

Hadlow Down Parish Council Meeting 5th September 2023

Signage on, and Speeding through, Hadlow Down on the A272

1. The current situation:

From Buxted eastbound on the A272: The speed limit drops direct from 60 mph to 30 mph at a point ~240m east of the 'Hadlow Down' village sign. The speed sign itself is large and rectangular, and includes the name of the village. There are a further two (on either side of the road) 30 mph round signs, followed by a 'School / 30 mph' sign and then a single small 30 mph sign by the top entrance to the Church next to the new Speed Indicator Display (SID) sign location. The new SID site is ~120m inside of the start of the 30 mph zone.

From the junction of the A267 and A272 westbound on the A272: There is a graduated speed restriction zone system in this direction. A drop from 60 mph to 50 mph occurs ~100 m west of the entrance to Little England Farm and is indicated by two relatively large round 50 mph signs (on either side of the road). Approximately 400m further west, just past Tinkers Lane, a 40 mph zone is introduced announced by a large rectangular sign that includes the name of the village (N.B. the comparable sized sign at the other end of the village announces the start of the 30 mph zone). Approximately 200m further west the 40 mph zone status is re-emphasised with two (one on each side of the road) round signs on a square background. Approximately 60m further west, close to the junction with Wheelers Lane, the 30 mph zone starts, being announced by two small round 30 mph signs. The 30 mph signs are in a section of road that is wooded on both sides making them difficult to see (as the photograph below shows).



2. Possible issues for debate

- (a) There is a clear disparity between how the 30 mph zone through the centre of the village is signed. This should be rectified with two changes:
- The start of the 30 mph zones should be comparable; the eastern border is too far into the village and should be at the top of Tinkers Lane, if not further east. This would help to improve the safety of those entering / leaving the A272 from Tinkers Lane, Tinkers Park, Wheelers Lane and Wilderness Wood. It would also improve the safety for pedestrians, particularly along the stretch where there is no grass verge or 'pavement'.
 - The start of the 30 mph zone from the east should be 'announced' by a large rectangular sign that includes the name of the village, as is the case entering the village from Buxted side.
- (b) The evidence provided by the speed recording function of the Speed Indicator Display (SID) signs clearly shows that the graduated speed zoning to the east of the village significantly reduces vehicle speeds as measured approximately 100m into the 30 mph zone. The impact of this graduated system would be enhanced if the signage for the start of the 30 mph zone was more clearly announced as suggested above. As it can be argued, for example, that during the opening hours of Wilderness Wood cars entering and leaving the site produce a traffic calming effect, it is perhaps more informative to look at two single three hour time slots, namely '06.00 to 09.00' and '18.00 to 21.00':

A272	Total Vehicles	30+ mph	35+ mph	40+ mph
Westbound 06.00 to 09.00	57589	63.26	35.07	14.03
Westbound 18.00 to 21.00	30848	69.80	39.45	15.18
Eastbound 06.00 to 09.00	56451	64.81	40.48	18.71
Eastbound 18.00 to 21.00	65955	64.99	39.68	17.41

However, the data for all time periods does show a similar pattern:

A272 westbound (Wilderness Wood site) 14th Dec. 2021 to 29th March 2022 and 7th June 2022 to 30th August 2022

[illegible]

A272 eastbound (Church site) 20th March 2023 to 30th May 2023

Range	0-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65+	Totals
Vehicles	32039	55683	58933	47114	23556	6321	1441	310	76	18	225491
%	14.21	24.69	26.14	20.89	10.45	2.80	0.64	0.14	0.03	0.01	100.00
All vehicles: Over 30 mph = 61.10% and over 35 mph = 34.95%											

The data for eastbound vehicles where the speed limit drops from 60 mph to 30 mph in one dramatic step shows that a far higher percentage of vehicles are travelling in excess of 35 mph and 40 mph than is the case in the other direction where there is a graduated reduction in speed limits (N.B. both sets of data are collected approximately 100m into the 30 mph zone).

(c) As well as the efficacy of a graduated reduction in speed limit zones (as demonstrated above) there are several other safety reasons that support the case for graduated speed limit zoning entering the village from the west:

- A footpath (HAD/23/1 to HAD/36/1) crosses the A272 at the lower end of the burial ground – a footpath used by, amongst others, St Mark's School children accessing the school's facility 'SMILE Meadow' (one and three quarter acres of land in Waste Wood acquired by the School in 2009).
- There are two other frequently used crossings, particularly when there is a church service, from the grounds of St Mark's Church.
- Approximately 100m further into the 30 mph zone from where the speed data is collected there is the junction with School Lane and Wilderness Lane. School Lane is a busy road, particularly during the start and end of the school day – data collected from the School Lane site shows an average traffic flow of 1,400+ vehicles per day. Exiting from School Lane onto the A272 is particularly hazardous as the view in either direction along the A272 is restricted.

3. Conclusions

There are clear cases for changes to signage, moving the start of the 30 mph zone at the east end of the village to Tinkers Lane (or even further) and for graduated speed zones to be put in place at the west side of the village.

There is also a case for the 30 mph zone at the west end of the village to be moved several hundred metres further west; the arguments for this include:

The derestricted sign is easily visible from the School Lane junction and thus encourages drivers to increase speed along the downhill portion of Main Road as they exit the village heading west.

Consistent safety measures: Extending the 30mph speed limit outside the village ensures consistency in road safety measures. By maintaining a lower speed limit beyond the village boundaries, drivers are encouraged to maintain reduced speeds consistently, minimizing the risk of accidents caused by sudden speed changes. This approach helps create a safer road environment for all road users. It would also help protect those using the public footpath that crosses the A272 including school children accessing SMILE Meadow.

Seamless transition: Extending the 30mph limit outside the village ensures a smooth and seamless transition for drivers traveling from the village area to the surrounding areas. Sudden changes in speed limits can create confusion and lead to abrupt braking or acceleration, increasing the risk of rear-end collisions or other traffic incidents. By extending the 30mph zone, drivers can maintain a consistent speed throughout their journey, enhancing overall safety and traffic flow.

Encouraging responsible driving behaviour: Extending the 30mph limit outside the village sends a clear message to drivers that responsible and cautious driving is expected beyond the village boundaries. This helps to instil a culture of safe driving practices and reminds drivers to be mindful of their speed and surroundings. Consistently enforcing a lower speed limit can contribute to reducing reckless driving behaviours and enhancing overall road safety.

Environmental considerations: Extending the 30mph speed limit outside the village can also have environmental benefits. Lower speeds generally result in reduced fuel consumption and lower emissions. By encouraging drivers to maintain a lower speed, especially in areas where there might be natural landscapes, wildlife habitats, or sensitive ecosystems, the impact on the environment can be minimized.