

A 20mph LIMIT FOR THE WHOLE OF WIDCOMBE HILL

When we heard a year ago that the Council was proposing to introduce a 20mph limit in the Widcombe/Bathwick area, but that Widcombe Hill could have been excluded from this, I and two other local residents submitted a Petition to Council on 10 April 2013, asking for the whole of Widcombe Hill to be included in the new lower limit. This is because Widcombe Hill is steep and narrow in many places, has a number of semi blind side road accesses, and is heavily used by cyclists and walkers going to and from the University. There have been many accidents of varying seriousness, over the years, due to excess speed.

Our Petition was signed by 71 residents, representing 87.5% of the homes on, or with access to the Hill.

We were delighted when the original draft scheme, published in 2014, included the whole of Widcombe Hill in the new limit.

However after the Scheme went out for statutory consultation, I heard from my local Councillor, Ian Gilchrist, that the Council Traffic Officer had reported to him that the Police had raised objections, because they questioned the likelihood of compliance without additional engineering measures.

The residents would love to see additional speed reducing engineering measures but I was told that there is no money for these in this year's budget. I subsequently met Councillor Caroline Roberts for a very helpful discussion. I argued that if it is not possible to introduce additional engineering measures, the Residents strongly felt that the implementation of a 20mph limit on the Hill would persuade the majority of drivers to reduce their speeds, thereby reducing the risk of accidents

On 4 September 2014, I heard from Caroline that she had decided to include the whole of Widcombe Hill in the new limit and that if traffic calming was necessary, this would be included in future budget planning.

So, you can understand our disappointment, when Caroline wrote to me on 8 December 2014 to say that she had taken Officer advice and had agreed to implement a separate Order for Widcombe Hill. The reason for this being that mean speeds on the Hill are too high to implement the speed limit without physical measures and the Police and others may object, This, she said, may jeopardise the implementation for the whole of the Widcombe/Bathwick area.

On 13 January 2015, I spoke to Dave Sheppard of Avon and Somerset Police. He explained that their position was that where speed checks indicated that compliance to a 20mph limit would be questionable, they normally recommended additional engineering measures. I specifically asked him if the Police would have objected to the current RTO for Widcombe/Bathwick if the whole of Widcombe Hill had been included. His reply was that, although they might make recommendations, the Police did not see it to be their role to object to the introduction of a 20mph limit if the Local Authority and the local community want one.

This being the case, my plea is that a separate Order covering the whole of Widcombe Hill is issued without delay. This will have the added benefit of simplifying the signing in the Widcombe Hill area and therefore will save cost for the Council.

Why is this now not possible please?

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