

Traffic Count in Preston village carried out in January 2020. Report by Cllr Alwyn Pidgen for Preston Parish Council.

**1. Background information**

An automatic traffic count took place on The Street in Preston between the 20<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> January 2020. It was carried out by Transport Survey Systems Ltd, (TSS) a specialist traffic and transport company on behalf of Kent County Council. TSS provided the data that was used in this report.

Strips were placed on the road at two separate locations within the 30mph speed limit, one at each end of the village.

Location A - was sited outside Preston Garden Centre (village centre side of the build out)

Location B - was sited near to Mossy's old farm shop.

Vehicles travelling both Northbound (towards Stourmouth) and Southbound (towards Wingham) were captured separately at each checkpoint.

**2. Objectives**

- To assess the number and type of vehicles travelling through Preston village at various times of the day and night.
- To check for patterns in the data, for example: weekdays v weekends, day v night, direction of travel (north v southbound) and the start and end of the school day.
- To assess the speed of vehicles travelling through the village at each checkpoint.

**3. Detailed findings from Location A – Preston Garden Centre**

**a) Number of vehicles.**

A total of 27,065 vehicles passed this checkpoint (in both directions) over the 7 days. During this period a total of 15,895 vehicles travelled southbound and 11,170 vehicles travelled northbound. Possible reasons for this difference in traffic numbers are given in the summary (section 5).

Traffic was generally quieter at the weekend (average of 2371 vehicles per day) compared with during the week (average of 4465 vehicles per day). This represented a 47% decrease in traffic numbers at the weekend.

**b) Vehicle types.**

In terms of the main vehicles types travelling through the village, 89.4% were cars or light vans; 0.5% were vehicles towing a trailer or caravan; 8.8% were

two, three or four axle trucks or buses; 0.8% were pedal cycles and 0.2% were motorcycles. Only a small percentage (0.3%) were either rigid or articulated HGV's.

#### c) Impact during the start and end of school days.

Coinciding with the start of the school day (Mon-Fri) the maximum traffic flow (in both directions) occurred between 08.00 and 09.00h. An average of 732 vehicles each day passed the checkpoint during this time period. In fact, between the hours of 07.00 and 10.00h a daily average of 1561 vehicles was noted.

At the end of the school day between 15.00 and 17.00h a daily average of 780 vehicles passed the checkpoint during this time period.

#### d) Day v Night observations

During each weekday, overnight traffic (between midnight and 06.00h) was very light (average of 2-26 vehicles per hour). After 06.00h there was a noticeable increase in traffic numbers, with a daily maximum of 732 vehicles occurring between 08.00 and 09.00h.

During weekday evenings, daily traffic numbers declined gradually from an average of 90 vehicles between 19.00 and 20.00h, to 16 vehicles between 23.00h and midnight.

During weekends, overnight traffic (from midnight to 06.00h) was also very light (between 3 and 20 vehicles per hour). From 08.00h onwards there was a gradual increase in traffic numbers, reaching a daily maximum of 254 vehicles between 13.00 and 14.00h.

During weekend evenings, traffic numbers declined gradually from a daily average of 71 vehicles between 19.00 and 20.00h to 20 vehicles between 23.00h and midnight.

#### e) Speed – general observations

The overall daily average speed of vehicles passing this checkpoint, for the entire week was 26mph. Values were consistent across all days and there was no noticeable difference in speed for the two directions of travel.

However, overall average values do not show the whole picture and as such can be misleading.

For example, during the survey a total of 5048 vehicles (19% of the grand total) exceeded the 30mph speed limit at this checkpoint. Of these, a total of 888 vehicles (3.3% of the grand total) also exceeded the ACPO\* speed limits, while a total of 25 vehicles (0.1% of the grand total) exceeded 45mph.

\* ACPO is the speed limit generally used by the Association of Chief Police Officers to issue a summons. This limit is 110% of the posted speed limit + 2mph. For example, in a 30mph limit a summons can be issued if a vehicle is travelling at 35mph or more.

f) Speed - during the school day

During the times of the day (Mon-Fri) when children were either on their way to, or leaving Preston Primary School the vast majority of vehicles (84-93%) kept within the 30mph speed limit at this checkpoint. However, a significant number of vehicles (6-14%) were travelling at speeds of up to 35mph. On the positive side, speeds in excess of 35mph accounted for only 2% of all vehicles (see Table 1).

Time period (h)	<30mph	31-35mph	35-40mph	41-45mph	46-50mph	Grand Total
07.00 – 08.00	2412(86%)	346(12%)	44(2%)	3(0.1%)	1	2806
08.00-09.00	3621(93%)	241(6%)	32(0.8%)	2(0.05%)	0	3896
09.00-10.00	1526(84%)	251(14%)	39(2%)	2(0.1%)	0	1818
15.00-16.00	1736(86%)	253(13%)	23(1%)	2(0.1%)	1	2015
16.00-17.00	2258(85%)	356(13%)	47(2%)	4(0.15%)	1	2666
17.00-18.00	2015(84%)	345(14%)	41(2%)	6(0.2%)	1	2410

Table 1: Total number of vehicles and their associated speeds (plus % of total) at the start and end of the school day for location A

**4. Detailed findings from Location B – Mossy’s old farm shop**

a) Number of vehicles.

