

Highways Committee

18 September 2009

**Proposed 30mph Speed Limit
A690 Brancepeth**



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

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To advise Members of representations received with regard to the proposed 30mph speed limit.
- 1.2 This report requests that Members consider the background and representations received in relation to the proposals and endorse the recommendations.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Public concern regarding speeding of traffic through Brancepeth has been brought to the attention of the County Council for many years. In accordance with protocol, traffic speeds were surveyed, however the results of the surveys indicated good compliance with the 40mph limit with only a very small percentage where enforcement would be considered.
- 2.2 The speed limits on the A690 at Brancepeth were reviewed in line with the new Department for Transport Circular on setting speed limits. The result of the review determined that the existing 40 mph speed limit should remain.
- 2.3 Further representations from the Parish Council resulted in a Members Consultative meeting on site in 2007 to consider speed limits and pedestrian crossing facilities. Following consideration of all the various aspects the meeting resolved not to make any changes to the speed limit on the A690.
- 2.4 The Consultative meeting was advised that a pedestrian crossing at this location did not meet the County Council criteria. However it was agreed to undertake a further survey on a day of the week specified by the Parish. The meeting also agreed to investigate whether a further island could be installed to the east of the cross roads.

- 2.5 The Consultative meeting agreed to investigate the street lighting provision and Cllr Chaplow worked with officers to introduce a £44k lighting scheme, which was also sympathetic with its surroundings.
- 2.6 The re-survey for a pedestrian crossing produced a value that was significantly lower than that required to justify a crossing. Investigations for a traffic island showed that the road was of insufficient width for an island and with the narrow footway widths each side, road widening could not be considered without acquiring land from the adjacent properties.
- 2.7 At the end of 2008 the Parish Council presented a petition requesting that the speed limit be reduced and pedestrian crossing facilities be improved.
- 2.8 Recent speed surveys show the average (mean) speed to be 36mph. 18% of vehicles travel at below 30mph, 17% travel at between 30 and 35mph, 49% at 36 to 40mph, 13% at between 41 and 45mph and 3% above 46mph. The 85th percentile speed is 41mph.
- 2.9 The injury accident record since 1st January 2006 for the length of road covered by the existing 40mph speed limit shows 1 fatal, 1 serious and 4 slight injury accidents. Of these, 3 were recorded at the C95 Stockley Lane junction, (prior to recent improvements) one at the Old Forge junction and the remaining two at the cross roads with Unclassified 26.2 Wolsingham Road.
- 2.10 Following a meeting between the Parish Council, Local Members, Cabinet Portfolio Member and the MP, it was agreed to undertake a consultation on introducing a 30mph speed limit.
- 2.11 Due to potential disparity between the existing vehicle speeds and proposed speed limit i.e. 82% of vehicles, a scheme was produced to assist in reducing speeds closer to the proposed limit. This scheme includes changes to road markings, the installation of a further island to the west, planting, bollards and coloured road surfacing. Also included is a pair of speed activated signs which are considered vital to the scheme.
- 2.12 Both an informal and formal consultation process was undertaken with all residents within Brancepeth and the statutory consultees. A total of 164 letters were sent out to residents and 95 returned amounting to a response of 58%. Of the responses, 92% were in favour and 5% against or raised reservations with the scheme and a further 2% were non committal. Of the Statutory consultees, there were 4 responses two being in favour however 2 voiced concerns. A further 2 letters and emails were received raising issues during the formal consultation.
- 2.13 The Police have not formally objected to the scheme but have raised concerns due to the speed limit not complying with the DfT Circular for setting speed limits. They have indicated their full support for the engineering features stating that it is imperative to introduce such measures to assist in reducing the vehicle speeds.

- 2.14 The Local Members, Councillors Jean Chaplow and John Wilkinson both support the proposal.

3.0 Current Position

- 3.1 The topic of representation is reported together with the County Council's response.

3.2 Representation 1

The Police whilst not objecting, raised many aspects of the DfT Circular for setting speed limits with which in their view the proposed 30mph speed limit does not comply.

Response: It is agreed that the proposed 30mph speed limit does not comply with the guidance contained within the DfT Circular for setting speed limits. However the proposed scheme outlined in paragraph 2.6 should help to address the issue and reduce vehicle speeds.

3.3 Representation 2

The respondent wishes that the reduced speed limit be extended to include Stockley Grove.

Response: Significant measures are being introduced to ensure the proposed 30 mph speed limit will have a degree of credibility in the eyes of the motorist. Extending the speed limit to include Stockley Grove will potentially undermine these efforts. Such a lack of credibility would probably result in abuse of the limit by motorists to a high degree with drivers travelling at speeds they see as appropriate. It is possible that vehicle speeds could become an even greater danger to the local community. This is further compounded as it is not permissible to provide repeater signs advising of a 30mph speed limit, as opposed to provision within 40mph speed limits.

3.4 Representation 3

The respondent requests that a light controlled crossing be installed. This comment was also made by other respondents who supported the scheme.

Response: The County Council Policy on the provision of controlled crossings which is based upon national guidelines requires a certain level of usage combined with traffic flows. A number of surveys to determine this factor demonstrated that the results fell significantly below the level required to justify the provision of a crossing. The narrow footways are in close proximity of side roads which would make the provision of a light controlled crossing extremely difficult.

3.5 Representation 4

The respondent questioned the need to provide the enhanced road markings and coloured surfacing as Brancepeth is a conservation area, commenting that it isn't required within the existing 40mph speed limit.

Response: The enhanced markings, signs and surfacing are required to attempt to achieve a significant reduction in vehicle speeds. Currently approximately 82% of motorists travel above the proposed 30mph limit and whilst some will automatically adjust their speed, it is considered that a large proportion won't without substantial changes. It is therefore considered that visual impact is required to influence the reduced speeds. Research has shown that by using signs alone, only minor reductions in vehicle mean speeds of approximately 1mph can be achieved; a reduction of over 6mph is required to the mean speed. Whilst this may not appear to be a large figure, when taken in the context that this applies to over 9000 vehicles per day, it must be considered that a significant step change is required which requires the visual impact of the scheme.

3.6 Representation 5

The respondent considered the 40mph speed limit to be acceptable however requested that a further island should be provided to the east of the cross roads.

Response: It is agreed that the existing island is not on the desire line for pedestrians to cross the road however there is insufficient highway space to provide an island. In order to provide the space required, land would be required from the adjacent properties. Such a move would bring the property frontage even closer to the road which would not be desirable for the residents living there. A lesser factor but must also be considered is that land acquisition is a lengthy process and it would not be considered appropriate to await this outcome.

4.0 Recommendations and Reasons

- 4.1 It is recommended that Members endorse the proposal to set aside the objections and proceed with the speed limit change.

Background Papers

Northern Area Scheme files.
County Council Policy on the Assessment of Pedestrian Crossings
Report to Cabinet on 13 May 2004 item no A8
Copies of correspondence have been placed in the Members' Resource Centre.

Contact: David Battensby Tel: 0191 332 4404

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance

Funding for the speed limit change will be provided by local Member through the Local Area Measures Allowance and the Local Transport Plan.

Staffing

None

Equality and Diversity

None

Accommodation

None

Crime and Disorder

The proposal could result in a large number of motorists committing a criminal speeding offence.

Sustainability

The proposed scheme is likely to have a negative visual impact on the Conservation Area of Brancepeth.

Human Rights

None

Localities and Rurality

As described in the Report

Young People

None

Consultation

Residents and statutory consultation carried out on 10 June 2009 and 30 July 2009 respectively.