

Highways Committee

29 September 2010

Objections to the Proposed B6282 Speed Limit Order



Report of Ian Thompson, Corporate Director, Regeneration and Economic Development

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To advise members of objections from residents of Etherley Grange following the advertising of a proposed new speed limit order for the entire length of the B6282.
- 1.2 This report requests that members endorse the proposal to retain the existing 40mph speed limit at Etherley Grange.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 All Highway Authorities are currently obliged to review the speed limits on their A and B road network, and implement any necessary changes to come into line with new guidance published by the DfT.
- 2.2 The new guidance recommends various factors to be considered when determining the appropriate speed limit for a length of highway. These factors include the existing measured mean speed driven on the road, length, type and amount of development and accident history.
- 2.3 As part of this review process a new speed limit Traffic Regulation Order is created for the full length of the road being reviewed. This new Order incorporates the speed limits that in this case are to remain unaffected and any proposed changes as identified by the review.
- 2.4 A review was undertaken on the full length of the B6282 and a new Traffic Regulation Order encompassing all speed limits along the route was produced and advertised on site for the statutory period. During this advertising period eight objections were received from residents of Etherley Grange to the proposal to retain an existing 40mph speed limit.

3.0 Reasons for Retaining Existing Speed limit at Etherley Grange

- 3.1 Current Government policy states that a 30mph speed limit should be the norm in villages. A village is defined as 20 or more houses located on one or both sides of a road, over a minimum length of 600m. Where the criterion for a village is not achieved, authorities should consider alternative limits of 40mph or 50mph.
- 3.2 The mean speed driven on the road (39.3 mph) is below the existing posted speed limit of 40mph. The guidance recommends that authorities align the local speed limits so that the original mean speed driven on that road is at or below

any new posted speed limit for that road. This indicates that the current speed limit is credible and perceived by drivers to be appropriate.

- 3.3 Etherley Grange consists of 35 houses over a length of 466m. This is below the minimum distance of 600m which is recommended for a village 30mph speed limit. Etherley Grange does not therefore qualify as a village and in line with the current guidance a 40mph speed limit would be recommended.
- 3.4 Etherley Grange is largely rural in nature and is located on a B class road. The guidance recommends that the speed limit in rural areas should be 60mph for most high quality strategic A and B roads with few bends, junctions or accesses. However, a 40mph limit should be considered where there is a high number of bends, junctions or accesses and where there is a considerable number of vulnerable road users.
- 3.5 Experience in other areas shows that simply changing the speed limit will have little or no effect on the mean speed. A degree of success has been achieved in some locations with lower mean speeds but only with the installation of significant physical measures.
- 3.6 Due to the road alignment, number of accesses and amount of development it is considered that a 40mph speed limit is appropriate.
- 3.7 The accident rate is comparatively low with two recorded personal injury accidents over the last 3 years. None of these accidents identified excessive speed as a contributory factor.
- 3.8 Based on the measured mean speeds, characteristics of the highway and the length and type of development it is considered that the 40mph speed limit at this location is in line with the new guidance and should be retained.

4.0 Objections Received

- 4.1 **Objection Point 1** – The existing speed limit is routinely exceeded by motorists.
- 4.2 **Response** – Mean average speeds have been recorded at Etherley Grange in 2010 (39.3mph), 2007 (37.7mph), 2005 (38.7mph), 2003 (38.3mph) & 2002 (37.1mph). This data indicates that the mean speed driven on this road is below the post 40mph speed limit. Therefore a 40mph speed limit is credible and appropriate at this location.
- 4.3 **Objection Point 2** – A number of accidents have been caused by the excessive speeds at which vehicles travel on this road. A reduction in speed limit from 40mph to 30mph and the installation of traffic calming would reduce these accidents.
- 4.4 **Response** – Two personal injury accidents in the last 3 years have been recorded over the length of the existing 40mph speed limit. None of these accidents identified excessive speed as a factor in the accident.
- 4.5 Although the Authority would want to see no personal injury accidents, a rate of two 'slight' personal injury accidents over a three year period would not indicate a major accident problem.

- 4.6 Current DFT guidance recommends that physical traffic calming is not placed on A or B class roads. As this road is a B class, traffic calming would not be installed in accordance with the DFT recommendation.
- 4.7 **Objection Point 3** – Road alignment and vehicle speeds create a serious traffic hazard for residents leaving their private drives. A reduction in speed limit would take away part of this risk.
- 4.8 **Response** - The guidance recommends a 40mph speed limit in rural areas where there is a high number of bends, junctions or accesses. This would indicate that the 40mph speed limit is appropriate at this location. The Highway Authority can not be held responsible for problems with private accesses joining the highway. Suitable measures should be taken by the land owner to ensure that their access is fit for purpose.
- 4.9 **Objection Point 4** – The characteristics of the highway and high vehicle speeds are particularly hazardous for pedestrians. A narrow footway located on one side of the carriageway with no grass verges is the only means of pedestrian access. The width of the footway and an overgrown hedge means that pedestrians, including children, have to step into the road to pass each other. A large number of HGVs use this route and when they pass pedestrians using this narrow footway at speed it feels very unsafe.
- 5.0 **Response** – Under the new guidance a 40mph speed limit is recommended in a rural area where there are considerable numbers of vulnerable road users. The maintenance issues with the hedge have been added onto an ongoing maintenance programme for hedge cutting.
- 5.0 Consultation**
- 5.1 Durham Constabulary supports the retention of the existing 40mph speed limit, however a reduction to a 30mph would be objected to by the police.
- 6.0 Recommendations and Reasons**
- 6.1 It is recommended that the Members endorse the proposals and set aside the objections.

Background Papers

Scheme file and objectors' letters.

Copies of correspondence have been placed in the Members' Resource Centre.

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