

Bev Norman (Mrs)
Service Manager
Traffic Management
Somerset County Council

ref: DM819071/BN/TMM

10th November 2017

Dear Bev

Speed Control on A358 Staplegrove Road

Thank you for your reply dated 8th November and please be assured that I fully understand that you have all been subject to budget cuts and redundancies and that funds are generally in short supply. I realise that you cannot easily cover the 6600 km of roads in your care and that currently you have to rely on clear evidence of significant problems or incidents to indicate where some attention is needed. This of course means that you have to act after an event when accident and probably injury has already taken place, which is unfortunate and it is this that the parish council is trying to prevent here.

There are of course still limited funds available and I suppose that some might query whether money spent at this time on downgrading the speed limit for a few hundred metres of road between Norton Fitzwarren and Cross Keys roundabout and slightly fewer metres of road between Silk Mills roundabout and Staplegrove House was the best use of these reduced funds.

Local residents, from their everyday experiences, can identify locations where there is an unsafe situation existing and would very much like to secure some remedial action to prevent a significant event actually happening. This is the position we find ourselves in and I understand that we do need to establish full justification before some action can be taken.

We are principally concerned with the A358 between the Manor Road junction and the Greenway Road mini roundabout junction, traveling eastwards towards Taunton centre. The road here has a left hand bend past the Post Office and the pedestrian crossing and a much sharper pair of left hand bends before the Village Hall. Visibility is particularly lacking at these last two bends. You say that there have only been 4 collisions in the last 5 years recorded by the police and I am slightly surprised that you can also say that they do not appear to be speed related. Of course there will have been other incidents which have not involved the police.

Furthermore, you also say that the mean speed on this length of the road is 28.4mph and that this does not indicate a speeding issue. Perhaps a more meaningful figure to use would be the 85 percentile speed which is 32mph. In fact the speed is controlled largely by the volume of traffic and as this is one of Taunton's busiest roads it is slower during peak commuting times which gives your low figure. If one looks at specific hourly periods one sees that, for example, between 8.00 and 9.00 in the morning when pupils are going to school, then 33%, 1 in 3 vehicles, are going at between 30 and 40mph, with 6% between 35 and 40mph. In the afternoon, between 3.00 and 4.00, 28% of vehicles are travelling at between 30 and 35mph with an additional 4% at between 35 and 40mph. This rises to 43% and an additional 14% up to 40mph, just as the evening functions are ending and people are wanting to drive out of the village hall car park.

Leaving the village hall car park and wishing to turn right is a very unnerving experience due to the lack of visibility and you find cars suddenly appearing just as you thought it safe to exit. Many people tell me that they turn left and then make a 360 degree turn at the mini roundabout, which itself is not a move expected by other drivers on the road, before driving back westwards. Please do drive into the car park and see for yourself.

Hence the parish council asks for the word 'SLOW' to be added to the carriageway to indicate to drivers that there could be a hazard ahead: just SLOW, not necessarily the yellow bars and certainly not a post and sign at the side of the road which would be clutter and completely unnecessary. If I see SLOW in the road I assume that it is there for

my benefit and I act accordingly. I don't need to look for a sign to tell me why it is there and whether or not I should take any notice of it.

Your letter does not explain why it is thought appropriate to have installed 'SLOW' and yellow bars twice on the NIDR before right hand bends with excellent forward visibility, on a stretch of road where the street lighting columns are low and hence at close centres and very visibly establishing the 30mph speed limit and where there are no properties fronting on to the road. Very sensibly these are not accompanied by posts and signs that we have in the past been told are essential. If it is thought appropriate in that case then why not on Staplegrove Road which has many more extenuating circumstances and which is the extension of that road?

Personally I should not be in too much of a hurry to remove the original 30mph sign posts outside Staplegrove House, even though they are clutter, thinking that it would be much more worthwhile spending the money saved on a safety provision. Actually it would only be spending some of the money saved as it really can't be very costly to put 'SLOW' on the carriageway before the village hall.

It would be a significant safety addition at very little cost and we really shouldn't have to wait until a major accident occurs, with all the anguish and cost which that entails, in order to justify our actions.

Regards

Michael Clark
Chairman, Staplegrove Parish Council