

Road safety in Parwich.

The Parish Council has again requested support from the highways Authority (Derbyshire County Council) to address a number of concerns raised by residents. This time we sought the support of our County Councillor Simon Spencer.

The following reply was received from Councillor Spencer's Office on the 9th of January 2020.

Firstly, please accept our apologies for the delay in responding, but as I am sure you will appreciate, unfortunately many things have been delayed due to the damage and work caused by the recent flooding.

Cllr Spencer has asked me to forward to you the following, provided to him by the Traffic and Road Safety Team, in response to the issues you raised in your email of 29 October.

Officers have provided comprehensive comments to the Parish Council on each of these issues in recent times. Nevertheless, my further comments are as follows.

The acute angle of the Kiln Ln/Creamery Ln junction, as demonstrated in the photos supplied, can present turning difficulties, especially for long wheel based vehicles. However, the difficulty here is providing the relevant information to drivers. There are few options in the Traffic Signs Regulations that advise of such a circumstance. The other problem is where to provide such information if it were available. For example, not all motorists entering Creamery Lane will be wanting to turn onto Kiln Lane and, similarly, those entering Kiln Lane may not be wanting to turn right into Creamery Lane. Therefore, it would be a distinct possibility that any signing could be deemed to be misleading and become ignored which can lead to such messages falling into disrepute generally.

This is an extract of some previous correspondence on this issue:

"Parwich sits within an area-wide 7.5-tonne Environmental Weight Restriction, which is appropriately signed at all entry points to the village (i.e. from the A515 and A5012). I suspect that the only route into the village, that would take HGVs bound for Creamery Lane onto Kiln Lane, is from the northernmost access from the A515 (it is unlikely that Sat-Nav systems would direct HGV's onto Kiln Lane if using any other route). We have already provided 'unsuitable for long vehicles' signage at this junction with the A515, which has the purpose of alerting drivers bound for Parwich that they will encounter narrow and winding roads ahead. Drivers will already have driven along a considerable length of narrow and twisting carriageway before reaching Kiln Lane and it should be self-evident that they may encounter access issues; it is unlikely that an additional sign at this junction, again informing drivers that it is 'unsuitable for long vehicles' would deter them from choosing this route if they are intent on access. Unfortunately, there is a growing habit of drivers relying heavily on their Sat-Nav systems and a tendency to 'miss' the salient information provided to them through road signage. Such driving behaviour is difficult to legislate for and increased signage is an unlikely and unsustainable solution.

I trust you will appreciate that there are numerous villages in and around the Derbyshire Dales, which have a legacy of ancient, often narrow and winding roads which heavy and long vehicles have difficulty negotiating. It would be impractical for the highway authority to display signage on all lanes where such difficulties might occur. We also have to be mindful of the aforementioned need to 'declutter' and of the intrusive visual impact high levels of signage has on the rural aesthetic of villages such as yours.

Bearing these points in mind, no signing is proposed for this issue at this time.

On the subject of a 20mph speed limit, there are two types of treatment – 20mph speed limits and 20mph zones. 20mph zones use traffic calming measures such as road humps or build outs to reduce vehicle speeds, making the area largely self-enforcing. 20mph limits are roads where the speed limit has been reduced to 20mph, but, there are no physical measures to help to reduce vehicle speeds within the areas. Drivers are alerted to the speed limit with boundary signs and repeater signs.

Derbyshire County Council (DCC) has carried out a trial site of signed only 20mph speed limit in Padfield near Glossop which ran in parallel with the Department for Transport's (DfT) national test sites. The data collected at the Padfield trial site tallied with the existing national guidance which suggests a reduction in speed of around 1mph can be expected as a result of the implementation of a signed only 20mph speed limit. In terms of casualty reduction, no personal injury collisions were recorded in the 5 years prior to the scheme being introduced in Padfield. Since the scheme was implemented in November 2015, 3 injury related collisions have been recorded within the 20mph speed limited area, all categorized as "slight" in severity.

The DfT has published its latest findings and there is nothing to demonstrate that anything has changed to the existing national guidance. Their case studies show a reduction to the average speed of under 1mph and no evidence to suggest that there has been any reductions in collisions and casualties. It should be noted that all the sites monitored during the study are urban areas where existing average speeds were typically below 24mph.

Apart from speed and casualty reduction, much is made of the purported wider benefits of a 20mph speed limit. The main non-tangible benefits that are usually mentioned are that 20mph limits improve peoples' perception of where they live and have wider health benefits such as encouraging walking and cycling. This is not evidenced by the qualitative survey carried out by DCC in Padfield. The DfT's study provides little evidence to suggest that this is the case either. Given that the most important aspects of any road safety engineering measures are speed and casualty reduction, there is little to suggest from DCC's trial site and the DfT's extensive research that the use of a 20mph speed limit would be of significant benefit in this respect. The Police are generally of the opinion that they would only support the introduction of lower speed limits where it can be demonstrated that such a change would be largely self-enforcing. Where a reduction to 20mph is concerned, this could well necessitate the introduction of physical traffic calming measures to achieve this.

Therefore, in terms of "value for money", it is always difficult to make a case in support of using a signed only 20mph speed limit where other road safety engineering measures have a proven success rate in terms of achieving the Authority's priority of reducing casualties on the network. As such, a 20mph speed limit would not be considered for Parwich. I note the Parish Council's comments that most motorists drive appropriately for the conditions and this is consistent with observations of the traffic conditions on site. As is the case throughout the highway network, there is a minority of drivers that do drive inappropriately and these are the most difficult to legislate for. A change to the speed limit would certainly not address this issue.

On the subject of the provision of Playground warning signs, this is something that is proposed commensurate with current priorities and workloads. It has been noted that there are a number of other warning signs within the village that seem rather superfluous. For instance, there are a couple of side road warning signs – this is a village centre, of course there are side roads. Therefore, some sign rationalisation will also take place as part of this exercise.

Cllr Spencer has also asked me to refer you to the report presented to the Cabinet Member meeting on 31 January 2019 regarding 20mph speed limits in Derbyshire

<https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/site-elements/documents/pdf/council/meetings-decisions/meetings/cabinet-member-portfolio/highways-transport-and-infrastructure/31-1-2019-20mph-speed-limits-in-derbyshire.pdf>.

Further to this, if you would like Cllr Spencer to come along to a Parish Council meeting to address the issues raised, he would be more than happy to do so.