

I passed my driving test on

17 March 1981

...and I always thought the white line was my friend.



Porthycarne Street, Usk

A 20mph road. A blind bend.

31
↓
24

Average speed (mph), before → after the line came out

The fastest drivers slowed too

37 → 30

The speed only the fastest 15% of drivers exceed — where serious speeding starts

Sound familiar?

A fast road. The limit drops to 20 with little warning. Then a blind bend.

A near-twin of the approach into Itton from the Devauden direction — and not a bad match for the St Arvans side either.



What if the line was the problem?

Not protecting us — just giving us permission to go faster.

This isn't a fluke

The same pattern, in independent studies

Llansoy

MONMOUTHSHIRE

Same county. Speeds fell on the bend; the straight section barely moved — the mechanism showing its hand.

Transport for London

CONTROLLED TRIALS

Before-and-after removal of centrelines produced significant speed reductions.

Wiltshire

COUNTY STUDY

The same finding — and no increase in injury collisions.

The status quo isn't neutral

ITTON · FASTEST DRIVERS · SOUTHBOUND · BEFORE ANY INTERVENTION

33.7 mph

measured at the bus stop — just ahead of the bend — where the limit is 20

It's the reason we're here. The measures with the strongest evidence are still ahead of us.



The thing we fear most is the thing this fixes.

Removal works hardest on a blind bend — slowing traffic before the bus stop and before the junction.

And if the data doesn't bear it out, a line can be painted back. Let's finish what we started.

Notes to slides

Slide 1

The white line down the middle of the road is something most drivers have trusted their whole lives. This talk sets out, with evidence, why that assumption is worth re-examining for the road through Itton.

Slide 2

On a comparable 20mph blind bend at Porthycarne Street in Usk, removing the centreline cut the southbound average speed from 31mph to 24mph, with no other change made at the bend itself.

Slide 3

The 85th percentile is the speed only the fastest 15% of drivers exceed — a standard measure of serious speeding. At the same bend it fell from 37mph to 30mph, so it was not just the steady middle slowing down; the fastest drivers slowed too.

Slide 4

The Usk site — a fast road dropping abruptly to 20mph at a blind bend — closely resembles the approaches into Itton, particularly from the Devauden direction.

Slide 5

The evidence raises an uncomfortable question: rather than protecting the pedestrian or the oncoming driver, a centreline may simply give drivers the confidence to travel faster.

Slide 6

The same pattern appears elsewhere: at Llansoy in Monmouthshire, where the bend slowed and the straight section did not, and in larger before-and-after studies by Transport for London and Wiltshire, which found meaningful speed reductions and no increase in injury collisions.

TfL

Trials on 30mph roads found centre line removal achieved **average speed reductions between 5.4mph and 8.6mph** in carefully controlled 'before and after' trials, with drivers taking a more cautious road position. **TfL attributed it to drivers needing more judgement — in their words, removing the line "introduces a degree of uncertainty which causes drivers to moderate their speed."**

Wiltshire County Council

Building on work by the government's Transport Research Laboratory this study found that not reinstating centre lines at a number of resurfacing sites led to a **reduction in both injury collisions and traffic speeds**, concluding:

"There is little evidence that centre lines improve safety on residential roads."

Slide 7

This was the measured speed southbound — from Devauden — with the 20mph limit in place. The status quo is the problem the scheme set out to solve. Markings have been refreshed, but the measures with the strongest evidence behind them are still to come.

Slide 8

Centreline removal works best on exactly the kind of blind bend and approach found at the Itton junction. Centre line removal works hardest where the road can't be read. The change is measurable and reversible if it does not deliver.