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**Release issued in partnership by Essex County Council, Uttlesford District Council and Saffron Walden Town Council**

## New safer, greener, healthier 20mph speed limits and pedestrianisation for busy Saffron Walden shopping areas introduced

Some new interim, signed 20mph speed limits on roads in busy shopping areas of Saffron Walden are being put in place starting from Friday 26 June on main routes around the town centre, including High Street and George Street / Hill Street. These will be in addition to road closures implemented by the Town Council on the 15<sup>th</sup> June.

Roads which are normally closed to vehicles on market days will also be closed Monday-Saturdays from 7am to 6pm. Saffron Walden Town Council staff will manage those road closures, installing bollards as necessary and being available to remove them if emergency access is required.

In addition to the market road closures, Cross Street (by Dorringtons) will also be closed. (See attached map). Existing on-street parking, waiting and loading bays on the above-mentioned roads are suspended while roads are closed. Disabled badge holders can park in designated bays on the east side of Market St.

Working together, and adding to public safety measures introduced elsewhere, the three councils are introducing these speed limits as part of the continuing response to the COVID-19 pandemic and provide a 'Safer, Greener, Healthier' environment for shoppers and other pedestrians and cyclists.

The new lower speed limits aim to encourage people to support their local businesses by increasing pedestrian and cyclist confidence when having to avoid other people, particularly where traffic is passing.

The measures will be monitored to assess their effectiveness and may be tweaked or amended as part of the 'test and learn' approach Essex County Council are using across all the Safer, Greener, Healthier measures being introduced to many towns across the county.

The project is funded by part of the initial £1.9m Emergency Active Travel Fund for Essex announced by the government for such schemes.

The Saffron Walden scheme, like others being introduced across the county, is driven by immediate public health requirements such as social distancing, but in encouraging walking and cycling it will enable healthier, more sustainable ways of getting around locally.

### **Dr Mike Gogarty, Director of Public Health, Essex County Council explains:**

“Providing a good environment for the public to practice safe social distancing remains a core part of the measures we need to limit the spread of coronavirus. Helping people to social distance in traditionally busy urban areas will help immediate public safety; it will also make it easier as businesses resume trading.

“Walking and cycling are healthy activities in their own right, they can help to lessen traffic congestion and consequently improve air quality, so these new measures are very supportive of societal demand.”

**Shara Vickers, Chair of the Saffron Walden BID, said:** “We are delighted to see that shoppers are coming back into town using our local businesses since lockdown has eased. The statistics show that Covid-19 is a real catalyst for change so that people want to support the local business community that's been there for them. We are grateful to ECC for their cooperation, swift response and action to make Saffron Walden safe.”

**Councillor Kevin Bentley, Deputy Leader of Essex County Council and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, said:** “Safety is the reason why we are introducing a 20pmh speed restriction in the centre of Saffron Walden. We want to keep people safe from COVID-19 infection while they visit the shops and businesses in Saffron Walden and this is how we are going to do it.

“While I recognise many people will still need to use their cars, this is a chance for all to think hard about driving for short journeys. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to greatly improve our air quality and our health as well as the life opportunities for the next generation.

“Saffron Walden is among the first towns in Essex to get such a scheme, we’re using this money to help people confidently return to shop and work, as lockdown measures continue to be carefully eased.”

**Cllr John Lodge, Leader of Uttlesford District Council, said:** “Helping our high streets to reopen safely has been a key focus for the council, and therefore welcome these temporary changes which will give shoppers the confidence to return to the town centre and to continue to support local businesses. We look forward to working with Essex County Council and other partners on further measures to improve pedestrian safety and green travel in the district.”

The total money that could be made available to Essex by the Government if further plans are approved is up to £9.6m.

People can share comments on the measures with Essex, Uttlesford and Saffron Walden Councils, please send an email to [SGH.Routes@essex.gov.uk](mailto:SGH.Routes@essex.gov.uk)

See more about the Safer, Greener, Healthier measures on Essex Highways’ website at: [www.essex.gov.uk/safer-greener-healthier](http://www.essex.gov.uk/safer-greener-healthier)

Details of the measures can be found on the Town Council’s website at <https://saffronwalden.gov.uk/news/a/road-closures-in-saffron-walden-from-15-june-2020/>

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