

Submission in regard to: Draft Interim Speed Management Plan

Having read and considered The proposed interim speed management plan as available on the Ashburton District Council, I oppose the plan in its current format. The consultation document does not contain any statistical analysis regarding the frequency and cause of road accidents in the locations where speed restrictions are proposed under the plan. Without understanding of the frequency of accidents and analysis of those accidents to determine if reduced speed limits would have a noticeable reduction in the both frequency of and harm caused by accidents, it appears that this plan is simply buying into an ideological approach to road safety, regardless of the consequences (negative or positive). There may be no measurable benefit in reducing speed limits and in fact there may be alternative actions which would increase safety to a greater extent.

Principle 1 – School speed limits

Speed reductions should be considered on an individual school basis, and not a blanket approach as has been proposed. The wider area and other road users must be considered as part of this process; for example, part of Walnut Avenue outside Ashburton Intermediate School would become a 30km/h area under the proposal. This would be yet another major route across the town that has reduced speed. As it currently stands, the rail crossing approaches from the east are already reduced to 30km/h at Havelock and Moore Streets; adding in Walnut Avenue would further divide the town into east and west, while also restricting traffic flows across town as there are limited rail crossings.

Repairing and maintaining roads and footpaths could have a positive impact on safety around schools and this should be a priority before speed restrictions are considered. My child had an accident en-route to school in May 2021, as a result of a footpath in poor state of repair. Her injuries required both medical and dental treatment. The hazard was reported to Ashburton District Council and some months later repairs to the area were made.

Where students are walking or cycling to school, burden of responsibility must lie with parents to ensure their children are aware of and capable of doing so in a safe manner. Quite simply, if a child cannot cycle on the road (not footpath!) or walk to school safely, then they should not be doing so without supervision. Road users should not have 30km/h speed limits imposed upon them, to relieve parents of their responsibilities!

Principle 2 – Urban fringes

The proposal to have multiple speed zones of 50km/h, 60km/h or 80km/h, in addition to 30km/h in some locations is messy, making it difficult for motorists to comply when speed zones change frequently within a small area.

Principle 3 – Developed urban areas with a high number of active users

It is not clear from the consultation document how “high number of active users” would be defined and there is the potential for this to be applied inconsistently. Notwithstanding the lack of clarity, I strongly believe that good road design, including provision for active transport, provides greater safety than further reducing existing speed limits within urban areas.

Prior to the CBD refurbishment central Ashburton was very easy to navigate safely by bicycle, with wide roads providing ample space for both motorists and cyclists; footpaths catered well for pedestrians. Following the completion of the CBD project, there are reduced speed limits but there are also narrower roads, even narrower intersections and some intersections have sections of footpaths designated for cyclists and pedestrians. It is no longer safe to cycle in the CBD, even with 30km/h speed restrictions! Sharing sections of footpaths with pedestrians is dangerous for both cyclists and pedestrians. There is no longer room for both cyclists and motorists at intersections and it is tight on the roads with cars parked – 30km/h does not make this area safer!

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