

Traffic Management - Part Thirteen



Last month's article covered the completion of the measures on Station Road, so this article will focus on the remainder of the scheme on the High Street and Pond and some frequently asked questions, so please do read on.

The Zebra Crossing Speed Table The speed table is designed to ensure traffic has slowed to the new speed limit at a critical point at the primary school. Those travelling in excess of the speed limit will find the table uncomfortable to drive over. The Community Warden, along with others, have reported the new wider crossing is clearing the school run more quickly, and school run traffic is much calmer.

Note The speed table has been designed to the maximum height permissible in Kent, which is the same height as other humps and bumps. It just doesn't look or feel as high due to the ramps and the gradual incline. Speed tables are known to be as effective as other humps, they are just more comfortable to drive over at the correct speed, and on a bus or main route, such as the High Street, they are the only form of speed hump permitted. The aim of the speed table is to slow traffic to a safe speed, rather than the excessively slow speeds required over large uncomfortable humps. Speed tables reduce accidents by around 44%.

The Pickmoss Pinch Point Instead of two full height pavement extensions (buildouts) the buildout opposite Pickmoss has not been built as approved. This will be reconstructed in the October half-term (at KCC's expense) and will be about half the size of the flattened buildout. The pinch point is providing extra space for pedestrians, and those with buggies or wheelchairs, to move safely around the Pickmoss step as well as slowing traffic down in this narrow section of the High Street.

Note Contrary to many fears, the pinch point is not causing undue congestion. Inevitably, such a measure will cause teething problems until drivers become accustomed to the new layout. These teething problems have been exacerbated by the late arrival of the specific traffic signage from KCC. The priority system will operate more effectively at lower more consistent traffic speeds once the flattened buildout is reconstructed. Typically, vehicles travel at around 21mph through a single chicane and accidents are reduced by around 29% so this new feature should make a big difference to pedestrian safety. **Please note**, not observing a Give Way is an offence, this applies to the Give Way at the pinch point and if this results in an accident the driver will be legally responsible.

Pond Traffic-Islands The traffic island upgrades to proper crossings have provided several smart and pedestrian-friendly safe places to cross at the heart of the village centre. These have been warmly welcomed, particularly by our more vulnerable members of the community.

Note Previously, only the Sevenoaks Road island was a suitable and safe crossing point. There have been a few observations about visibility due to the vegetation at the new enlarged Woodman refuge. The foliage will be reduced and maintained to ensure safety. Pedestrian refuge-islands decrease pedestrian accidents by around 40%.

20mph Speed Limit As is the case with any speed limit, not all drivers will comply, however, 81% of drivers in a 20mph limit will be driving at under 30mph. The physical traffic calming measures will help to enforce the speed limit, and along with the signage and road markings will work together to slow average traffic speeds and improve pedestrian safety. Each entry point into the 20mph limit will have a large section of red surfacing to highlight the new limit.

Note Beware the 20mph speed limit is in force, and contrary to popular myth, you can get a speeding ticket in a 20mph limit! The Speed Watch team has been reinstated and will be out in force regularly reporting any drivers exceeding the speed limit to the police. If the data proves a driver is ignoring repeated warnings, the police can prosecute.

Overall Objectives The objective of the traffic calming scheme is to achieve lower consistent speeds across the entire scheme, not to lower speeds excessively at any given traffic calming feature. Research shows that lowering traffic speeds excessively leads to more braking and acceleration which creates noise and pollution. Lower steadier speeds in urban environments reduce pollution as braking and accelerating is reduced, and traffic flows more efficiently reducing congestion.

Speed Cameras Speed cameras are not possible for our village. Fixed speed cameras are only considered where there have been three or more fatalities or seriously injured speed-related crashes over 1.5km stretch of road in a three-year period. Speed cameras are seen as a last resort once all other justifiable solutions have been exhausted, and they are only possible on a relatively straight road. The cost per speed camera is prohibitive at between £20-£40,000 and maintenance and running costs are around £8-9,000 per annum.

If you would like to find out more about why certain traffic calming measures are not possible in some locations, please go to www.otfordpc.org.uk/traffic-management and select 'Traffic Calming Options Reviewed'.

Now that the Phase One measures have been installed, the Traffic Management Group will be focussing on Phases Two and Three of the Traffic Calming Scheme.

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