

Councillor Pete West

King's House
Grand Avenue
Hove
BN3 2LS

Date: 20 July 2009

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

Dear Councillor Theobald

Introducing a 20 mph speed limit in West Hill and beyond

I have been contacted by residents of St Nicholas Road, concerned about the danger speeding traffic in their road is presenting to children attending St Paul's school, other highway users, residents, their properties and parked vehicles.

St Nicholas Road is a narrow one-way street with a slim pavement on one side only and parked cars abutting a wall on the other. Residents, parents and the school are concerned that the road is frequently used as a high speed rat run in particular by taxis and delivery vans. The lives and safety of children accessing St Paul's School are clearly endangered, and there is further concern for the safety of pedestrians and occupants of homes if a speeding driver were to take evasive action in the face of a potential collision with a child.

I have appended a letter from Mr Addison addressing these concerns, in which he calls for traffic calming measures including the introduction of 20mph speed limit. This call is backed by the Head teacher of the school. Mr Addison and his neighbour Joyce Duncan have subsequently raised a petition, which has been supported by most households in St Nicholas Road.

I understand St. Paul's School is working very hard to encourage sustainable travel, and is regarded as an exemplar among the city's schools for its proactive work. The council are currently working with the school on the "Bike It" initiative which is encouraging many children to cycle to school. In support of this the council provides a "Bike It" officer from the sustainable transport charity Sustrans. The council is also working with the school on the pilot "Golden Flip-Flop" scheme which is encouraging children to walk to school by rewarding them with golden flip-flop stickers. I also understand the school is restarting its Walking Bus, which is an organised walk to school initiative. The school is one of only 8 in the city to operate a walking bus.

The children, their parents, the school, and council officers are to be commended for their efforts towards making sustainable travel a growing reality. However, these great achievements need to be supported by the creation of a safer travel environment in the travel to school area.

Council officers have explained that the road will not qualify for speed humps as there has been no accident recorded in the past three years. Apart from the wincing inhumanity of this policy, its inflexibility seems disingenuous in its failure to account for the rising likelihood of accidents with more children now travelling by foot and by bike – as encouraged and supported by the council!

I note your statement at Council (July 16) in which you recognised the importance of the 20mph limit in Chalky Road had been in helping to reduce the severity of injury to a recent child road accident casualty. So, notwithstanding the willingness or ability of the Council to introduce physical traffic calming, I wish to request your support for the introduction of a 20 mph speed limit in St Nicholas Road and surrounding travel to school area.

Council officers have suggested that without supporting physical measures, motorists won't adhere to the speed limits, and the Police will see this as an enforcement problem and therefore would be unlikely to support traffic orders.

However, the Department of Transport (DfT) are clear that implementation of 20 mph limits by signs only and without physical measures is feasible where the general traffic speed is already relatively low. I suggest that this is the case in the narrow short streets of the area and that introducing a 20 mph limit will only help to reinforce this and reduce speeds further.

I further note the emphasis the DfT places on the benefit of 20 mph limits in that they *"help to protect children walking and cycling to and from school, and may encourage other children to walk or cycle."* 20mph speed limits have also proven to reduce vehicle-related injuries and fatalities, improve air quality, cut carbon emissions and reduce noise.

In January 2006 new DfT guidance was issued (DfT circular 01/2006) allowing local authorities to implement 20mph speed limits across large areas without having to install new traffic calming measures. Since then, a growing number of local authorities have decided to adopt 20mph as the default speed in their area. The list now includes Leicester, Norwich, Oxford, Portsmouth, Newcastle, large areas of Bristol, and the London Borough of Islington.

In March 2008 Portsmouth became the first city in Britain to have a 20 mph limit on almost all residential roads – in effect a default speed limit throughout the city, with exceptions for important arterial roads only. The entire cost was a mere £500,000.

If a pedestrian is struck by a vehicle at 35 mph there is a 50% chance they will die... At 20mph their chance of survival is improved 97%. For children this is significantly worse.

I therefore call on Cllr Theobald to:

- a) take seriously the concerns of residents of St Nicholas Road;
- b) introduce physical traffic calming measures and 20mph in St Nicholas Road;
- c) recognise the vital need to introduce a low speed culture in the city;
- d) acknowledge that this can and must be achieved in St Nicholas Road, it's surrounding area, and across the whole city by the comprehensive introduction of 20mph limits on all residential (non arterial) roads;

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pete West', written in a cursive style.

Councillor Pete West
For and on behalf of the Green Party Councillors
St Peter's & North Laine Ward

