

<b>To</b>	<b>Tamahere Community Committee</b>
<b>Report title</b>	<b>Birchwood Lane – Survey results</b>
Date:	2 September 2025
Report Author:	Janette Underwood, Transport Safety Engineer
Reviewed by:	Aram Goes, Transport Manager
Authorised by:	Megan May, General Manager Service Delivery

## **1. Purpose of the report**

### **Te Take moo te puurongo**

---

To inform the Tamahere Community Committee of the results of the vehicle speed and resident surveys.

## **2. Executive summary**

### **Whakaraapopototanga matua**

---

Council attempted to trial a series of horizontal traffic calming devices (aka chicanes) on Birchwood Lane to manage vehicle speeds in response to on-going complaints. The devices were indiscriminately removed by the community in response to the inconvenience that they were perceived to pose to users of Birchwood Lane.

Although the ability to measure the benefits of the original trial layout had been negated by the removal of the traffic calming devices, Council gave an undertaking to resurvey vehicle speeds on Birchwood Lane to confirm if there is still an issue with vehicle's speeds and to survey residents on their concerns.

The vehicle speed data collected showed a reduction in vehicle speeds at the original traffic count location where the chicanes were set up, however this reduction in speed was not replicated at the location further north, where the wide centreline was installed.

The disruption to the trial raises queries/anomalies about the data that has been collected, with staff unable to determine if this reduction was the result of some residual effect from the roadmarking associated with the traffic calming devices or if drivers were making conscious choices following the media attention that was raised because of the trial works done.

The resident survey was equally inconclusive with disagreement between residents of Birchwood Lane as to whether there actually was a problem, and an almost equal split between support and no support for treatment being needed.

---

Drivers who use the route for access were more inclined to disagree that there was an issue and supported no changes. This was not a significant majority as 40% of these respondents were supportive of some changes.

A breakdown of the information gathered is included in Attachment 1.

Due to the inconclusiveness of the data collected, and no clear direction gained as to whether there is a problem and how it should be resolved, the remaining road markings will remain temporarily. As these road markings may be supporting the lower vehicle speeds, staff are hesitant to remove them until necessary, and to reduce costs, plus avoid reflective 'ghost' markings that result from blacking out road markings.

The additional speed limits signs will remain and figure "50" will be marked on the road beside the signage following the reseal that is programmed for Birchwood Lane (due this summer 2025/2026). This resurfacing work will remove the remaining trail markings at no extra costs.

At the time of writing this report staff consider the issue be discussed with the Tamahere Community Committee (TCC) to determine the next steps, noting that a raised pedestrian crossing was identified as the preferred treatment. If desired by the TCC and wider community, staff will investigate the most appropriate location to provide a safe crossing point, in conjunction with a wider study of pedestrian and cycle routes within Tamahere.

### **3. Staff recommendations** **Tuutohu-aa-kaimahi**

---

THAT the Tamahere Community Committee receives the Birchwood Lane – Survey Results report.

### **4. Background** **Koorero whaimaarama**

---

#### **Traffic Data**

Traffic count data has been collected in two locations on Birchwood Lane, in 2022 and 2023 which showed an average daily traffic flow of between 1,220 and 1,342 vehicles per day. New traffic counts were undertaken in June and July 2025 between 13/06/2025 and 11/07/2025 at the same locations which showed an average daily traffic flow of 1,279 vehicle per day.

During the survey period there was an incident on State Highway 1 which resulted in a number of vehicles using Birchwood Lane as a detour. The data during this event have been removed from the analysis.

Overall, there has been little change in the volume of traffic recorded in 2022 vs 2025. The higher volumes in 2023 are likely due to construction works that were occurring in the area.

Given the number of properties that can legitimately access Birchwood Lane, the consistent traffic volume indicates it is unlikely that there are a significant number of vehicles that are short cutting through Birchwood Lane between Hillcrest and the Hamilton airport area.

---

The data showed that there was a 15% drop in traffic on Birchwood Lane during the school holidays indicating that a high portion of children are driven to and from school.

