

Speeding in Lapworth and Public Meeting on 21st December

There has been concern expressed in Lapworth about speeding for many years. Just in the last 8 or so years Lapworth Parish Council has been approached by residents about nearly 20 sites around the area – 8 sections of the Old Warwick Road, 4 on Station Lane, 2 on Rising Lane, and one each on Chessetts Wood Road, Grove Lane, Wharf Lane and Mill Lane. All have been discussed at Parish Council Meetings with Warwickshire County and District Councillors present.

What has been achieved over the years?

New speed signs along Rising Lane

Speed gate by The Boot

New speed limit on Wharf Lane

New road markings on OWR

Multiple visits by Warwick road safety experts to look at possibility of speed humps, road crossing points, concealed driveway signage, double yellow lines to restrict parking, etc

Presentation of detailed mobile phone speed data by section of road across the parish

Week-long speed data collection at 2 locations on OWR in 2016/7 and June 2021

One week-long set of data for Station Lane near the school in June 2021 with a second one due shortly in the section without a pavement

Recruitment of a Community Speedwatch Group.

What has not been achieved over the years?

A significant reduction in average speeds. The speed checks in July 2021 can be compared with those of 2016/17 (for an analysis of the June/July data go to the Parish Council website, www.lapworthpc.org.uk). The data show that the mean speed in both directions at the former Timber yards was just over 44 mph and the 85th percentile was 51 mph. The percentage of vehicles exceeding the 40 mph speed limit was 78% and 81% (1917 and 1994 cars per day respectively). Both are higher than in 2016/7, although the fact that traffic volumes were down slightly may account for some of the difference as people tend to drive slower when there is more traffic around. The comparable figures for the OWR by the Village Hall were a mean speed of 35.5 mph westbound (85th percentile 43 mph) and mean speed 38.7 mph eastbound (85th percentile 45.5 mph). The percentage of vehicles exceeding the 30 mph limit was 68% westbound and 82% eastbound (1177 and 1321 per day), both being close to the 2016/17 figures.

The figures for the site on Station Lane between the school and the station were very similar in each direction: mean speed 24 mph, 85th percentile 29 mph, percentage exceeding 30 mph limit 9% northbound and 7 % southbound. The percentage doing over 35 mph were 1.2% (6 vehicles in the week) northbound and 0.4% (2) southbound.

In addition no new traffic calming measures, road crossings, etc. have been introduced. These have all been rejected for a variety of reasons, e.g. inadequate street lighting, insufficient traffic volumes to justify, roads too narrow for pavements, no/very limited resource to enforce further parking restrictions, budgets for the year already fully allocated, etc

Why has more not been achieved?

There have been three main difficulties:

1. **Budgets:** as you will be aware, Local Government is under huge financial pressure and is having to make difficult choices about where it spends its money. Warwickshire County Council has responsibility for road safety, road markings and all signage, whilst the Police have responsibility for enforcement of speeding. Both argue that they can't do everything that they might want to do unless they have greater resources. This could come from increased efficiency and/or from higher taxes.
2. **Evidence:** given the finite nature of resources, decisions have to be made on evidence of

safety and value for money. For example, the more expensive types of signage such as VAS (Vehicle Activated Speed Signs) have to be shown to make a difference if they are to be installed or maintained.. At present Warwickshire has suspended all new installations of VAS signs, and even repair and maintenance of existing ones, until a report has been finalised looking at the evidence for the cost and accident effectiveness of those that have been in place for years. These are therefore very unlikely to be given approval in Lapworth in the near future, unless the evidence is overwhelming.

There is also some scepticism about whether more and more signs make any difference to safety as the drivers most likely to respond to them tend to be the more cautious and law-abiding drivers anyway. There is an argument that more enforcement of existing limits would be more effective than more signs in deterring the real dangerous drivers.

Finally and very importantly, a key piece of evidence for Warwickshire County Council and the Police is the level of accidents at any location. With limited financial and personnel resource there is logic in saying that resources should first be allocated to actual accident hot-spots. In that respect Lapworth is both very fortunate and also at a disadvantage. In 2019 (the last “normal” year before COVID and lockdowns), there were 317 serious injuries and 34 deaths on Warwickshire roads. Meanwhile data suggests that there have been zero road accident deaths in Lapworth and an annual average of 1.4 serious injuries and 1.2 slight injuries in the 5 years from 2014 to 2019. Unsurprisingly therefore Lapworth is not rated as one of the highest priority areas for expenditure in Warwickshire.

3. **Prioritisation:** given the above, it has been and continues to be hard to achieve everything that residents might like. The difficulty is compounded by the fact that the same concerns and worries about speeding are being repeated in virtually every town and village in Warwickshire. Requests for more signs and more enforcement are coming from multiple directions, so the County and the Police need to have criteria for setting priorities and they have to be based on evidence, the number of accidents and injuries being a key one. Indeed the same need for criteria would exist in Lapworth itself should we be fortunate to receive permission and money for more signs. How should we decide where the money should be spent? Of the 20 or so sites where concerns have been expressed, which should get the resource first and why? If there were obvious accident spots, the decision would be easy/easier, but in the absence of them how could effectiveness, value for money and fairness be proven just in Lapworth?

So what happens next?

In spite of the difficulties encountered and described above, the Parish Council does not accept that nothing can or should be done. We continue to push for improvements in signage and in frequency of enforcement. We are also pushing to get the Community Speedwatch Group police training completed soon so that residents can contribute a visible presence in the area.

In the last two months we have accompanied a member of the Warwickshire Traffic Planning and Road Safety department on a guided tour of the parish. She has produced a list of recommendations and is having those costed. Her report is expected soon. The Parish Council has also asked for two more locations and suggestions to be costed following a recent meeting with the Headmistress about parking around the school.

We have also been in touch again with the Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner and he has now agreed to hold a **Public Meeting at Lapworth Village Hall on Tuesday 21st December from 18.00 to 19.00.** We are hoping that a representative from Warwick County Council will be there as well to describe what actions can and will be taken on signs.

The Parish Council hopes that this meeting will be informative. More importantly we hope that the event will lead to further measures on signage and on enforcement.