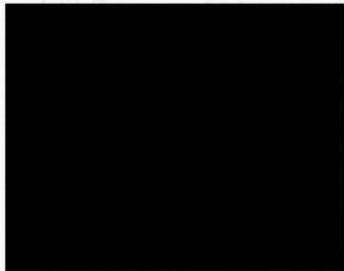


This letter is from an individual member of the Council and is not written on behalf of the Devon County Council.

I would be the first to admit that in spite of all the checks there are mistakes in design have been made but these are usually identified quite quickly and amended. At the present time I support the view that the amendment to the road layout directly contributed to an accident.



28 June 2010



Dear 

It was with some surprise and considerable disappointment that I received your letter of the 25th of June. It is clear that in spite of my best endeavours for some reason you did not receive responses to your earlier letters for which I can only apologise.

On receipt of your letter of the 22nd of August I contacted Highways to ensure that I was informed about the issues. I was advised that all appropriate procedures had been followed and assured that a Safety Audit had been carried out. I understood that you would be receiving a letter to this effect assuring you that the changes were both necessary and safe. On receipt of your follow up letter I again chased the issue and was once more assured that you would be kept fully informed. For whatever reason this appears not to have happened and I can only apologise.

The reason that I did not choose to write to you personally was that I do not consider myself to be a qualified Highway Engineer and it was my view that you ought to receive a reply from the officers directly responsible and with the appropriate experience and qualifications. Clearly I ought to have followed this up and that is my error.

The matter of Highway safety is often a contentious one and there are lots of views from the general public most if not all of which are subjective and based on personal experience(s). It is for this reason that bodies such as Devon County Council employ specially trained and qualified staff to design road layouts, markings etc and also use the services of independent people to carry out Safety Audits.

The professional officers base their views on their experience, training and historical data together with other aids such as computer models. The information they use is culled from all over the World but tailored to the unique circumstances which each road presents.

For the last 12 years or so I have been driving around 50,000 miles per annum throughout the UK and Western Europe and in so doing I frequently find myself questioning the validity and safety of some of the road layouts I encounter. But I have to remind myself that I am viewing these from a lay persons standpoint without access to historical data or comparable examples.

I would be the first to admit that in spite of all the checks and balances there are examples where mistakes in design have been made but these are few and far between and are usually identified quite quickly and amended. At the present time there is no evidence to support the view that the amendment to the road lining at one end of Vale Down has directly contributed to an accident.

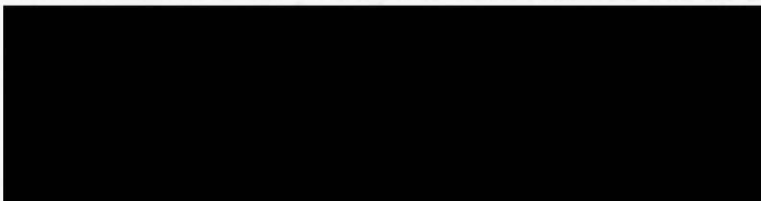
The general philosophy of road design is to try where possible to design out potential accident zones but sadly no amount of design can adequately deal with the actions of a very small minority whose driving standard falls far below that which is acceptable and safe. The section of road to which you refer is well within a 40 MPH zone and the bend is clearly visible when approaching from either direction. Any driver who is irresponsible enough or whose driving standard is so poor as to overtake in this area is in my view as likely to do so whether the road markings are as they are now or as they were before the 40MPH limit was imposed. This section of road did not historically enjoy a good safety record hence the 40 MPH limit was introduced.

There has been a lot of attention paid to this section of the A 386 and mobile Safety Speed cameras are frequently deployed at either end. As someone who uses this section of road an average of 10 times per week I am only too well aware of the failure of some motorists to drive along it in a responsible and safe manner but it is my personal belief that driver education particularly in the early years of a motoring career will be the only long term solution to problems of this nature which occur throughout the road network.

I appreciate that you may find my reply unhelpful but I do assure you that whatever you or I may feel on a personal level the people whose job it is to ensure the highest standards of safety on the Counties roads have looked very carefully at this particular problem and are satisfied that the design and markings achieve the required standards. It would be unrealistic to assume that this section of road will remain accident free for the foreseeable future but I can assure that it will be very carefully monitored and frequently reviewed.

I would be more than happy to meet with you if you feel it would achieve anything.

Yours sincerely

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature and name of the sender.