The number of heavy vehicles recorded at the site 560m west of Devine Road equated to approximately 2.5% of the total number of vehicles recorded which is considered to be typical for this type of road/environment. However, there were twice as many heavy vehicles recorded at the count location closest to Alfred Main Drive. As there are only three no exit side roads between the two count sites it is difficult to determine why there is such a difference between the volumes of heavy vehicles.

### **Speed Data**

Speed data has previously been collected in two locations on Birchwood Lane in 2022 and 2023. The location 560m west of Devine Road showed an 85<sup>th</sup>ile speed of 71km/hr while the data collected at 170m east of Alfred Main Drive showed an 85<sup>th</sup>ile speed of 62km/hr

In conjunction with the traffic count additional speed data was collected in June and July 2025 at both of these locations and the recorded 85<sup>th</sup>ile speeds were:

- 560m west of Devine Road            57km/hr
- 170m east of Alfred Main Drive    62km/hr

There has been a significant reduction in vehicle speeds on Birchwood Lane in the vicinity of the trial traffic calming devices, however disappointingly there was no reduction in vehicles speeds on the control section of Birchwood Lane where the wide centreline was installed.

The traffic calming devices had been removed when the data collection took place with only the road marking present for the three devices closest to the tube counters which makes it difficult to determine if there was some residual effect from the roadmarking or if drivers were simply being cautious following the media attention that was raised as a result of the works done.

There is a greater spread of vehicle speeds recorded at the 560m west of Devine Road site compared to the control site at 170m east of Alfred Main Drive with the majority of vehicle speeds within a 30km/hr spread verses a 20km/hr respectively.

### **Resident Survey**

A survey of the residents was undertaken from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2025. The survey was a mix of quantitative and qualitative questions to understand how Birchwood Lane was being used and by whom. It also provided feedback on perceived issues and potential treatments. 245 responses were received with 20 identified as duplicates and were removed from the analysis. A summary of the results is below:

The majority of respondents (65%) were from within Tamahere but did not live on Birchwood Lane with 3% being from outside of the area.

Birchwood Lane was used by a number of respondents to walk or cycle by both those that live on the road and those from within Tamahere.

The majority of respondents indicated that they use Birchwood Lane more than once a day (53%) or daily (26%) with only a small number of respondents using it monthly (4%).

---

The main reason for using Birchwood Lane was identified as being a combination of using it to get home and to/from work/school. This is to be expected given the number of side roads that are accessed from Birchwood Lane.

With respect to whether respondents felt that there were issues with the safe and efficient use of Birchwood Lane, the responses were fairly consistent between those that live on Birchwood Lane and those in the wider Tamahere area as tabled below.

	<b>I live on Birchwood Lane</b>	<b>I live in Tamahere, but not on Birchwood Lane</b>
People are consistently breaking the speed limit on Birchwood Lane	Mostly agree	Mostly agree
Traffic needs to be slowed on Birchwood Lane	Mostly disagree	Mostly disagree
The speed limit on Birchwood Lane is appropriate	Mostly agree	Equal split between agree and disagree
Birchwood Lane is currently safe for children	Mostly agree	Mostly agree
There is a high risk for crashes due to vehicle speeds on Birchwood Lane	Mostly disagree	Mostly disagree
There are no traffic-related safety concerns on Birchwood Lane	Equal split between agree and disagree	Mostly agree

For the question regarding *If after the evaluation process is complete, and no change to traffic management on Birchwood Lane is proposed, how satisfied will you be with the outcome?* the responses from residents who live on Birchwood Lane were evenly split between satisfied and dissatisfied. For those not living on the street there was a slight majority that would be satisfied with this result, however 40% of these respondents would be dissatisfied.

The top treatment selection, if treatments are decided to be required, and if/when funding becomes available, were raised platforms with pedestrian crossings and additional speed limit signs and road markings. Beyond that, opinion was split with residents asking for speed cushions, while non-residents would prefer a wide centreline treatment.

