

Committee: **Lead Cabinet Member for Community Services**

Date: **14 December 2016**

Report By: **Director of Communities, Economy and Transport**

Title of Report: **Petition to Reduce the National Speed Limit of 60mph to 40mph on the B2188 Road from the Lye Green Junction to the Florence Corner Junction in Groombridge**

Purpose of Report: **To consider the petition for a reduced speed limit on this part of the B2188 Cherry Gardens Hill**

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Lead Member is recommended to:

- (1) Advise the petitioners that a reduced speed limit on this part of the B2188 Cherry Gardens Hill is not a priority for the County Council at the present time.**
 - (2) Withyham Parish Council may wish to consider part funding a lower speed limit on this part of the B2188 through the Community Match fund scheme.**
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1. Background Information.

1.1 At the County Council meeting on 18 October 2016 Councillor Whetstone presented a petition to the Chairman stating:

"We the undersigned being the residents and community of the Cherry Gardens and Hendall Hill area of East Sussex; do petition the East Sussex Council to reduce the speed limit from the National Limit of 60mph down to 40mph on the section of the B2188 road from Lye Green junction to the Florence Corner junction, in Groombridge".

1.2 A copy of the petition is available in the Members' Room. Standing Orders provide that where the Chairman considers it appropriate petitions are considered by the relevant Committee or Lead Member and a spokesperson for the petitioners is invited to address the Committee. The Chairman has referred this petition to the Lead Member for Community Services.

2. Supporting Information

2.1 The predominant factors the County Council considers when determining an appropriate speed limit are the number of properties that are clearly visible to drivers and the average speed of traffic already using the road. The petition is requesting a reduction of the national speed limit on the B2188 between Florence Corner in Groombridge and the existing Lye Green 40mph speed limit. A Location Plan indicating the length of the road where the lower speed limit is requested is included in Appendix 1.

2.2 The 40mph limit in Lye Green forms part of the zonal Ashdown Forest speed limit that was introduced as part of the strategy to remove fences and return the forest to open grazing. The speed limit in the Ashdown Forest has not been entirely successful as the majority of drivers continue to travel above the posted speed limit on many of the more rural parts of the forest.

2.3 It is recognised nationally that the majority of drivers travel at the speed they consider to be safe for the conditions of the road. The part of the B2188 between Florence Corner and the Lye Green 40mph speed limit is predominantly rural in nature with only a small number of properties fronting the road and clearly visible to drivers over relatively short lengths of the road. As a result of its rural appearance a signed speed limit would be unlikely to reduce vehicle speeds in accordance with a 40mph speed limit. The research that has been carried out nationally indicates that speed limits that are introduced with signs and lines alone only reduce the average speed of the traffic by about 1 or 2mph. This is also the County Council's experience from the speed limit review work that has been carried out in East Sussex.

2.4 The crash data provided to the County Council by the Police indicates that there have been four slight injury crashes and one serious injury crash in the latest 3 years on the part of the B2188 where the 40mph speed limit is being requested. A plan indicating the location and severity of the crashes is included in Appendix 2.

2.5 At the present time the County Council has very limited funding available for road safety including lower speed limits. The capital funding that is available for speed management work is from the Public Health fund which will be targeted at “reducing killed or serious injury crashes”.

2.6 The B2188 Cherry Gardens Hill will be prioritised along with all of the other roads in the County to establish whether it is a priority for action in 2017/2018 financial year. However, as the majority of the crashes on the B2188 are slight injury crashes it is not considered likely to be a priority for action from the Public Health fund.

2.7 The Road Safety Team would not object in principle to a lower speed limit on this part of the B2188 if speed surveys indicated that a reduced limit would be effective. There is presently no speed data available for this part of the B2188 but, if Withyham Parish Council wish to consider making an application through the County Council’s Community Match fund scheme the Road Safety Team will share the cost of two surveys which would be around £700.

2.8 If the Parish Council do wish to consider making an application for a lower speed limit on the B2188 Cherry Gardens Hill through the County Council’s Community Match fund, at this stage it is difficult to be certain how much a scheme would cost. The speed surveys would help us to agree the most appropriate approach with Withyham Parish Council and Sussex Police. They would also help us to get a better idea of how much a lower speed limit is likely to cost but, from our experience in other locations, it is likely to be in the region of £5,000 to £10,000 if no physically engineered measures are required.

2.9 It would not be appropriate to introduce solid white lines to prevent overtaking as the B2188 is relatively narrow and solid white lines cannot be used on roads under 6.1m wide. To introduce ‘no overtaking’ signs requires a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO). This process is relatively expensive and can take many months to complete as we have to carry out various consultations and follow a statutory procedure. At the present time the County Council have very limited resources available for Road Safety so it is important that the resources that we do have available are targeted at locations that offer the most benefit in terms of their contribution towards casualty reduction. None of the crashes on the B2188 involve overtaking so a TRO here is not a priority.

2.10 The concerns that are raised in respect to the poorly maintained catseyes and centre line have been reported to the County Council’s Asset Management Team.

3. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendation

3.1 The B2188 Cherry Gardens Hill will be prioritised along with all of the other roads in the County to establish whether it is a priority for action in 2017/2018 financial year. However, as only one of the crashes was a serious injury crash it is not a priority for the Road Safety Team and it is unlikely to be a priority for action from the Public Health fund.

3.2 If Withyham Parish Council would like to consider lowering the speed limit through the County Council’s Community Match initiative it is recommended that they initially contact the Road Safety Team to arrange for two speed surveys to be carried out. The surveys will help us to make a more detailed assessment as to whether a lower speed limit would help to improve road safety on this part of the B2188 Cherry Gardens Hill.

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LOCAL MEMBER

Councillor Whetstone

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None