

Re: Traffic Management and Road Safety in Ston Easton.

We are writing to you as residents of Ston Easton village which straddles the A37 which is a major North/South transit route.

Our village has always experienced quite large volumes of traffic and has specific challenges with this due to a series of four sharp bends through the main part of the village whilst the A37 has long straight sections leading into Ston Easton from both North and South. The County Council has acknowledged these issues in the past, at one time talking about a by-pass. However, no measures to address these issues have been taken.

Our situation is now deteriorating and has become more dangerous due to the volumes of lorries and cars combined with excessive speeds and a complete lack of enforcement of the existing, inadequate, speed limits.

Key issues are:

1. Poor/Inadequate road signage.

The village sign at the southern end of the village was demolished by a car 7 years ago and has yet to be replaced. The sign at the northern end of the village is too small and cannot be seen. Several years ago the village gardening club cleared areas in front of both signs and planted flowers and bulbs as a way of improving the access and alerting drivers to the fact that this is a place where families live. The effort had to be abandoned due to the danger posed by speeding traffic to those volunteers trying to maintain the displays.

There are no warning or alert signs preceding the start of either the 30 mph zone on the northern entrance or the 40 mph zone on the southern entrance to the village. Other villages in Somerset and neighbouring authorities have a series of signs set at 300, 200 and 100 metres before the zone starts and this would be very helpful in Ston Easton.

2. Excessive speeding above the 30 and 40 mph limits.

This relates to (1) above. Vehicles travelling north enter the village at speeds frequently 20-30 miles above the 40mph limit. Lorries regularly travel at 50-60mph and only begin to brake 300-400 metres after the start of the 40mph zone. Apart from being illegal and dangerous it also creates both particulate and noise pollution. A series of warning signs prior to the start of the 40mph zone would mean earlier braking and less pollution/noise.

Vehicles travelling south enter a 30mph zone which starts too close to the first bend as you enter the village. Drivers travelling in the opposite lane and approaching these bends from the south have to drive well over to the left (bounded by high stone walls) to avoid oncoming vehicles, particularly lorries, which are often travelling above 30mph and regularly cross the central white line in order to negotiate the bends. There have been numerous incidents over the years where lorries have collided blocking the road and shedding their loads on to the roadside and even into gardens.

The road is often covered in tyre "burn" marks and both verges are torn up by lorries either deliberately or accidentally mounting them to avoid oncoming vehicles. Some of the "arrow" signs used to indicate a curve in the road have been knocked down by lorries and others are obscured by dirt and vegetation.

3. Ineffective speed limits and no traffic calming / management.

In the main part of the village there is a single footpath which starts just after the first bend in the road as you travel south. For most of the distance covered there is no space between the footpath and the road. The footpath follows the contours of the road and becomes very narrow after you pass the entrance to Ston Easton Park after the second bend. At this point vehicles start to speed up again having exited the second bend and coming into a roughly 350/400 metre straight section. However, this is the main crossing point for residents as it affords the best view of the road in both directions and it intersects with Green Street which leads to the Village Hall and Playpark. This is also the location of Clare Hall Nursing Home, the post-box and the bus stop where school aged children are picked up and dropped off during term time. Last year the post-box was demolished by a vehicle, you are left to wonder what might have happened had that "accident" occurred whilst children were waiting for the school bus.

Cars entering the A37 from Green Street have to contend with a poor and short line of sight to the north and the fact that many vehicles coming from the north and south are above 30mph.

The speed limit should be reduced to 20mph and other traffic calming measures should be examined. Such measures can be seen in other villages such as Pensford (A37), Temple Cloud (A37), Marksbury (A39) and Corston (A39). Other options include (a) a Pelican crossing located on the A37 at the main crossing point/Green Street intersection and (b) solid single or double white lines throughout the current 30 and 40mph zone.

4. No enforcement of existing speed restrictions.

There is no enforcement activity by Avon & Somerset Police e.g. the Mobile Speed Camera Unit or by Somerset County Council e.g. permanent or temporary siting of Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs). Both of these activities are common in other villages and "hot-spots".

5. No collection or collation of incident data.

It appears that Avon & Somerset Police and Somerset County Council have no interest or motivation to collect data about the situation in Ston Easton. This could reflect a lack of resources combined with the knowledge that collecting data would then mean having to act upon it to improve the situation which needs both time and money.

Most incidents have been single vehicles hitting stationary objects (walls, signs and fences). However, the baseline cause is speeding and this is not "victimless". Residents limit their walking because it is not safe, children and older people are highly vulnerable when seeking to cross the A37. Owners of the walls are also required to carry out frequent and repetitive repairs, the only hole remaining unrepaired belongs to Somerset CC and has been there for 2 years. Those living closest to the road experience physical pollution including the detritus left after collisions (tyres, wheel caps, bumpers, registration plates, etc.) and extreme noise pollution (lorries braking, accelerating and the large "bangs" caused by them hitting inadequately repaired potholes and trenches in the road).

The actions we want from Somerset County Council and you are:

1. A meeting with you, Highways Officers, Police and local Councillors to walk the village and then discuss developing and implementing a road safety programme for our village.
2. Your help in engaging the Police so that the Mobile Speed Camera Unit is deployed in Ston Easton to detect speeding and gather data.

3. Your leadership to secure a short life working party with SCC, Police and the Parish Council to develop proposals for road safety improvements and to identify funding sources to deliver this.

4. Your support to secure SCC installation of average speed monitoring apparatus at both entrances to the village to monitor both volume and speed of traffic to gather data and inform any safety proposals.

Yours Sincerely,