

From: David Stubbs

Sent: 16 December 2024 21:53

To: democratic services <democratic.services@medway.gov.uk>

Subject: 19/12 Scrutiny Committee meeting (School Streets Scheme)

Dear Scrutiny Committee,

I am writing to express serious concerns with the proposed 'School Streets Scheme' at St William of Perth (SWOP) in Rochester. These concerns are focused on the safety of the children attending the school. I would like the Scrutiny Committee to reject the proposal to implement School Streets at SWOP.

Summary:

There is no evidence to support claims of dangerous driving in Canon Close and the issue the Council is trying to solve for is not clear.

It is clear, however, that the Council's proposed solution to this unclear problem by way of School Streets is going to put small children in more danger.

School Streets will displace children onto Maidstone Road and Priestfields, two roads where several serious and one fatal accident has occurred in the past five years.

Drivers regularly exceed the speed limit on Maidstone Road, as evidenced by it ranking 16th in the whole county of Kent for speeding offences. The data are provided below.

Putting small children onto these roads lacks common sense and the data shows this is exposing them to risks that do not exist in Canon Close.

Detail:

The issue the Council is trying to solve for with the proposed scheme is not clear. Councillor Paterson cites generic, nationwide accident data to support his claims that the scheme at SWOP will improve safety.

Councillor Paterson wrote in an email dated 15/11/24 that "As ward councillor for the area I have witnessed the dangerous, selfish behaviour of motorists outside the school at drop-off and collection times first hand."

I have asked Councillor Paterson to provide the number of times he, or anyone acting in an official capacity for the Council, has been present at SWOP during school drop off/pick up times to observe this type of behaviour. Unfortunately, the data has not been provided to support such claims (I also submitted an FOI request for this and am waiting for the response).

Councillor Paterson also made the following statement in Issue 9 (Autumn 2024 edition) of the Rochester Community Magazine: "the first school streets have transformed active journeys to school for thousands of pupils across Medway...making roads safer, and

reducing the pollution being breathed in by young people.” I submitted an FOI request for the data/evidence to back these statements. Specifically, (a) how was the “thousands “ of pupils measured (one assumes someone measured the number of journeys by car before the implementation and the number of journeys now being taken on foot/cycle etc and that this data is easy to share), (b) how you have evidenced an improvement in safety (one assumes there is pre/post accident data that is readily available to share), and (c) exactly how much pollution levels have decreased by (one assumes someone has measured the air quality before / after to support such claims)? Despite this FOI request being submitted on 22/10/24 I am yet to receive a response.

So in summary, the council has not provided any data specific to SWOP to 1) support claims of dangerous driving and 2) to show how safety has been improved by tranche 1 of school streets.

I would speculate the issue the council is trying to solve for at SWOP is to appease residents of Canon Close who do not like increased traffic volumes during the school run (despite these residents knowingly purchasing a house next to a school).

However, I want to keep things factual and there is data to show the following:

1. Maidstone Road ranks 16th of all the roads in the entire county of Kent for speeding offences. The following link shows that, in the last 12 months, a total of 849 speeding fines were issued for offences on Maidstone Road i.e., the road that hundreds of primary school children with a relative lack of road safety awareness will be displaced to.
2. The following link provided by Councillor Osborne in 2023 shows there have been zero accidents in Canon Close in the past 5 years. In contrast, there have been multiple accidents on Maidstone Road and Priestfields during this time. On Maidstone Road there was one fatal accident and seven slight accidents. At the Priestfields junction, three slight and two serious accidents occurred. The data can be accessed by putting the school’s postcode in the search bar on the following link: <https://www.crashmap.co.uk/Search> . It is worth highlighting that the Council is suggesting parents use a car park on Priestfields (which has no pedestrianised entry/exit) and walk to school past this junction where the accidents have occurred.
3. There are various sources showing a clear relationship between impact speed and chances of survival in an accident. In Canon Close, cars drive at 10-20mph. If, god forbid, a child gets hit at this speed they are much more likely to survive than if they are hit at 30-40mph on Maidstone Road (where per the above links, several accidents have occurred and drivers regularly exceed the 30mph speed limit). Canon Close is somewhat of a sanctuary for small children relative to Canon Close and Priesfields.
4. The Council conducted two surveys as part of their consultation for school streets, one in 2023 and 2024. The data for SWOP show 71% and 72% of

responses were against the scheme being implemented. This is an overwhelming number of parents, school staff and even local residents (1/3 voted against) saying no to this scheme. The Council's response to this is that the consultation was not a referendum. My issue is that there appears to be no decision making framework (which the survey results presumably feed into) in place to determine which schools proceed and which do not. I've asked the Council to outline their criteria / framework but they have failed to provide this.

I strongly urge the proposal for SWOP to be rejected. There are serious gaps and flaws in the Council's process and supporting evidence. But the main issue is one of safety for small children aged 4-11.

If there is a chance to speak at Thursday's meeting to raise these concerns I would like to.

Please circulate my objections to the Scrutiny Committee.

Thank you

David Stubbs (father of a pupil at SWOP and Medway resident)