



Rt Hon Bradley Thomas MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

1 October 2025

Dear Mr Thomas

Re Rowney Green Association - 20 mph speed signs

I refer to previous correspondence regarding this matter and, in particular, your request for a signs-only 20mph speed limit to be introduced in Rowney Green as “a special case under the Hazardous Rural Roads initiative”.

To reiterate what has been said previously, Worcestershire County Council does not currently support new signs-only 20mph limits. There is sound reasoning for this, based on consideration of published research into such limits elsewhere and the Council’s own trial in Rubery.

You will appreciate that the public will usually call for a speed limit to be lowered on the assumption that doing so will cause drivers to choose to travel more slowly and thereby make the road safer. However, findings indicate that signs-only 20mph speed limits make little difference to actual vehicle speeds and therefore to highway safety.

The latest guidance from the Department for Transport on setting local speed limits, Circular Roads 01/2013 (as revised in March 2024), states: “It is government policy that a 30mph speed limit should be the norm in villages”.

Rowney Green, as you know, has a 30mph speed limit and this is in accordance with government policy.

The same paragraph in the Circular goes on to say, “It may also be appropriate to consider 20mph zones and limits in built-up village streets. But it is important to consider the safety case and to seek local support before doing so”.

I accept there may be local support for this here but am unable to agree that there is a ‘safety case’ for the intervention requested. As our previous reply said, there have been no personal injury collisions recorded on Rowney Green Lane during the last 25 years. That does not indicate that the road is unsafe or

Sarah Gilmour MSc,
BSc, MIHE
Head of Traffic
Management

Worcestershire
County Council
County Hall
Spetchley Road
Worcester
WR5 2NP

hazardous. Clearly, safety is an emotive term and difficult to quantify. The public will often criticise the use of collision statistics, but they are the key yardstick for measuring the safety of a location on the highway network relative to another.

The absence of a collision history in Rowney Green Lane is likely due to a combination of the light traffic flows it carries (circa 450 to 500 vehicles per 24 hours at the time of the last survey in September 2023) and the narrow nature of the road which serve to restrain traffic speeds to the low levels recorded by survey. It is important to consider also that much of the traffic using the roads through Rowney Green will be locally generated and driven by people familiar with local conditions.

This is important in view of the four concerns outlined in your letter of 8 July i.e.

1. Lack of footways requiring pedestrians to walk in the road
2. The presence of stables and equestrian traffic
3. Use by local schools as a walking route for the Duke of Edinburgh Award
4. Child pedestrians walking along the road to access the school bus service

Much of the rural minor road network generally lacks the infrastructure, such as continuous footways, crossing facilities, road lighting, etc., which is to be found on roads in more densely populated areas. Consequently, it is commonplace for pedestrians to share the carriageway with motor traffic. The same is true of those who choose to ride horses on the road. These factors are not in themselves justification for a reduced speed limit. They are a regular part of rural life and drivers are expected to anticipate them and drive accordingly. The Highway Code is clear on this and, as you will be aware, the updated version introduced in 2022 focused specifically on protecting vulnerable road users. It did this by introducing a hierarchy of road users and giving greater priority to pedestrians, cyclists, and horse riders.

I appreciate that the Rowney Green Association may be disappointed by this response. However, Worcestershire County Council has a responsibility to co-ordinate consistent speed limits across its network and the roads subject to this request already have a speed limit which accords with national policy criteria. The Council must also prioritise limited resources on reducing harm to the public from traffic accidents. Although the Association has concerns about safety, these are not supported by evidence. Furthermore, if intervention were required, it would be by means of appropriate warning signage rather than the requested reduction in speed limit.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sarah Gilmour', with a stylized, cursive script.

Sarah Gilmour
