

## **Make our streets safer and more active: petition for central Sevenoaks 20mph zone**

### **Introduction**

- Thanks to STC for agreeing to note this petition for safer, cleaner, healthier streets in Sevenoaks.
- This petition was presented to Sevenoaks Joint Transportation Board in June/Sept 2021
- The proposal in the petition has
  - many benefits
  - no downsides
  - There's no reason not to do this.
- Following the JTB, KCC Highways has looked at the proposal, evaluated its feasibility and desirability, and designed a scheme in response.

### **The proposal**

The proposal in the petition is to introduce 20mph speed limits in central Sevenoaks from the town centre north up to (but not including) the A25.

This is an area of just 1.5 square miles but has

- 10,000 residents
- numerous workplaces
- countless amenities, including
  - - the main town centre
  - - several satellite shopping areas
  - - the main railway station
  - - no fewer than 12 schools.

It's densely packed and heavily walked, exactly the kind of area where 20 zones give the most benefit.

And we need that benefit: in the last decade (pre-lockdowns) 221 people have been injured in the proposed 20 zone, on streets that still have 30 limits.

### **Why we need this**

20 limits would radically improve this safety record, and realise many other benefits besides:

- **safety improves massively:** with an effective 20 limit
  - injury collisions reduce by 50%
  - serious injuries reduce by up to 90%per OECD International Transport Forum (59 nations) study 2018.
- because it's much safer, **active travel increases:**
  - walking and especially cycling increase, with strong health improvements for the population.
  - proposals for safe cycling infrastructure from Amherst to Trinity schools and Otford to Sevenoaks High Street need these 20mph limits to realise their potential
- **the air quality improves:** slower speeds, smoother driving, less acceleration and less braking all mean less fuel burnt and less brake and tyre wear polluting the air
- noise disturbance – which is increasingly recognised as harmful to health - **reduces dramatically with slower top speeds**
- **congestion reduces as well:**
  - slower, smoother driving takes up less road space per vehicle.
  - Traffic becomes less stop-start, flows better and the roads can process higher volumes at peak times.

## No downsides

Sevenoaks Town Council Planning Committee 17-10-2022 - Additional information relating to 20mph petition  
All these benefits come with basically no downsides.

- **journey times barely change**, up approx. just 4% in new 20 zones on average (per Atkins study for DfT in 2018):
  - for a 5 minute journey that's 12 seconds
  - as the study says, the increases are so small most drivers won't even notice
- The proposal is **quick, easy and cheap to implement** – between £5 and £10 per resident on average
- **Such schemes save money** – many new 20 zones pay back within just a single year (per KCC website)
- **It fits with national and local policy** (net zero, vision zero 2050, GearChange, the NDP)

## Community support

- Not surprisingly, given the important benefits and lack of downsides, this has very strong local support – seven local schools, nine local residents associations (including St Johns, Hollybush, Knole Paddock, The Drive, Bradbourne RA and White Hart Estates) and 1,800 signatories are actively backing this: a minimum of 380 signatories in Eastern ward, 350 in St Johns, 180 in Northern, 140 in Town, remainder in other Sevenoaks district/other
- Note as well this is the 5th petition asking for action on traffic safety in Sevenoaks: this one follows petitions for
  - Sevenoaks Primary School
  - St Johns Primary School
  - the Seal Road A25 route to Seal School, past the three schools at the Trinity site
  - for action at the hole in the wall by Knole Park on Seal Hollow Rd.

The community wants action on traffic safety and shouldn't be ignored – to quote from some key local leaders in support of the petition:

### Headteacher at Lady Boswell's C of E Primary School

"We have been made aware of quite a number of 'near misses' involving a few of our pupils and Road Safety is something that features in our children's education. This scheme would, however, provide our children, their families, and all those across Sevenoaks with enhanced safety if the speed limit were to be restricted to 20mph. As a School we commend this proposal."

### Headteacher at St John's CE Primary School

"St John's school community were delighted and reassured to hear that their push to see the 20mph limit in the roads surrounding the school had been treated seriously. It is now somewhat lacking that the rest of this town isn't joined in speed limitation. A network of smaller town roads and heavy pedestrian use should surely qualify this town for some joined up thinking and 20mph speed restrictions being enforced throughout. I thoroughly support the motion to get this passed as soon as feasible and before we have to wait for a fatal accident to happen."

## Summary

Very sadly, since that last comment was made, a fatality has occurred on a 30mph street in Sevenoaks, in August 2021 – we need action now.

This proposal does address the safety of our community and has other very important benefits. It has no downsides, fits with policy, actually saves money and is widely popular. Sometimes local decisions are difficult: surely not here. There's simply no reason not to do this.

Please therefore note the petition and the wide local support it has.