

1. Description of the existing road and footpaths

- 1.1. The stretch of road in question runs from immediately outside St Mary's Church Stratford St Mary and the off slip of the A12 south bound to the bridges crossing over the River Stour just short of Dedham.



Photo. The end of the metalled footpath at St Marys Church Stratford.

- 1.2. The area in question is in the centre of the Dedham Vale National Landscape and National Park.
- 1.3. All of these elements being discussed are within Suffolk and under the control of Suffolk Highways, including the bridges at the border to Essex.
- 1.4. The highway between these points consists of metalled highway up to grass banks, ditches or hedges bordering the highway. There is no provision for pedestrians.



Photo. The end of the metalled footpath on the Essex Suffolk border.

- 1.5. The highway is relatively narrow with high hedges and corners with poor visibility. This does not allow any time, even for an experienced driver to foresee pedestrians ahead.
- 1.6. There is a 30mph speed limit from St Mary's Church Stratford St Mary and a few hundred metres off the A12 slip through to Donkey lane.
- 1.7. The remainder of the road is national speed limit through to the bridge at the border where the 30mph limit starts again.
- 1.8. There are a number of houses, field entrances, water pumping station and one lane off this section of the road, all with tight egress and limited visibility, but most within the 30mph limit.
- 1.9. There are five cross country unmade footpaths which end at the B1029.
- 1.10. There are two very sharp bends within the national speed limit section.
- 1.11. There are yellow lines from the bridge along the straight towards Stratford St Mary on both sides of the road, with breaks on the west side for limited parking.
- 1.12. The limited parking areas were recommended by Suffolk Highways engineer to reduce speeding along this national speed limit section.

2. Use of the Area

- 2.1. The A12 is the main arterial road in the area for any residents working out of the immediate area or travelling to other destinations.
- 2.2. The increase in new housing, particularly around Lawford, Manningtree and Mistley has resulted in far more traffic using the B1029 as a cut through to the A12.
- 2.3. There are generally more residents using commuting to work on the B1029 as well as school runs to Ipswich and Colchester.
- 2.4. The Speed watch team in Stratford St Mary has a Police approved position near Hall Farm and the A12 bridge. It regularly logs 300 plus vehicles in a typical hour morning session.
- 2.5. A large proportion of these logged vehicles use the slip road on to the A12 North bound to Ipswich. These vehicles would have travelled the B1029 from Dedham.
- 2.6. There is extremely limited public transport in the area, the B1029 has two buses per day.
- 2.7. The B1029 is a main access road across the National Landscape and National park and as such is relied on heavily by visitors.
- 2.8. Dedham has become an extremely popular tourist spot, particularly the Stratford St Mary side of the river. People are travelling from all part of the local area to enjoy the river and the countryside.
- 2.9. Dedham has extremely limited parking, which results in parking on the double yellow lines and in the local farmers fields.
- 2.10. Issue of Traffic parking offences have been delegated to Ipswich Council and they do not have the resources to police this.
- 2.11. The police have limited resources to police the area.
- 2.12. Regular visitors are realising that they can park in other areas and walk to Dedham enjoying the countryside enroute.
- 2.13. This has resulted in Hall Farm, for example, having its farm shop carpark used for long term parking by the public walking to Dedham via public footpath and the B1029.
- 2.14. The Local Authority has given approval for the conversion of Woodhouse Farm to commercial units.
- 2.15. There has been no consideration given to pedestrian access to the facilities to get to and from work or for the employees to be able to use the local facilities and boost the local economy, which is surely why approvals are given.

- 2.16. The B1029 is twice daily used by groups of horses being walked from their meadows to the stables.
- 2.17. These have no escape for horses or pedestrians off the highways in the event of a unfamiliar visitor not seeing them in time with high hedging.

3. The Pedestrian rights of way

3.1. There are a series of public, none metalled, footpaths either crossing or terminating on the B1029.

3.2. These footpaths are as follows: -

- a. Footpath 11- from just after the A12 slip road through to the bottom of Cemetery Lane in East Bergholt.