## 5. Discussion Matapaki

The results of the traffic counts and speed data show that there has been no significant change in traffic volumes since 2022. To determine if there is a rat running problem will require an origin/destination survey to be conducted which is not considered necessary at this time as the recorded traffic volumes are in the order of what would be expected given the number of properties that access Birchwood Lane.

The speed data showed a reduction in speed at the original survey location (where the chicanes were installed) however no speed reduction was recorded at the control site (where the wide centreline was installed). The only works that had been undertaken at

the control site was the installation of the wide centreline and while we heard during that public meeting that this was viewed more positively by those who commented, the data does not support this.

This then leaves the explanation for the shift in vehicle speeds at the original survey location to being either that drivers are more aware of their speeds due to the media attention this site has gained, or the additional speed limit signs and remnants from the traffic calming trial (road marking) are continuing to influence driver behaviour.

Following the public meeting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2025, members of the Tamahere Community arranged a community survey. The survey organisers advised that they received nearly 300 responses, however the majority of their questions related to items and/or issues that were not related to Birchwood Lane, but rather the wider Tamahere area. Of those responses that related to Birchwood Lane the results were that 68% do not support any alternative traffic calming on Birchwood Lane and that 70.5% support a pedestrian crossing on Birchwood Lane, near the Devine Road end. 62% supported increasing the speed limit on Birchwood Lane to 60 or 70 km/h. Other comments that were received included requests to install traffic cameras or speed cushions and a shared view that Birchwood Lane is **not high risk** for vulnerable users.

As expected, the results from the resident survey were mixed which reflected the messages we had heard at the public meeting.

Responses to whether the speed limit is appropriate and if there was perceived to be safety issues were different between those who live on Birchwood Lane and those that use it for access. Generally, about 10% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the various statements. This is similar to the responses from the Community Survey which showed that 35% support keeping the speed limit at 50 km/h, which is likely to be consistent with the small portion of Birchwood Lane residents that responded to this survey.

Of note the most preferred treatment for Birchwood Lane, should treatment be needed, was the most invasive; being a raised platform with a pedestrian crossing. This treatment was qualified in a number of comments by being only near the Devine Road intersection and not midblock. A number of respondents requested a pedestrian crossing but without the raised platform. The installation of a pedestrian crossing on Birchwood Lane near Devine Road also featured highly in the Community Survey with 70.5% support.

A pedestrian crossing (aka zebra crossing) is not considered to be a safe feature unless the vehicle speeds can be reduced to the survivable limit of 30km/hr at point of impact. Without using a raised platform this will require the crossing to point to be positioned close to the Devine Road roundabout, however this creates other issues with respect to driver distraction and if they will see and stop for pedestrians at this location.

Comments regarding the reopening of Newell Road and pedestrian safety within the wider Tamahere area are outside the scope of this project.

---

## **6. Next steps**

### **Ahu whakamua**

---

Due to the inconclusiveness of the data collected and no clear direction gained from the resident survey as to whether there is a problem and how it should be resolved, the remaining road markings will remain temporarily. As these road markings may be supporting the lower vehicle speeds staff are hesitant to remove them until necessary, and to reduce costs, plus avoid reflective 'ghost' markings that result from blacking out road markings.

The additional speed limits signs will remain and figure "50" will be marked on the road beside the signage following the reseal that is programmed for Birchwood Lane (due this summer 2025/2026). This resurfacing work will remove the remaining trail markings at no extra costs.

At the time of writing this report staff consider the issue be discussed with the Tamahere Community Committee (TCC) to determine the next steps, noting that a raised pedestrian crossing was identified as the preferred treatment. If desired by the TCC, staff will investigate the most appropriate location to provide a safe crossing point, in conjunction with a wider study of pedestrian and cycle routes within Tamahere.

## **7. Attachments**

### **Ngaa taapirihanga**

---

Attachment 1 – Birchwood Lane traffic and resident survey information.

---