

11 December 2013

Brighton & Hove City Council

DEPUTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

A period of not more than fifteen minutes shall be allowed at each ordinary meeting of the Council for the hearing of deputations from members of the public. Each deputation may be heard for a maximum of five minutes.

Deputations received:

(i) Deputation: 20mph speed limits- Chris Murgatroyd

This Deputation urges Brighton & Hove City Council to include residential roads bordering Hove Park and Hove Recreation Ground within the lower speed limits proposed for Phase 2 of the ongoing 20mph scheme. No evidence was offered during the recent consultation on the Phase 2 scheme to explain why these streets should be excluded. Excluding these streets near such busy public parks is likely to discourage children from cycling, and to expose children and other vulnerable users to unnecessary risk.

This deputation urges that other priority roads in the Dyke Road West area be included around the major public parks in the area, Hove Park and Hove Rec. As a minimum, Hove Park Road, Goldstone Crescent, Orchard Road and the westernmost section of The Droveaway, should be subject to 20mph limits.

The current proposal which excludes the streets around Hove Park and Hove Rec. is a perverse outcome from the recent consultation. There is a good deal of evidence showing the general benefits of slower speeds – the BHCC Scrutiny Panel on 20mph in 2010 reviewed available evidence and recommended 20mph in all residential streets of Brighton & Hove. All political parties represented on BHCC have recently been reported as supporting lower speeds in residential streets.

The roads around Hove Park and Hove Rec. specifically are an important part of the journeys which could be made by bike, by children commuting from east Hove to Hove Park School and Blatchington Mill School, and from west Hove to the schools east of Shirley Drive – Cottesmore, Cardinal Newman, Brighton & Hove High School. Hove Park Road and Goldstone Crescent in particular are crucial to moving safely between Hove Rec. and Hove Park – these two streets meet at a busy junction made more dangerous still by the number of parked cars on Goldstone Crescent. Failure to include these roads in the 20mph scheme are likely to be a major disincentive to cycling to school and to encouraging young people to be more active.

The BHCC proposal seeks to exclude the streets in the Dyke Road West area only because responses in the recent consultation appeared to show that local residents did not support 20mph limits on “their” streets. But a consultation is not in any sense a referendum or a “vote”, and it is a blunt instrument for policymaking. The principle of taking residents' views into account is definitely a sound one, but those views can't be the only consideration, or even the main consideration. The streets around Hove Park and Hove Rec. are public roads, they are not part of a private estate.

In short, when considering where to introduce lower speed limits the wishes of people living in a particular street are a relevant factor, but not the only relevant factor. If the evidence from the Scrutiny Panel shows that 20mph limits are generally better for all people, the Council should not give undue weight to matters which should not be given that weight, and should not fail to take other relevant matters into account at all. The wishes of residents who responded in the consultation – most of whom do not have children – should not be allowed to deny children safer streets or discourage them from being active, or to expose taxpayers to higher bills for unnecessary accidents.

Chris Murgatroyd
Nicola Maurice
Eleanor Cartwright
Simon Maurice

Background/Supplementary Information

In the Phase 2 proposal, all of the streets in the area known as “Dyke Road West” are excluded from the 20mph scheme, apart from a small section to the east of Shirley Drive around local schools.

The deputation urges that priority roads in the Dyke Road West area be included around the major public parks in the area, Hove Park and Hove Rec. - ie. as a minimum, Hove Park Road, Goldstone Crescent, Orchard Road and the westernmost section of The Droveaway, should be subject to 20mph limits. To make the scheme coherent, though, it could also be extended to other streets within the area bounded by Nevill Road in the west, Woodland Drive in the north, Shirley Drive in the east, and Old Shoreham Road in the south.

With strong evidence for the benefits of slower speeds on residential roads, the burden must be on those who support retaining the current 30mph limit to justify why higher speeds are necessary. If the evidence for and against 20mph was balanced – ie. if there was just as much evidence for the benefits of 30mph as 20mph in residential areas – then the views of residents might be given priority. But there is a complete lack of evidence from the consultation to show why anybody (apart from the emergency services) needs to drive at 30mph on any residential street at any time, let alone on these streets around two of Hove's biggest public parks, and on the routes to and from so many schools.

It's also significant that people under 24yrs of age made up only 4 percent of those responding to the Phase 2 consultation as a whole, and only about one-third of respondents to the consultation as a whole are recorded as having children under 18 living with them. Excluding these residential streets from the proposed scheme would fail to act in the best interests of children. It would be a travesty if we discouraged activity amongst young people, or put them at unnecessary risk, simply on the basis of partial information from a consultation exercise.

All taxpayers should also have a real concern. The cost of accidents is high, and 20mph limits should reduce the number and severity of accidents. By excluding some streets from the scheme without any evidence for why they should be excluded, the council runs the risk of incurring additional costs – a person injured on a street deliberately excluded from the scheme could add the Council to a legal claim for compensation in the event of an accident. And what might the Council's response be to such a claim: “we had the evidence to show that slower speeds have multiple benefits and reduce the risks to children and other vulnerable road users, but a small number of local residents said they didn't want those benefits in public streets, and although they didn't give us any evidence or reasons for their opposition to the scheme we excluded those streets anyway”?