The main section of the footpath joins the B1029 at the national speed limit section of the road.



Photo. The end of Footpath 11 just prior to the 30mph limit.

This has an alternate arm which also comes out onto the B1029 at Wood House Farm.



Photo. The alternate end to Footpath 11 at Woodhouse Farm

- b. Footpath 12 – This runs down Donkey Lane and joins up with Footpath 22 on the East Bergholt border.



Photo. The end of Footpath 12 Donkey Lane

- c. Footpath 13 – This runs off footpath 12 (Donkey Lane) and joins the B1029 immediately between the two sharp corners in the national speed limit.



Photo. The entrance to footpath 13 is at the front of the car.

- d. Footpath 18A – This runs from behind Hall Farm, Stratford St Mary, through to the end of the straight section within the national speed limit section.



Photo. The end of footpath 18A – Note this photo clearly shows the yellow lines and congested parking.

- e. Foot path 14 – This runs along the River Stour on the North bank and crosses the B1029 at the bridge only just within the 30mph speed limit.



Photo. The crossing of the B1029 by Footpath 14 – public use of the water meadows.

4. Pedestrians and sharing the highway

- 4.1. Pedestrians using the Suffolk network of public foot paths are looking to traverse the countryside using each foot path in turn.
- 4.2. In the case of the footpaths onto the B1029 this is only possible by using the highways to join the two footpaths together.
- 4.3. Pedestrians travelling down from the centre of East Bergholt would use either Footpath 11, 12 or 13. To get to Dedham there would then be a 1 mile walk along the highways.
- 4.4. Foot path 14 would be another option but this is not as easily accessed from the centre of East Bergholt and is frequently restricted by livestock in the field or flooded water meadows.
- 4.5. Visitors to Dedham looking at alternate parking arrangements ultimately have to use the national speed limit section of the B1029.
- 4.6. Needless to say that it has only been a matter of luck that there has not been an accident or a known injury to pedestrians from the mixed use of the highway.

5. Changing Use of the countryside

- 5.1. The covid pandemic has resulted in a realisation by the population that there is a wonderful expanse of countryside within the UK to explore.
- 5.2. The Covid pandemic has encourage the public to get out in the countryside more.
- 5.3. There is an increase in dog ownership from the Pandemic.