A total of 32,222 vehicles passed this checkpoint (in both directions) over the 7 days. During this period, similar numbers of vehicles travelled southbound (15,696) and northbound (16,526).

Traffic was generally quieter at the weekend (2527 vehicles per day) compared with during the week (5434 vehicles per day). This represented a 53% decrease in traffic numbers at the weekend.

b) Vehicle types.

In terms of the main vehicles types travelling through the village, 89% were cars or light vans. 0.4% were vehicles towing a trailer or caravan. 9.8% were two and three axle trucks or buses, while a total of 0.5% comprised pedal

cycles and motorbikes. Only a small percentage (0.3%) of vehicles were 4 axle rigid or articulated HGV's.

#### c) Impact during the start and end of school days.

Coinciding with the start of the school day (Mon-Fri) the maximum traffic flow (in both directions) occurred between 08.00 and 09.00h. During this time period an average of 867 vehicles passed the checkpoint each day. In fact, between the hours of 07.00 and 10.00h a daily average of 1895 vehicles was noted.

At the end of the school day between 15.00 and 17.00h a daily average of 941 vehicles passed the checkpoint during this time period.

#### d) Day v Night observations

During weekdays, overnight traffic (between midnight and 06.00h) was very light (daily average of 2-31 vehicles per hour). After 06.00h there was a noticeable increase in traffic numbers, with a daily maximum of 867 vehicles passing the checkpoint between 08.00 and 09.00h.

During weekday evenings traffic numbers declined gradually from a daily average of 123 vehicles between 19.00 and 20.00h to 16 vehicles between 23.00h and midnight.

During the weekends, overnight traffic (between midnight and 06.00h) was noticeably light (daily average of 2 -15 vehicles per hour). From 08.00h onwards there was a gradual increase in average daily traffic numbers, with a maximum of 269 vehicles passing the checkpoint during the 13.00 and 14.00h time period.

During weekend evenings, traffic numbers declined gradually from a daily average of 77 vehicles between 19.00 and 20.00h to a daily average of 20 vehicles from between 23.00h and midnight.

#### e) Speed – general observations

The overall daily average speed of vehicles passing this checkpoint, during the whole week was 32mph. Values were consistent across all days and there was no noticeable difference in speed for the two directions of travel.

However, overall average values do not show the whole picture and as such can be misleading.

For example, during the survey, 20,112 vehicles (62% of the grand total) that passed this checkpoint exceeded the 30mph speed limit. Of these, 7157 (22% of the grand total) also exceeded the ACPO speed limits used by the police to issue a summons. In addition, a total of 852 vehicles (2.6% of the grand total) exceeded 45mph (see additional comments below).

#### f) Speed - during the school day

During the times of day when children were either on their way to or leaving Preston Primary School, an average of only 40% of drivers kept within the 30mph speed limit.

Of the 60% of drivers that exceeded the 30mph speed limit, approximately 40% were travelling at speeds up to 35mph. Another 12 -16% were travelling at speeds up to 40mph while between 2 - 5% of drivers were travelling at speeds up to 45mph (see Table 2).

However, the greatest cause for concern during school drop off and pick up times was that a further 195 vehicles were travelling at speeds between 50 and 60mph, while 80 vehicles reached speeds between 60 and 70mph and 7 vehicles were reported as travelling over 90mph

Time period (h)	<30mph	31-35mph	36-40mph	41-45mph	46-50mph	>50mph	Grand Total
07.00 – 08.00	1385(39%)	1655(46%)	436(12%)	59(2%)	12(0.3%)	15(0.4%)	3562
08.00-09.00	1741(38%)	1827(40%)	598(13%)	120(3%)	152(3%)	150(3%)	4588
09.00-10.00	896(43%)	743(36%)	303(15%)	47(2%)	16(0.8%)	75(3.6%)	2082
15.00-16.00	1094(45%)	928(39%)	316(13%)	55(2%)	9(0.4%)	3(0.1%)	2405
16.00-17.00	1147(37%)	1254(40%)	435(14%)	156(5%)	30(1%)	94(3%)	3116
17.00-18.00	1046(37%)	1151(41%)	456(16%)	122(4%)	37(1%)	13(0.5)	2825

Table 2: Total number of vehicles in each speed category (plus % of total) at the start and end of the school day for location B

### **5. Summary and discussion of findings**

Controlling vehicle speeds across the length of The Street in Preston village has been a major challenge for the Parish Council in recent years. In this traffic survey, 89% of all vehicles were found to be cars and light vans. This is not surprising, due to: -

- Our rural location
- The steady increase in new housing developments within East Kent including Preston Grange.
- A significant change in shopping habits, leading to a marked increase in the volume and frequency of delivery vehicles.
- The fact that the road through the village connects up with busy major roads (A253/A28 and A257) and leaves us vulnerable to the certainty that

traffic will use our village as a cut through when these 'A' roads are closed or congested (see additional comment below).

