

# **Proposed Safety Camera, Loose Road, Maidstone**

A report by the Director of Kent Highway Services to the Highways Advisory Board on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2007.

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## **Introduction**

1. This report is for Members' information and refers to the proposed introduction of a new safety camera housing on the A229 Loose Road in Maidstone. A previous proposal for narrowing of the carriageway and construction of a pelican crossing was withdrawn and we have subsequently been investigating other means of addressing local concern about the creation of a safe crossing point.

## **Background**

2. This is a very busy section of the A229 Primary Route, and there has been considerable discussion at the Maidstone Joint Board about highway problems in the area. The concern is based on the desire to protect pedestrians crossing the wide, four lane carriageway, and to prevent vehicles from approaching the sharp bend into Sheals Crescent at high speeds, the road is subject to a 30mph speed limit.
3. Pedestrian crossing movements are dominated by students heading for the Maidstone Boys Grammar School in Barton Road in the morning, and parents/children heading to and from Southborough Primary School. Although there is a pedestrian bridge near the Primary School, it has long approach ramps and steps at the top, so many pedestrians choose to cross at ground level.
4. The speeding issue also causes concern to residents of Sheals Crescent, who have seen the crash barrier at the bend struck and damaged.
5. Other means of speed management were investigated. The A229 being a primary route and four lanes wide, does not allow traffic calming measures to be implemented. The possibility of an interactive bend warning sign was considered, but the alignment of the road would make it difficult to locate a sign to give drivers adequate warning of the bend, without placing it so far away that vehicles would have time to build up speed again before the turning into Sheals Crescent.
6. An additional speed camera housing was therefore considered, as this stretch of road lies between two other existing sites. It would therefore be seen as an additional measure on a road already subject to camera enforcement where crashes continue to be reported.

## **Discussion**

7. A site meeting was held to look at the potential location for a safety camera on Loose Road just south of Sheals Crescent. The most suitable location for a camera to reduce speeds approaching the sharp bend was in the entrance of the former vehicle access to Southborough School. This would encourage drivers to approach the bend at a lower speed than currently occurs reducing the risk of crashes. There would be some requirement for ancillary works in association with the camera, including kerb protection for the camera post, setting back of the guardrails within the school access, removal of one road sign, and some new carriageway surfacing in which to bed the detector loops. It was also felt that this lay-by area offered a suitable and safe location from which to carry out camera maintenance.

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8. The crash record supports the use of an additional camera bid. In the last five years there have been four serious and three slight crashes between the footbridge and Sheals Crescent junction and also one serious and three slight crashes prior to the footbridge. Three crashes involved pedestrians of which two were children. Three other crashes involved loss of control due to speed, two of which hit the Armco barrier on the bend.
9. In September/October 2005 a week long speed survey was carried out at a location just prior to the new camera position opposite Heather Drive. An average figure was taken for the whole week with an 85% speed of 37.6mph and a mean speed of 32.8mph with slightly higher figures at the weekend. Throughout the week 28% of vehicles were exceeding 35mph, this was on average 3435 vehicles per day.
10. Local consultation has been carried out by Councillor Mrs Wilson, the local Borough Council Member. The general response has been favourable to the proposed location. We would therefore wish to proceed on the basis that this is the final option available and pursue the installation of a camera housing at this location in the current financial year.

### **Costing and Funding**

11. The cost of these works will be some £33,000 and this money could be available from within the budget allocation for safety cameras.
12. The addition of this site to the schedule of sites administered by the Kent and Medway Safety Camera Partnership would not trigger the need for a bid for a new camera itself.

### **Summary**

13. After considering all options available including narrowing of the carriageway, a pelican crossing and an interactive bend sign all of which were deemed not feasible, therefore a safety camera is seen as the most suitable and effective mechanism to reduce speed and injury crashes on this stretch of road.

### **Recommendation**

14. Members are asked to note the introduction of an additional safety camera.

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