
**PROPOSED 40 MPH SPEED LIMIT -
VARIOUS ROADS, SPELDHURST, TUNBRIDGE WELLS**

To: Tunbridge Wells Joint Transportation Board – 18 Oct 2021

By: Tim Read, Head of Transportation, Kent County Council

Classification: Unrestricted

Electoral division: Tunbridge Wells West

Summary: This report provides details of the consultation that took place for the proposed reduction in speed limit from 50 mph to 40 mph on the A264 from Ashurst to Langton Green and B2110 Groombridge Hill from the A264 to Groombridge in Speldhurst, which is being promoted by Speldhurst Parish Council.

1.0 Introduction and proposal

1.1 The objective of the proposed speed limit reduction is to help address concerns regarding vehicle speeds within the existing 50 mph speed limit. A speed survey undertaken in early March 2020 (pre-Covid-19 lockdown) recorded a combined mean speed on the A264 of 40.2mph, illustrating very good levels of compliance with the existing 50 mph limit. This data suggests that a reduction in speed limit to 40 mph could be reasonably implemented as it would already be self-enforcing but is unlikely to further reduce vehicle speeds much below their current levels. The limit is proposed to be introduced as per the extents in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Proposed 40 mph – Roads and extents

Road	Extents of proposed 40 mph
Ashurst Road	From the existing 30 mph terminal point at the entrance to Ashurst village to the junction with Langton Road and Groombridge Hill
Langton Road	From the existing 30 mph terminal point at the entrance to Langton Green village to the junction with Ashurst Road and Groombridge Hill
Groombridge Hill	From the existing 30 mph terminal point at the entrance to Groombridge village to the junction with Ashurst Road and Langton Road

1.2 A location plan detailing the proposed 40 mph speed limit can be found in Appendix A of this report.

1.3 The proposed scheme will:

- reduce the speed limit to 40 mph using a combination of upright terminal signs and roundel repeater road markings

2.0 Consultation & Traffic Regulation Order

2.1 A formal traffic regulation order consultation with local residents and other stakeholders took place from Friday 9 July 2021 until Monday 2 August 2021.

2.2 At the end of the consultation, a total of 43 responses were received. 36 (84%) were in support of the proposed 40 mph speed limit, with 7 (16%) objecting.

2.3 Kent Police offered the following comments:

- *'All aspects of DfT Circular 01/2013 to be adhered to. Any limit introduced outside of this guidance may not only be ineffective but it may leave the Police with the task of carrying out enforcement, where previously an issue of excess speed did not exist.'*
- *'Kent Police would seek that the legislation and advice from Traffic Signs Manual Chapters 3 and 5, and the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016, is complied with.'*
- *'In line with the above comments, we would look for this limit to be appropriate and in the main self-enforcing. Speed enforcement competes with other issues of public concern, therefore the deployment of resources must be prioritised and this will mean that the enforcement of this speed limit receives a low priority.'*

2.4 The majority of respondents were in favour of the proposed 40 mph speed limit for the following key reasons:

- improved safety for non-motorised & vulnerable road users such as cyclists and pedestrians, including children
- reduction in collision casualty severity
- expectation that speeds will reduce below their current levels
- 40 mph is the appropriate speed limit considering the nature and characteristics of the routes

2.5 The reasons given for being against the proposals can be summarised as follows:

- lower speed limits can lead to driver frustration and encourage dangerous manoeuvres
- general lack of speed limit enforcement
- concern that a lower speed limit will lead to an increase in congestion and pollution

- disagreement that reducing the speed limit will have a positive benefit in terms of safety, amenity and passage of traffic

2.6 Each objection and the scheme promoter's response can be found in the following table:

Table 2: Objections and scheme promoter response

Objection 1	Scheme Promoter Response
<p>These roads are main through roads and little used by pedestrians nor likely to be even if speeds are reduced. Most traffic is now far more advanced than it used to be in terms of technology, reduced stopping distances, etc. Decreasing speeds leads to frustration which can lead to accidents. "Health and safety" is hard to argue against but is often used for revenue-gathering purposes, which is what I suspect is the bottom line here.</p>	<p>Speldhurst Parish Council (SPC) have been working closely with the local community, who have raised concerns about safety and vehicle speeds, particularly in terms of crossing the main roads to reach the various amenities on offer and on the village approaches. A speed limit reduction has therefore been identified by parishioners as a high priority and SPC are very keen to support this.</p>
Objection 2	Scheme Promoter Response
<p>What incidents have occurred regularly to make this necessary? There is very little need for yet more regulation. The part from Speldhurst Road is slowed by those turning right towards Blackham and the sharp bend to the hill. Most people are braking going down Groombridge Hill due to the bends and concentrating on driving down there. The change from 50mph to 40mph will do little to 'improve the amenity' or 'facilitate the passage of traffic' and may cause more accidents due to concentration on speed rather than negotiating the road. It will also make the environment worse due to possible additional braking causing more dust. If it is implemented how will it be enforced? The police do not have the manpower to do much for the ratepayers anyway let alone hide in the bushes with speed cameras. A fixed camera would just be seen as another KCC income producer while not actually making it any safer.</p>	<p>Speldhurst Parish Council (SPC) have been working closely with the local community, who have raised concerns about safety and vehicle speeds, particularly in terms of crossing the main roads to reach the various amenities on offer and on the village approaches. Numerous anecdotal reports are submitted to SPC regarding road traffic collisions. A speed limit reduction has therefore been identified by parishioners as a high priority and SPC are very keen to support this to help encourage appropriate vehicle speeds in the area.</p>

Objection 3	Scheme Promoter Response
I drive ashurst road everyday and don't believe it needs a 40mph limit. It will encourage dangerous overtaking & is not needed. It is a safe bit of road	Speldhurst Parish Council (SPC) have been working closely with the local community, who have raised concerns about safety and vehicle speeds, particularly in terms of crossing the main roads to reach the various amenities on offer and on the village approaches. Numerous anecdotal reports are submitted to SPC regarding road traffic collisions. A speed limit reduction has therefore been identified by parishioners as a high priority and SPC are very keen to support this to help encourage appropriate vehicle speeds in the area. This also takes into account the various route hazards including bends and hills, as well as hamlets that the roads pass through.
Objection 4	Scheme Promoter Response
The road can easily take a 50mph speed limit reducing the speed will just increase traffic congestion and increase pollution.	Speldhurst Parish Council (SPC) have been working closely with the local community, who have raised concerns about safety and vehicle speeds, particularly in terms of crossing the main roads to reach the various amenities on offer and on the village approaches. Numerous anecdotal reports are submitted to SPC regarding road traffic collisions. A speed limit reduction has therefore been identified by parishioners as a high priority and SPC are very keen to support this to help encourage appropriate vehicle speeds in the area. This also takes into account the various route hazards including bends and hills, as well as hamlets that the roads pass through.
Objection 5	Scheme Promoter Response
Reducing the speed limit from 50 to 40 is not going to have any positive effect. and will certainly not make the roads safer	Speldhurst Parish Council (SPC) have been working closely with the local community, who have raised concerns about safety and vehicle speeds, particularly in

	<p>terms of crossing the main roads to reach the various amenities on offer and on the village approaches. Numerous anecdotal reports are submitted to SPC regarding road traffic collisions. A speed limit reduction has therefore been identified by parishioners as a high priority and SPC are very keen to support this to help encourage appropriate vehicle speeds in the area. This also takes into account the various route hazards including bends and hills, as well as hamlets that the roads pass through.</p>
Objection 6	Scheme Promoter Response
<p>1. The reasons stated are entirely spurious, of no substance and totally outwith the authority's own policy and the relevant DfT Circular 01/2013.</p> <p>2. The proposal will have no effect on the prevention of danger but, indeed, if anything, will increase danger by further reducing already poor driving standards.</p> <p>3. The proposal will not preserve or improve amenity in any form.</p> <p>4. The passage of any class of road traffic will be hindered, rather than facilitated, by the proposal.</p> <p>5. There is no factual evidence to justify the proposal.</p> <p>6. Given the current state of KCC's finances and public sector debt nationally, the cost of implementation would represent a scandalous waste of public resources to no public benefit and to the general detriment of road safety.</p> <p>7. If any change is to be made at all, the current limit should be returned to NSL in line with Para 7.2.129 of the above Circular.</p>	<p>Speldhurst Parish Council (SPC) have been working closely with the local community, who have raised concerns about safety and vehicle speeds, particularly in terms of crossing the main roads to reach the various amenities on offer and on the village approaches. Numerous anecdotal reports are submitted to SPC regarding road traffic collisions. A speed limit reduction has therefore been identified by parishioners as a high priority and SPC are very keen to support this to help encourage appropriate vehicle speeds and driver behaviour in the area. This also takes into account the various route hazards including bends and hills, as well as hamlets that the roads pass through. Working in partnership with Kent County Council, SPC have carefully budgeted over the preceding years in order to be ready to make a substantial contribution towards the proposed speed limit changes.</p>
Objection 7	Scheme Promoter Response
I have driven those roads many times and I didn't see a	Speldhurst Parish Council (SPC) have been working

problem with the speed limit. If I don't feel it's safe in some places to drive at 50mph, then I don't. Drivers are adults and should use their common sense and slow down if necessary. It's a speed LIMIT not a speed RECOMMENDATION

closely with the local community, who have raised concerns about safety and vehicle speeds, particularly in terms of crossing the main roads to reach the various amenities on offer and on the village approaches. Numerous anecdotal reports are submitted to SPC regarding road traffic collisions, as well as information from Speedwatch groups. A speed limit reduction has therefore been identified by parishioners as a high priority and SPC are very keen to support this to help encourage appropriate vehicle speeds and driver behaviour in the area. This also takes into account the various route hazards including bends and hills, as well as hamlets that the roads pass through.

3.0 Corporate implications

3.1 Financial and VAT

Should the proposed 40 mph speed limit be supported, it is to be funded by Speldhurst Parish Council and delivered via the Kent County Council Schemes Planning and Delivery team process.

3.2 Legal

All works will be within the publicly maintainable highway for which Kent County Council is responsible.

3.3 Corporate

None.

4.0 Recommendation

4.1 That the Joint Transportation Board recommends implementation of the proposed 40 mph speed limit as advertised.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Location plan showing extents of proposed 40 mph speed limit

Background Papers

None.

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