

VISION ZERO – THE ROAD SAFETY STRATEGY FOR KENT

RESPONSE FROM AYLESFORD PARISH COUNCIL

The Council welcomes the Vision for 2050 so clearly stated in this document and in particular its aim to have zero, or as close as possible, road fatalities and serious injuries. The Council also welcomes the Strategy for the next five years as an important step to achieve this vision.

However, the Council believes that this change can only be achieved by not only taking into account the statistics relating to fatalities and accidents but also, very importantly, by listening to the local community. Kent Highways need to listen to Parish Councils and local people to ensure that they are ahead of the statistics and not following them. This is vitally important if the aim of zero fatalities is to be achieved. The importance of listening to Parish Councils is that they are local people who use the roads all the time and also speak to their local community who express their views through their local Parish representatives.

Listening to Parish Councils and local people is absolutely vital if Kent Highways wish to get ahead and reduce the fatalities rather than just taking account of statistics of what has happened.

However, in the past, Kent Highways have been guilty of following only statistics and not listening to the Parish Councils and the local community until too late, and the accidents that might have been avoided have occurred. As an example, over the last few years this Council has raised the following issues, all of which, the Council believes would help Kent Highways to achieve their vision of zero fatalities.

- 1 Since 2015 the Council has raised on numerous occasions the speed of traffic in Fostington Lane and highlighting, in particular, the contradictory nature of having a 40mph and 30mph signs so close together – Nothing has happened and the suggestion ignored
- 2 Bull Lane/Pilgrims Way junction – The Council raised this issue and supported by local people through the Bull Lane Safety Group, Kent Highways undertook minor works to improve the situation. However, the inherent danger of this junction still remains and it seems that this will only be resolved by an additional 900 dwellings being added to the local area and adding to the problem their additional traffic movements.
- 3 Since 2016 the Council has suggested moving the slow sign on the A229 South slip road from under the bridge to a more effective position on the actual slip road thereby improving safety – this was ignored.
- 4 In 2017 the Council asked that Tunbury Avenue be considered for a 20mph speed limit particularly as there is a school in this road and later in 2019 supported the provision of a pedestrian crossing to help children access the school on this very busy road – no action taken on both

- 5 In 2018 the Council asked that a 20mph speed limit be introduced in Eccles village and that the speed limit on Bull Lane coming from the junction with the Pilgrims Way be reduced from 40mph to 30mph – both of these were rejected.
- 6 In 2019 the Council proposed a reduction in the speed of traffic on the downhill section of the A229 Blue Bell Hill as it heads south towards Maidstone and to create a 50mph speed limit from the Lord Lees roundabout to the approach into Maidstone. – This proposal was rejected as there had not been enough accidents to merit such a reduction.
- 7 In 2020 the Council raised the issue of the widened Rochester Road as it meets the new Sandpit entrance. This wider road has led to traffic speed increasing as it leaves the village before it returns to a narrow lane at too fast a speed and also as traffic enters the village there is urgent braking because the cars are travelling too fast before it accesses the village traffic calming scheme. Both of these could easily end in a major accident and to avoid this the Council asked that something be done now but was told that nothing could happen as there was no record of any accidents. This being obvious as the new entrance had only just opened and what was being suggested was action that could prevent the accidents and the creation of statistics.

These examples show that there has to be a significant change in the way Kent Highways function for this vision to be achieved and the first of these steps would be for them to listen to Parish Councils and their local communities.