



**ROAD POLICING UNIT
OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT
HAYWARDS HEATH POLICE STATION**

Your Ref: TRO/CSM014/RC

Our Ref: TMW/163/10/IWJ

Date: 11th August 2010

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Dear Mrs Caney,

**West Sussex County Council (Ansty: Various Roads) (30mph Speed Limits)
Order 2010 – Statutory Consultation**

I refer to your letter of formal consultation, dated the 11th August 2010, in respect of the above matter. It is disappointing that the Authority has not heeded the concerns expressed by Sussex Police in relation to this proposal as articulated in our letter of objection, dated the 29th April 2010.

Whilst we have no objections to a 30mph speed limit being introduced in Deak's Lane, Sussex Police do object to the introduction of a 30mph speed limit on the A272 and the B2036.

I shall reiterate the reasons for our objections:

Sussex Police strongly objected to the changes West Sussex County Council have made to their Speed Management Policy as a result of the members decision to remove the requirement to link the speed limit to actual speeds. This in effect creates blanket speed limits and is contrary to the underlying principles as outlined in the national guidance Circular Roads 1/2006, produced by the Department for Transport on the setting of local speed limits.

Mrs R Caney,
Legal Officer, Joint TRO Team,
Northleigh,
Tower Street,
Chichester,
West Sussex,
PO19 1RH

Whilst the above document in Section 6 indicates it is Government policy that a 30 mph speed limit should be the norm in villages, it does in fact qualify that statement by including the caveat of 'where appropriate'.

Sussex Police believe a hierarchal approach to speed limit setting in villages and towns is still relevant and is something road users expect. The A272 is a principle road and as such a higher speed limit is, in our view, quite appropriate. Although the recent speed and volume counts showed there is some divergence between the average speeds on differing roads in the settlement they varied between 31.5mph (B2036) – 45.8mph (A272). This indicates to us that the existing speed limit of 40mph, in the main, is both realistic and appropriate.

Contrary to popular belief, just introducing a lower speed limit and relying solely upon the new signing is not in itself, a guarantee that a limit will work. There is a system of street lighting along the Bolney Road and this may preclude the use of repeater signs as directed in Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2002. For a speed limit to be successful it is important that it generates a high level of compliance in order for the safety measure to be effective.

We are aware that where a speed limit is reduced by 10mph this may result in speeds, on average, reducing by 2mph – 3mph. Therefore, we are concerned that the mean speed differential between the existing 40mph and proposed 30mph speed limit is likely to be too great for the new limit to work effectively.

Due to the rural nature of these roads we believe drivers will fail to realise the speed limit is 30mph and will as a result habitually drive at a higher speed. Pedestrians and other vulnerable road users will have the expectation that traffic will be travelling at 30mph or slower, so may unwittingly endanger themselves when using the road.

Research and experience confirms that the implementation of an unrealistic or inappropriate speed limit is most likely not to be adhered to by the motoring public. As a consequence, the unrealised expectations of local residents will generate complaints to the police for enforcement action. This is clearly a Crime and Disorder Act issue where there was previously none¹.

Since 1998, Sussex Police has been a strong participant in the promotion of the West Sussex rural village speed limit programme. We have supported the introduction of at least 90 village speed limits. It is with regret therefore, that we cannot support this proposal in full and object for the following reasons:

- We do not support the policy easement;
- There are no gravity factors, such as casualty figures where speed was identified as a causation factor, that would justify the lowering of the limit;
- National guidance and best practice has not been applied to the setting of this proposed speed limit;
- The differential between the mean speed and the existing speed assessment criterion is too great and compliance rates are likely to be low;
- The introduction of a lower limit will raise public expectation and when unrealised will generate pressure to divert resources from other core policing functions to target offenders. Based upon the current set of policing priorities, resource and financial limitations, it is extremely unlikely this will happen;

¹ Average speeds at the present time are below Association of Chief Police Officers Enforcement Guidelines.

- As a consequence a Crime and Disorder Act issue will be generated where there was none previously;
- The success factors for the proposed speed limit are not outlined, nor are there any assurances, that if they are not met, an engineering solution will be introduced.

I ask that if the Authority decide to proceed even though we have objected they comply with Regulation 17(3) of 'The Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996 and notify us with their rationale for not acceding to the points we have made.

In conclusion, speed limits should be set following proper assessment, based upon a set of appropriate and consistently applied criteria that resonate with drivers' expectations, to do otherwise undermines the essential legitimacy of speed limit setting and the rule of law itself.

Yours sincerely,



Ian Jeffrey
Traffic Management Officer (West)
Road Policing Unit
Operations Department