We can no longer rely on regular HGV traffic flow (as we did from the old Salvatori depot) to act as a speed deterrent. In this survey the combination of all 2, 3, and 4 axle trucks, articulated vehicles and buses contributed <10% of the total traffic volume.

In terms of total volume of traffic, 27,065 vehicles were captured passing the Garden Centre checkpoint, while 32,222 vehicles were captured passing Mossy's old farm shop.

Of the above totals, 15,800 vehicles were captured travelling southbound at both checkpoints. However, 5300 fewer vehicles were captured travelling northbound at the Garden Centre checkpoint (11,170) compared to those travelling northbound at Mossy's farm shop checkpoint (16,526). Possible reasons for this are speculative but could include: -

- This survey was carried out at a time when the southbound A256 carriageway near Discovery Park was closed due to a sewerage leak. This caused long delays and congestion at peak times in the vicinity and many vehicles avoided the area by turning off the A253 and using the southbound road through Preston village as a cut through to the A257 and subsequently the A256. However, since the northbound A256 carriageway was open, it was probable that a number of these vehicles did not make the return journey via Preston.
- Many Preston residents who leave the village by car are most likely to travel southbound to join the A257 (either via the Nash Road or Preston Hill) and return northbound, passing Mossy's farm shop checkpoint – but not necessarily the Garden centre.
- Many parents who bring their children by car to Preston primary school from outside (e.g. Sandwich, Ash, Wingham) will most likely enter the village travelling northbound past Mossy's farm shop and then drive along The Street to reach the school without passing the Garden Centre. Most will then continue their return journey by travelling back via Mill Lane, Elmstone and either the Nash Road or Longmete Road.

On the positive side, traffic through the village was generally much quieter at the weekend with an approximate 50% decrease in traffic volume. However, there was no noticeable difference in speed compliance between weekdays and weekends.

Speed compliance over the whole week was much better at the Preston Garden Centre checkpoint than at Mossy's old farm shop. However, even at this checkpoint 5048 (19% of all vehicles) still exceeded the 30mph speed limit with 888 (3.3% of all vehicles) exceeding the ACPO speed limits used by the police to issue a summons. On the positive side, only 0.1% of all vehicles exceeded 45mph at this checkpoint. This could be partly due to the greater distance vehicles travelling southbound get to slow down before reaching the

checkpoint, plus the deterrent of the new traffic calmed build out. Parked vehicles dotted throughout the length of The Street and especially at the Village stores, could also contribute to the lower speeds.

Speed compliance at Mossy's old farm shop gives considerable cause for concern. For example, 20,112 vehicles (62% of the grand total) that passed this checkpoint were exceeding the 30mph speed limit. Of these, 7157 vehicles (22% of the grand total) also exceeded the ACPO speed limits used by the police to issue a summons. In addition, a total of 852 vehicles (2.6% of the grand total) exceeded 45mph.

However the greatest concern was the speeding that occurred between 08.00 and 10.00h and between 15.00 and 17.00h. These times coincide with school drop off and pick up off and times when children are waiting for and disembarking from, school buses. Results showed that 195 vehicles were travelling at speeds between 50 and 60mph, while 80 vehicles reached speeds between 60 and 70mph, and 7 vehicles were reported as travelling over 90mph.

During the evening (after 19.00h) and the overnight period (until 06.00h), volume of traffic was not a major problem.

The significantly higher vehicle speeds found at Mossy's old farm shop checkpoint are not surprising when the road layout at that end of the village is taken into account. The speed limit on the northbound approach to the village gateway, which is sited just before the vehicle turnings to Court Lane and Longmete Road, is 60mph. As was seen from this survey, many vehicles did not slow down sufficiently to attain the 30mph speed limit before they passed Mossy's old farm shop. In fact, some may still be exceeding the speed limit when they reach the entrance to The Forstal.

The speed problems at this gateway are well known, are constantly raised as a concern by village residents and are documented in our Highways Improvement Plan. The Parish Council has tried unsuccessfully several times over the years to liaise with DDC and KCC to find a workable solution to the speed problem at the southbound end of the village. This problem becomes even more of a concern given the lack of any safe pedestrian walkways in the area.

It is also instructive to compare the results from the current automated traffic survey with the one reported in August 2014 by Bellamy Roberts (as part of the Quinn Estates Planning application for Preston Grange). This survey was carried out on Stourmouth road at the north end of the village. Since 2014, results have shown a 2.3 fold increase in the total volume of traffic at this end of the village, rising from 11,700 in 2014 to 27,065 in 2020.