**THE NORFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL**

**(CASTLE ACRE/NEWTON BY CASTLE ACRE, NEWTON MILL BRIDGE (TF81101), MILL COMMON AND ST JAMES ROAD)**

**(2.0 METRE (6.6”)) WIDTH RESTRICTION) EXPERIMENTAL ORDER 2023**

**STATEMENT OF REASONS FOR THE MAKING OF THE ORDER**

The proposal to make the Order is made because it appears to the County Council that it is expedient to do so in accordance with Sub-Sections 1(b), (d) and (f) of Section 1 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act, 1984, namely -

**“**(b) for preventing damage to the road or to any building on or near the road;

(d) for preventing the use of the road by vehicular traffic of a kind which, or its use by vehicular traffic in a manner which, is unsuitable having regard to the existing character of the road or adjoining property;

(f) for preserving or improving the amenities of the area through which the road runs;**”**

The Newton Bridge (TF81101) (“the Bridge”) is situated on the U33068 Mill Common. The Bridge was originally built for use by the adjoining mill (“the Mill”) as part of its operations prior to it becoming a private dwelling. Since the Bridge’s construction around the end of the 18th/early 19th century, vehicle types have changed, especially goods vehicles which have become wider and longer.

The Bridge itself is a private structure attached to the Mill but there are established highway rights over the Bridge. It is the shortest route that allows access to and from the A1065 for land and properties situated on St James Road on the north-western side of the River Nar.

The evolved nature of the highway in this location, typical of rural Norfolk roads, means it does not have the characteristics of more modern roads which are designed to cater for the free flow of larger vehicles. Given the sinuous nature of Mill Common on approach to the Bridge it may be possible that drivers of larger vehicles, especially those unfamiliar with the road, could position themselves inappropriately which may increase the risk of striking structures adjacent to the Bridge or the Bridge parapets.

The experiment will be to ascertain whether a width restriction and its implemented length will sufficiently reduce the potential risk of vehicle strikes to the Bridge. Modern vehicles, which due to their dimensions and the dimensions of the Bridge, may have greater difficulty manoeuvring over the Bridge.

The experiment will enable the Highway Authority (the “HA”) to understand whether a vehicle of the width of 6 foot 6 inches (2.0 metres) (or broader) is unsuitable to use the Bridge and if so what the width of a suitable vehicle should be to preserve and protect against the risk of damage to the Bridge and the Mill by an unsuitable vehicle. The proper length of a width restriction (or any other potential restriction) will also be considered to ensure its effectiveness. It may be that a width restriction is not suitable in any form, in which case other options could be a weight limit or road closure. The consideration of these points during the experimental period will help with deciding on whether a permanent option is deemed appropriate.

When the experiment is in place the HA will monitor any changes in traffic usage and flows and any impacts on the surrounding network resulting from the width restriction. This will enable the HA to assess whether or not the imposition of such a width restriction will create any unintended safety issues on the local road network. Particular focus will be on the roads in the nearby village of Castle Acre with its community facilities.

The HA will consider making the ETRO permanent at the end of the monitoring period. This will be dependent on whether the ETRO has enabled the HA to determine if the width restriction is the most appropriate restriction type, extent, and length for this location. The conclusions drawn following the ETRO will be based on the information gathered during the experimental period through traffic surveys undertaken and public feedback.