

Additional Submitted Comments from Cllr Helen Belcher

Comment made:

I suspect that you will have been informed by Samantha of the discussions at last night's Corsham Area Board regarding these proposals for Bradford Road. At the meeting the proposed 40mph was universally unpopular. It was pointed out by a resident that, out of 49 residents who provided feedback, only 1 supported the proposal. In the meeting, many residents reinforced their concerns regarding the safety for pedestrians on that road, and that the proposals would do extremely little to improve the matter. It made the Council's commitment to public consultation ring extremely hollow. Nick Botterill arrived during this discussion, and tried to make the point that residents' concerns were taken seriously. His point rang very hollow as it had already been shown that they appeared to count for nothing.

Officer response:

- Taking residents' concerns seriously is not the same as agreeing with their preferred solutions; speed limit decisions need to be evidence based and reflect the experience of qualified engineers as well as DfT guidance.
- It was residents' concerns that led to the initial Speed Limit Assessment and then a review of its recommendation which led to the TRO for the reduced 40mph limit supplemented with other measures, including the school time advisory 20mph signage.

Comment made:

The point was also strongly made that speed limits are there to be enforced, and that if the current speed on roads was the key determining factor in setting speed limits, it becomes almost impossible to change them even though local factors may demand this.

Officer response:

- DfT guidance references a wide range of considerations when reviewing a speed limit. Current speeds provide an indication of drivers' current views on an appropriate speed and future compliance.
- Speed Limits are one tool to manage the speed of vehicles with a view to improving safety. A speed limit that needs regular enforcement because it is consistently ignored will not improve safety for other road users. Other tools include education and engineering works to directly address known concerns. These are clearly acknowledged in the review with measures being proposed.
- A clear 20mph warning associated with the presence of school children (combining education with engineering) is a clear visual clue for drivers to slow down as the hazard is highlighted. This compares with a blanket 30mph on a main distribution road without visual clues associated with a residential area, reflected in the current average speed of 40mph.

Comment made:

I made the point about pedestrian access being along faster stretches of road, and that the Council's sustainable transport policy, in particular encouraging parents and children to walk to schools, was not being met because of the difficulties and dangers walking along the 50mph stretch of Bradford Road. It means that parents who only live a couple of hundred yards from the school entrance feel they have no option but to drive their children to the school, even though they would much rather walk.

Officer response:

- From Bartholomew Drive, there is an informal crossing, with a refuge in the middle of the 8.5m wide carriageway to the rear entrance of the school. This would be most heavily used when the 20mph signs are in use.

- From Bartholomew Drive, if parents do not want to use the informal crossing, there is a level pavement on both sides of the road to a signal-controlled crossing approximately 175m away.
- As the school opted to open up the rear entrance for parents, they have a responsibility to supervise access as they do with the main entrance.
- The Council has offered to work with the school to widen the pavement on the school side of the informal crossing.

Comment made:

I know Ruth has already written to Spencer Drinkwater and Gareth Rogers this afternoon regarding the substantive bid now in to provide a new pedestrian path for residents from Park Place in Corsham to access the Broadmead school, where she makes many of these same points.

Officer response:

- The substantive bid to fund a footpath to the signal-controlled crossing from Park Place is currently being reviewed. A Cabinet Member decision report is due to be published in early February.

Comment made:

It is also unclear what significant disruption putting a 30mph limit in will be over putting a 40mph limit in. If it is simply an enforcement issue, then I refer you to the point I make above. The key or determining evidence cannot simply be an assessment of existing speeds on the road. Putting a 20mph limit in at certain times doesn't take account of other events that children might want to be going into or out from school – such as sports clubs, performances, half days and fetes. If it is recognised that a 20mph limit is needed for children's safety, then that concern does not only manifest itself at certain times of day.

Officer response:

- the role of speed limits and other mechanisms to support road safety is noted above.
- Options to use the signal-controlled crossing are noted above.
- Events at the school should be supported with a risk assessment. Supervision of the rear entrance could be included.

Comment made:

In Ruth's words to Spencer and Gareth, it would be extremely "politic" to reconsider this decision in the light of the many concerns shared by residents and supported by myself and Derek as the two councillors representing the area.

Officer response:

- Speed limit decisions need to be evidence based and reflect the experience of qualified engineers as well as DfT guidance that cannot be overridden by local opinion.