

I write in response to your recent petition that Kent County Council has received via Swale Joint Transportation Board to lower the speed limit on Plough Road to 30 mph

In accordance with our 'Petition Service' as your letter contains less than 1,000 signatures I have investigated and reviewed your concerns in my role as the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport.

The speed limit on a road (including the national speed limit where a lower local limit is not in place) is the absolute maximum and does not mean it is safe to drive at that speed irrespective of conditions. Speed limits are set by the highway authority in accordance with guidance issued by the Department for Transport (Circular 01/2013 'Setting Local Speed Limits) and in consultation with Kent Police. The guidance states that speed limits should not be used to attempt to solve the problem of isolated hazards, such as road junctions or areas where there is reduced forward visibility but are instead based on the road environment along a longer section. For a single carriageway rural road, the above circular states that the national speed limit would normally be appropriate but a lower limit may be appropriate if, for example, a collision history indicates that this speed cannot be achieved safely and the risk of collisions cannot be addressed through other engineering measures.

There is little evidence to show that introducing an artificially low speed limit without any obvious change in the road environment will make any significant difference to the driven speeds anyway. Indeed, it can actually increase collision risk as you get a wider range of speeds with some drivers respecting the limit and others continuing to drive at higher speeds. With vehicles travelling at different speeds, it makes it difficult for pedestrians trying to cross or drivers turning out onto the road to judge gaps. It is the more vulnerable road users, such as children and those with visual impairments, that are most at risk.

We receive many requests for the implementation of improvement and safety measures on the highway and, as such, all requests are reviewed and prioritised. We use an evidence-based approach to prioritise investment in Casualty Reduction Schemes as we seek to ascertain if there is any pattern of personal injury crash records for the past three years that could be addressed by engineering methods.

The collision record for Plough Road for the last three years has been checked and there have been few collisions with no pattern to these in terms of location or contributory factors; it is therefore difficult to prioritise this site against a number of areas across the county, where a pattern of incidents is occurring and our engineering intervention could help reduce crashes. Therefore, at this stage we have no programmed works on these roads and do not plan to take any action as a result of your petition. For your reference, the data we consider can be viewed for free on Crash Map at www.crashmap.co.uk.

I would like to reassure you that we take seriously all concerns about road traffic dangers and as such we will continue to monitor this site. We are continually assessing the risks and casualty records of sites across the county, liaising with Parish Councils, elected Members and the Police to help prioritise our future programme of improvements. Full details of the work we do to prevent and reduce

road crashes can be found in our Casualty Reduction Strategy for Kent which can be viewed at: [www.kent.gov.uk/ data/assets/pdf file/0012/14520/Road-Casualty-Reduction-Strategy-for-Kent.pdf](http://www.kent.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0012/14520/Road-Casualty-Reduction-Strategy-for-Kent.pdf)

If you believe that drivers are driving at excess speed and without due care, then this is a matter for the Police using their existing powers. Such concerns can be reported to them on their non-emergency number 101.

Thank you for taking the time to raise a petition and bringing your concerns to my attention. I really value a community voice to flag up local concerns based on your knowledge and experience of the roads and footways in your area.

I hope that my review has clarified our position on this matter. If however you feel we have not dealt with your petition properly, please do contact me again.