

**Roger Elkins**

Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure

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Peter Catchpole  
Chairman  
North Horsham County Local Committee

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**Forest Road, Colgate**

Dear Peter

Thank you for your letter dated 14 March on behalf of the North Horsham County Local Committee regarding Forest Road, Colgate. As I am sure you are aware I have previously had correspondence with Mr Garley of Colgate Parish Council on this matter.

As you will also be aware, the County Council has adopted a Speed Limit Policy that provides officers the framework in which to assess and process speed limit changes. The policy was drafted in consultation with Sussex Police, and was supported by Members when it was introduced, subject to a slight amendment in 2011. It has recently been reviewed and determined that the current criteria remains fit for purpose. All speed limits across the county are assessed against the criteria within the policy to ensure consistent application.

Speed limits should not be used to attempt to solve the problem of isolated hazards, such as a single road junction / private access or reduced forward visibility such as a bend. The setting of speed limits should avoid departure from evidence based proposals leading to the introduction of inappropriate speed limits which are unlikely to be understood or complied with by drivers. This would result in increased numbers of drivers exceeding the posted speed limits, thereby breaking the law, and causing excessive resource implications for enforcement.

The criteria used for setting speed limits includes:

- Traffic speed (speed assessment)
- Character of the route (route assessment)
- The length of the route for the speed limit
- The rate of injury accidents along the route
- Other means of intervention to improve safety

**Speed assessment:**

We have determined the average (mean) speeds that are appropriate for each speed limit. Where average speeds are in excess of these values it is considered that the next higher speed limit would be more appropriate.

Speed Limit	60	50	40	30	20
Average speed to be <b>below</b>	62	52	42	33	24

So, for example, if average speeds are 41.9 mph then a 40mph speed limit is feasible, but if speeds are 42 mph then a 50mph speed limit is more appropriate.

It is common opinion that where there are no posted speed limits, drivers tend to make better assessments as to what is the most appropriate speed for the conditions and location. It is accepted that some drivers will drive inappropriately, but the majority are sensible and this determine the average traffic flow speeds.

**Route assessment:**

The route assessment looks at the type of environment through which the road runs. 30mph speed limits are suited to urban roads with a high percentage of residential properties and vulnerable road users are more likely to be present. In a village environment this would be the equivalent of at least 20 properties with individual direct access to the road.

Roads suitable for a 40mph speed limit would typically have some frontage and / or frequent bends junctions or accesses with regular daily use indicating a degree of potential conflict.

50mph speed limits are suitable where there is no specific requirement for frontage access, such as rural roads with few vulnerable road users present.

**Route length assessment:**

This considers the distance over which the speed limit will apply. It is good practice to avoid many changes in speed limit along a route where the distances are quite short, so consideration has to be given to applying the most suitable speed limit to allow consistency of travel and promote awareness of lower speed limits where they are most needed.

**Injury accident rate:**

The number of personal injury related collisions are taken into account to determine where higher risks exist. Speed limits alone are not the panacea for dealing with road safety issues but can be useful as part of a speed management package on routes that have a higher casualty rate per kilometre. Where there are no personal injury accidents it is difficult to justify lower speed limits in isolation.

**Other measures:**

Other measures could be a combination of different approaches instead of a speed limit, such as improved signs or road markings to target a specific road safety hazard. However, resources need to be carefully prioritised and again if there is no evidence of a problem existing it will be difficult to justify.

So, in relation to Forest Road between Colgate and Horsham, officers have undertaken assessment of the route and considered this against the speed limit policy criteria, as well as consulting Sussex Police. As you are aware it has been determined that part of the route does meet criteria for a 40mph speed limit and this has been approved by your CLC for progression as a 2019/20 Community TRO. The remainder of the route, which equates to approximately 1.3km in length has been assessed as follows:

<b>Speed assessment</b>	Speed data taken adjacent to the Roffey Park Institute in March 2018 determined that average speed of traffic eastbound (toward Colgate) was 42.1mph and westbound was 42.3mph. These values are in excess of the speed assessment criteria, though it is recognised they are only just above the threshold. However, it is believed that average speeds on the section of road between the Roffey Park Institute and Colgate village are likely to be higher, though speed data for this section has not been gathered.
<b>Route assessment</b>	Although there are several private entrances along the route this is primarily rural in nature. The road is relatively straight and accesses generally have good visibility for exiting traffic. Few properties directly front the road. It is considered that the route ideally meets the criteria for a 50mph speed limit, but if the speed criterion was met could be considered for 40mph.
<b>Route length assessment</b>	This is not an issue as the length is approximately 1.3km.
<b>Injury accident rate</b>	In the five years to end of February 2019 there has been one slight injury within this length of route, adjacent to the Roffey park Institute. This was a single vehicle incident in 2014 when the driver lost control on the bend on a wet road. Speed was not cited as a contributory factor. Although there are reports of deer being killed along the road, these incidents, though being upsetting to anyone involved, are not considered as evidence of a road safety problem.
<b>Other measures</b>	In the absence of a casualty problem highlighting a specific hazard, there is no evidenced justification to provide additional engineering measures.
<b>Sussex Police</b>	Have been consulted and do not support a 40mph speed limit where it is not compliant with policy.

Having regard to the officer assessment, the views of Sussex Police and the representations made by Colgate Parish Council and your CLC, I confirm that I support the application of the policy criteria and do not consider there is sufficient evidence to justify departure from policy.

Once the agreed proposal has been progressed, and subject to consultation outcome, then when implemented, further speed data can be taken to measure the impact. If the speed data supports compliance with a 40mph speed limit on the remainder of Forest Road to Colgate then another community led TRO application could be submitted for further consideration by the CLC for inclusion in a future Annual Delivery Plan.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R. Elkins', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Roger Elkins  
Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure