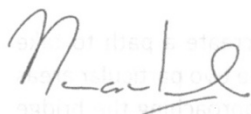
Because of the increasing volume of traffic, local people (and in particular, the parish council) feel that there is a very strong case for a 20mph limit through the village. Further, the stretch of road between Swafield and Knapton currently has the national speed limit – yet the road is completely inappropriate for a 60mph speed. One of the parish councillors, Tim Payne, lives on this stretch of road and mentioned that there had been three serious accidents over the last eighteen months.

The parish council believes very strongly that the speed limit on this stretch of road needs to be reduced. Their view is that, ideally, the speed limit should be 30mph all the way through to Knapton – and presumably then a reduction of the 40mph speed limit on the main road at Knapton down to 30mph so that it was consistent all the way through. Is this something that the County Council is willing to consider? Surely, as traffic volumes increase and therefore as hazards increase, it is appropriate to review speed limits to make sure that they make sense. Members of the parish council mentioned to me that the stretch of road between Thorpe Market and Roughton has a 40mph limit all the way through. It seems completely inconsistent for that road to have a reduced limit and yet this road between Knapton and Swafield should be subject to the national speed limit.

I would very much appreciate the County Council's engagement on these issues. I recognise that resources are constrained but we would like to look at parish partnership opportunities and we feel very strongly that the County Council needs to take a strategic view of the impact of development in this area on villages such as Swafield.

I look forward to your full response as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,



The Rt Hon Norman Lamb MP
Member of Parliament for North Norfolk

Dictated by Norman Lamb