
Marlow Road 20 Mph Zone and Enforcement by Cameras



Above is a picture of Marlow Road, Penge. A 20 mph speed limit zone was introduced into this and adjacent roads in November 2004. Since then there have been no accidents in the zone whatsoever (at least up until the time of writing in late June). However all such schemes are reviewed after a few months.

The review concluded that the scheme has had little effect in reducing traffic speeds, and that residents are still dissatisfied with the measures that were introduced.

So four additional steps are now proposed:

- a – Two additional “speed reactive” signs be introduced on Marlow Road at a cost of £6,000.
- b – Consultation be carried out on introducing parking restrictions on the kerb build-outs to prevent obstructive parking.
- c – Investigation of possible road closures in certain roads on the estate.
- d – “Urgent” consideration to be given to the introduction of enforcement of the 20 mph zone by speed cameras as soon as they become available (as described in our last edition and which is currently under trial by TfL).

Here are my comments on this:

As you can see from the photograph above, Marlow Road is quite a wide road, with room for two vehicles to pass, even with parking on either side of the road. With good “sight lines”, it therefore does not appear to the average motorist to be a particularly dangerous, which is probably why most people do not adhere to the 20 mph speed limit.



Other roads such as Wheathill Road (see picture above), Warwick Road and Witham Road are narrower and appear much more dangerous. In addition all these roads are used by traffic cutting through from Elmers End Road (the A214) to Croydon Road (the A213).

It would seem likely that a 20 mph zone across the whole of the area was inappropriate and unnecessary. In addition, the proposed additional measures are totally excessive considering the recent accident record.

Note that even before the 20 mph was installed there was only one serious accident in the previous 3 years, although there were also 5 slight incidents. There have been no accidents since the 20 mph zone was put in. Bearing in mind the nature of the roads, this does not appear therefore to be a particularly dangerous zone in comparison with other similar areas, if one also takes into account that the one serious accident could be a statistical blip.

The proposal for the introduction of speed camera monitoring, at enormous expense, seems to be a totally disproportionate response to the nature of the problems. And there is no proof that there are any problems outstanding. It looks very much like this response is being driven by a few local residents who have a bee in their bonnet about excessive traffic and excessive speed. In reality, trying to impose a 20 mph limit on Marlow Road itself is just silly. If anyone thinks otherwise, I advise you to drive down Marlow Road at what you consider to be a safe and natural speed without looking at your speedometer, and have someone else check what speed you are doing – it is almost certainly going to be more than 20 mph!

But other roads in the estate are probably more appropriate for a 20 mph zone, and it certainly seems a good idea to consider some road closures. For example, deterring through traffic from using Warwick Road and Witham Road as a short cut may be a good idea. Such measures are likely to be a lot more effective at reducing accidents and a lot cheaper, than introducing a system of fining otherwise responsible drivers who happen to exceed the 20 mph speed limit on Marlow Road.

Of course it could just be that the existing measures have improved the accident record anyway, so would it not make sense to wait another year or two until there was some sound statistical data? All we seem to be getting is pandering to the complaints of a few local residents while ignoring the real evidence.

Roger Lawson, BBRAg 24/7/2006