

FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR RICHARD SMITH, MVO  
SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL

Gap House, 8 Albion Street  
Saxmundham IP17 1BN

6 December, 2023

The Clerk, Yoxford Parish Council

BY HAND

Dear Trudy Charles

Thank you for your letter dated as long ago as October 25<sup>th</sup>. I apologise for taking so long to reply but, following a brief e-mail exchange, I promised to hand you this response at the December meeting of Yoxford Parish Council, and I am meeting that promise.

In mitigation, I can say only that, in nearly fourteen years as a County Councillor, I have never been so busy as I have been over the last six weeks, following the serious flooding problems of Storm Babet and the very arduous and prolonged work I have had to do with County colleagues on Suffolk County Council's next budget for 2025/25. Those decisions have been the most difficult I have had to take during my years as a Councillor, and the results will be in the public domain in the first days of the New Year. I could cite other reasons too, but won't!

From conversations held during my reports each month to the Parish Council, you and Members will know of my opposition to 20 mph zones, which I will reiterate here. I serve at present as the County Cabinet Member for Transport Strategy, alongside other areas of responsibility, and draft Traffic Regulation Orders come before me for decision. Some of these are for 20mph zones, and some I have approved when they have been backed-up by statistics and data rather than just desire or occasional political motive.

But I will not give my support to such a zone for Yoxford, partially because the statistics and data have not, I believe, yet been gathered, but also because the main road where you wish this zone to be instigated is an 'A' road, the A1120, and Government guidelines do not support such zones on 'A' (or even 'B') roads unless in very extraordinary circumstances. I am not aware of any such extraordinary circumstances which appertain to Yoxford.

Also I believe that Yoxford High Street is usually populated by variable numbers of parked cars, and these have the effect of slowing down passing motorists, who drive according to local conditions and hazards. You will also be aware that Suffolk Constabulary will not enforce 20mph zones.

As to calling for implementing 20mph limits in Suffolk's towns and villages, this is a political decision the Administration at Suffolk County Council will not support, although I am well aware that Yoxford Parish Council passed a motion calling for this, and your letter on its behalf is a detailed argument in favour of that policy.

It is obvious that I will neither hold my present Cabinet role nor be your *elected* County Councillor for ever, especially as the boundaries for the reduced number of 70 County Divisions will be introduced and will apply from the next set of County Council elections in May 2025. I have yet to decide where I will stand, but am motivated to make that decision by my long-term (32 years) residence in Saxmundham. So, if the Parish wish, I will offer some advice: you should start by commissioning and paying for a speed survey to ascertain the speeds of vehicles passing along Yoxford High Street and obtain the accident statistics from the Police. These can be used in part-evidence for a future application, which again needs to be paid for by the Parish and co-ordinated by the Community Highways Engineer covering Yoxford, Wayne Saunders. He will emphasise to you the difficulties presented by the Yoxford situation but, if you insist, he will co-ordinate your efforts into a report for consideration by my eventual successor, although once more I emphasise that such a zone will prove very difficult to agree to, as it is along as 'A' class road. It would also be necessary for the Parish to pay the full costs of implementing any 20mph zone in the future, and these costs (for which I am not qualified to proffer an estimate) will not be insignificant.

I end by re-emphasising that as long as I remain your County Councillor such a scheme through Yoxford will not have my support.

Finally, please may I request that any future correspondence on this or any other matter is sent to me via e-mail – [richard.smith@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:richard.smith@suffolk.gov.uk)

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Smith', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Richard Smith  
County Councillor for the Yoxford Division