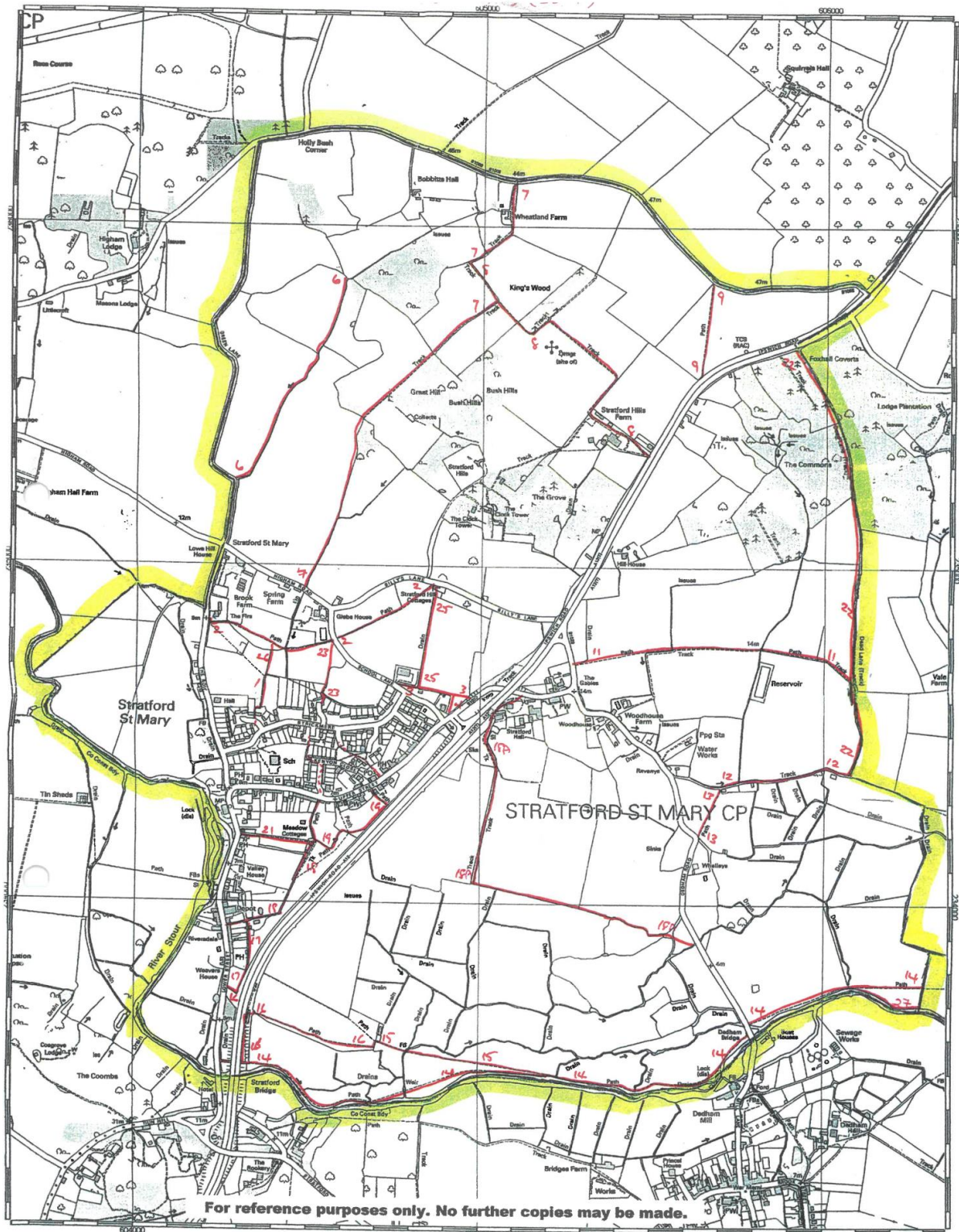
- 5.4. There is a government lead initiative to use less private vehicles and more public transport as part of its Green Agenda.
- 5.5. Local residents and their children, living along the B1029, are encouraged to walk into the centre of the village for buses and facilities.
- 5.6. The Local Authority approved the development of the Woodhouse Farm site to commercial units. The people working there can only drive safely to and from their place of work.
- 5.7. All these have resulted in large amounts of pedestrians.
- 5.8. Road traffic has become far heavier, and the standard of driving has reduced resulting in greater risks to road users.


6. Suggested Solutions

- 6.1. There seem to be two potential solutions to the problem and the Stratford St Mary Parish Council would welcome Suffolk Highways input and thoughts on this.
- 6.2. The mix of high speeds in the national speed limit section and the poor visibility for drivers contending with high and wide hedges, a narrow road and corners with poor forward visibility are a potential disaster waiting to happen.
- 6.3. The easy solution would be to introduce a 30mph speed limit all the way along the B1029 and for this to be enforced by either police patrols or speed signs/cameras.
- 6.4. The alternate solution is to introduce metalled side walks to the highways to allow pedestrians to be separated from the traffic.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1. There has been no cohesive consideration given to the area and roads with development approvals. No thought has been given to dealing with pressures on highways, pedestrians, work force, businesses and social activities.
- 7.2. There has been a significant increase in the use of the B1029 road users and pedestrians. For example, on Saturday 13th July at 10 am in the morning there was a group of 20 walkers using the B1029 to walk towards Dedham from presumably one of the aforementioned footpaths.
- 7.3. The Parish Council need to highlight the increased risk and danger to serious injury or worse for pedestrian, either local residents or visitors, on this stretch of highway.
- 7.4. Suffolk Highways has a duty of care to negate that risk.



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Map. Village Boundary with Footpaths and numbers