

Email to Jean Swan from Toby Donlon of Kent County Council - Speed Indicator Devices - September 2018

Good Afternoon Jean,

A colleague and I visited Preston yesterday to carry out a provisional site check of the locations provided. Unfortunately for the reasons listed below none of the locations will be suitable for a Speed Indicator Device (SID) and, after thoroughly investigating the entire north to south section of 30mph carriageway for alternative locations, I do not believe that we will be able to accommodate an SID scheme for Preston.

1. On the bank near to the entrance to the Hunts Horsebox sales

The bank is raised, uneven, and unsuitable for post foundations. A large agricultural vehicle has clearly recently churned it and there are signs of significant carriageway overrun (vehicles driving partially onto the banked area, presumably to pass another vehicle). There is also a secondary access here adjacent to the access to Hunts Horsebox Sales, presumably for larger vehicles judging by the overrun. We would not install so close to an access like this as a sign would likely block visibility for vehicles manoeuvring in or out. This is also third party land that would require a Deed of Easement to be established and the legal right to access a sufficient area of land to accommodate a sign. This area is not suitable.

2. On the triangle at the Forstal junction

This island is far too small to accommodate a SID. There is already a statutory road sign in place, which cannot be obscured or moved from its position, and there is also an overhead power supply, which we cannot install close to. The line of sight for the sign is actually rather poor for northbound vehicles, and questionable for southbound vehicles. A sign here would also distract from the side road access, which in turn is likely to reduce safety, and the ground is uneven with clear underground utilities in place. This area is not suitable.

3. On the green opposite Swan House

There is insufficient room to accommodate a sign safely here. We would not install between the war memorial and the village sign as the space is insufficient and would obscure the village sign. We would not install behind the village sign as the SID would be obscured and of no benefit. A sign here would also obscure vehicles using the Mill Lane junction. There are also clear signs of vehicle overrun on the green, which we experienced first hand when two large vehicles attempted to pass one another at this point. This was exacerbated further when a bus was in position at the bus stop opposite; we do not install SIDs at, or opposite, bus stops. Exceptions have only been made when the carriageway is sufficiently wide to accommodate this safely, as well as a clear line of site with minimal additional distractions, which is not the case here. This area is not suitable.

Given that we will not be installing at any of these locations, we attempted to find alternative locations but were unable to identify anywhere suitable. The

large verge by the Grove Road junction is unsuitable as the placement required to provide a sufficient line of sight will be set too far back. This creates a potential hazard and will negatively affect vehicles using the junction and may impact on the recently installed build-out.

Travelling south from this location there are then large areas of wide, low-level hard standing throughout the village which are undoubtedly used as footways and parking – none of these are suitable from practical and safety perspectives.

The footway and large grass verge on the north side of The Downs junction is unsuitable as it would impede, and possibly block, a statutory diagram 545 (school) and diagram 512.2 (junction) road sign. It would also negatively affect The Downs junction and be highly visible to most properties within this Close.

The area between The Downs and Shotfield Close has an insufficient line of sight due to the geometry and curvature of the carriageway. The verge on the southbound side of Shotfield Close also has an insufficient line of sight for vehicles travelling northbound into the village and the placement of a sign would obstruct the junction.

The footway on the north side of the Forstal junction by property “Japonica” is too close to the island and has an inadequate line of sight. This will also obscure the junction and is unsafe.

The island at Longmete Road is too small, raised, uneven and therefore unsafe. There is also an inadequate line of sight.

With regard to the VAS sign located on The Street outside Preston Nursery. Given that the criteria for installation and the road geometry have changed extensively in the 14 years since this sign was installed, it will not be moved from its current position.

My records show that this sign was installed in 2004 and therefore has greatly exceeded its life expectancy, which is approximately 6 years for this type of equipment. Should it fail, it will be removed from site as it is obsolete and therefore a maintenance liability. All electronic warning signs are non-mandatory and non-enforceable, and are not safety critical assets. They will not be replaced upon failure unless an alternative funding source can be identified, and in any case the site will need to be re-assessed, as there should be a justifiable on-going reason to support any VAS installation. Specifically, every location must have an ongoing crash or speed related problem that has not been addressed by the use of other engineering measures, such as gateways, build outs or white lining improvements. Given the recent installation of a build out this will change the nature of the road and a replacement VAS is highly unlikely.

Whilst going through the village yesterday we also noticed that there were a couple of residential wheelie bins displaying imitation diagram 670 (20mph) road signs with the message “20 is plenty” but in the 30mph limit. We also noticed that the property “Highsted” has an imitation speed camera protruding

onto the carriageway to deter speeding motorists. Whilst I understand the sentiments of these homeowners, both instances are unlawful and should be removed immediately. We can serve a notice under the **Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, Part V, Section 69: Removal of third party equipment directing highway users**, but I think it reasonable to notify the Parish in the first instance and have this dealt with locally.

We will not currently be taking any further steps toward obtaining an SID for Preston due to insufficient locations, and cannot move forward with a scheme based on what we have found. We could not find one appropriate location, so we will certainly not find the required three to qualify for a SID. I appreciate that this will not be the reply you were hoping for, but these signs are not suitable or appropriate everywhere and I would suggest that other methods of speed reduction ought to be pursued.

I am happy to discuss any other ideas or locations you may have, but I do believe we have covered the area comprehensively.

Kind Regards,

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