

case No. 27234145

Dear Mr Jeffrey,

**Petition – Request for 20mph – Bower Mount Road, Maidstone**

I refer to your recent petition to reduce the speed limit to 20mph in Bower Mount Road and the surrounding roads.

I appreciate the time you have taken to raise this issue with me and please be assured that we take every suggestion about road safety very seriously.

With regard to your particular request for a 20mph speed limit, the number of requests for 20mph speed limit has increased exponentially over the last few years. Any changes to speed limits requires public consultation and amendments to the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO). This is to ensure that it is enforceable and as part of this process a formal consultation is carried out with all statutory consultees including the emergency services, bus companies, affected residents and businesses. There is a cost for this process, and it takes approximately 3 months or more if we receive objections and have to submit a report to the Joint Transportation Board (JTB) for the proposals to be reviewed. The JTB meets approximately every 4 months, all such requests are assessed to see whether or not a scheme is deliverable and appropriate for that location. KCC do not have designated funds for such projects unless it is a known crash site and we therefore rely on a sponsor such as the County Member or a Residents Group who would be willing to fund such works.

If my officers feel that Bower Mount Road is a potential site for a 20mph speed limit and the County Members are in support, a two-stage approach is required. The first being to ensure that there is strong community support for a 20mph speed limit which has been evidenced by the petition you have collated. The proposal would then be appraised against a list of local factors. For example, will it help vulnerable road users around community centres, schools or shops?

If deemed appropriate, the second stage would involve traffic surveys which will confirm if the location is suitable for consideration as a 20mph site. This is where existing speeds are between 24-28mph and more innovative and psychological traffic methods could practicably be implemented. The aim is therefore to help encourage lower speeds by changing the driver's perception of the road environment.

We receive many requests for the implementation of improvements on the highway, and all requests are reviewed and prioritised. We use an evidence-based approach to prioritise investment in our highway improvement projects to achieve safer roads and streets. Our first priority is to check if there is any pattern of personal injury crash records for the past three years that could be addressed by engineering methods.

Following our checks, we have established that in this location there is no such pattern; it is therefore very difficult to prioritise this site for Crash Remedial Measures against locations across the County where a pattern of incidents is occurring. Implementing highway improvements at known crash hotspots remains our priority. At this stage we have no programmed works at this location, although we will of course continue to monitor the site.

However, we recognise that whilst prioritising our efforts based on known crash data is an established and sensible approach, not all problems will be highlighted using this approach. We have also therefore recently established a process with local Parish Councils and County Members to ensure that a community voice helps to prioritise our efforts, and in many cases, help support funding for improvements that do not achieve sufficient priority through our countywide assessments.

I would urge you to contact your County Members, Tom Cannon and Dan Daley in the first instance to ensure that they are in support of a 20mph scheme in this location and are willing to promote on your behalf.

We have also recently developed and published a new approach to casualty reduction in Kent and this is called 'Vision Zero' Road Safety Strategy (see link below)

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/road-safety/road-casualty-reduction-strategy>.

This new approach is designed to build a more complete picture which understands that people make mistakes and aims to ensure these mistakes do not cause a death or a life-changing injury. This is called the 'Safe System Approach' and consists of looking at safe roads and streets, safe speed, safe behaviour, safe vehicles and post collision response.

We are therefore reviewing how we evaluate and prioritise road safety schemes to reflect the principles of the Vision Zero Strategy. Once we have finished this review, we aim to publish the way that communities and residents can report their concerns to us and how we engage with them to deliver our new approach.

However, clearly not all issues can be solved by the County Council and by changes to the road layout.

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.

There are also schemes such as Speed Watch that allows the local community to record speeding vehicles on roads in their area, by using portable speed devices. The owners of vehicles seen repeatedly speeding anywhere in Kent over a 12-month period are then sent a warning letter and advice by the police. I would encourage you to contact Kent Police Speed Watch Team who can provide training on community led speed action. See link below:

<https://www.kent.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/wsi/watch-schemes-initiatives/kent/community-speedwatch/>

For future reference the current process for how to request highway improvements can be found at:

[www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/what-we-look-after/roads/changing-roads-in-your-area](http://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/what-we-look-after/roads/changing-roads-in-your-area)

As you can see from the information above our new approach recognises that everyone plays a part in helping to reduce casualties on our roads, whether it is our highway team to improve the road layout, communities to encourage those who use local roads to do so appropriately or our local Police colleagues to enforce speed limits. Community engagement is at the heart of this strategy; if Vision Zero is to succeed it will depend on Kent's public and all road users sharing our ambition.

I would like to reassure you that reducing the number of people injured on our roads is one our top priorities.

Thank you for raising this matter with me and I hope that you have time to look at the website links above and especially more information about our Vision Zero Road Safety Strategy.