

Highways Committee

2 December 2010

**Proposed Traffic Calming Scheme:
C5 Front Street, Ouston,
Chester-le-Street.**



Report of Terry Collins, Director of Neighbourhood Services Councillor Bob Young, Cabinet Portfolio Member.

1.0 Purpose of the report

- 1.1 To advise the Committee of objections received with regard to the traffic calming scheme proposed for the C5 Front Street, Ouston, Chester-le-Street.
- 1.2 This report requests that the Committee consider and determine the objections to the proposals.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Over the years the issue of vehicle speeds on the main road through Ouston has been highlighted. Representations have been made by local members for the council to investigate the introduction of a traffic calming scheme on Front Street. The village is subject to the periodic provision of the Speed Visor signs and the Police have undertaken a number of enforcement campaigns, however these have failed to provide the lasting speed reduction requested by the public.
- 2.2 Following these concerns and an investigation, a traffic calming scheme was entered onto the Local Member's Pool List of schemes for consideration.
- 2.3 In addition, speed surveys have been taken at various points along the corridor within the last four years. In April 2007 results indicated that, at a point near to the junction of Iris Crescent and C5 Ouston, 49% of vehicles were travelling up to and including 30mph and 51% of vehicles were exceeding 30mph.
- 2.4 In August 2008 results indicated that, at a point near to the junction of Milbank and C5 Ouston, 59% of vehicles were travelling up to and including 30mph and 41% of vehicles were exceeding 30mph.
- 2.5 In October 2009 results indicated that, at a point near to the junction of Turnberry and C5 Ouston, 52% of vehicles were travelling up to and including 30mph and 48% of vehicles were exceeding 30mph.

- 2.6 A public consultation exercise was undertaken with residents / business proprietors considered to be directly affected by the proposals. This included properties fronting the C5 Front Street, Ouston between the Speed Limit Terminal Signs north of Turnberry to its junction with St Benet's Way. A total of 101 properties were provided with details of the proposed scheme and their occupants invited to comment upon the proposals. Plans were also displayed in the local post office and filling station in order to elicit comments from the wider community.
- 2.7 Out of 101 letters sent out to residents, a total of 42 replies were received. Of the 42 replies, 16 were in favour, 26 were opposed for a variety of reasons, which are set out below.
- 2.8 In addition to the above, the Council received a number of objections from residents not directly consulted. A total of 38 replies were received, including 2 in favour and 36 opposed to the scheme. Letters of support for the scheme were also received from the schools in Ouston.

3.0 Public Objections

- 3.0 Since the number of objections is high and raised several different issues in respect of the scheme, each topic will be reported together with the number of objectors who raised the particular issue and the Council's response.

3.1 Representation 1

“Speed cushions cause damage to vehicles”

This point was raised by 10 respondents.

Response: The Highway Code advises in Rule 153 that motorists should reduce their speed when approaching traffic calming features that are intended to slow them down. Therefore the principle applies that if the speed cushions are negotiated at a reasonable speed, then they will not cause discomfort, damage or constitute a danger to any road user. The proposals are based upon national guidance for traffic calming measures and these take into account all types of vehicles likely to encounter these features.

3.2 Representation 2

“Would cause congestion”

This point was raised by 4 objectors.

Response: Some delays may be expected which may encourage motorists to find an alternative route. Flows also tend to be tidal with lighter opposing flows therefore it is not expected delays would be excessive.

3.3 Representation 3

“Waste of tax payer’s money”

This point was raised by 5 objectors.

Response: The scheme is being funded from Local Member’s Allowance and is considered to be a cost effective means of responding to the issues raised by residents. The national average cost of an accident is over £65k. If one accident is prevented, or the severity reduced as a result of the installation of this scheme, then it can easily be established as having been cost effective.

3.4 Representation 4

“I understand that Councils are doing away with bumps that they are not environmentally friendly”

This point was raised by 2 objectors

Response: We are not aware of any local authorities in the North East region that are considering the removal of traffic calming measures on the grounds that they are not environmentally friendly. In fact, research has shown that if motorists maintain a constant lower speed through a traffic calming scheme, then vehicle pollution will actually decrease.

All new housing estates in County Durham are designed to include traffic calming features similar to those proposed in Ouston. They are considered an enhancement to road safety within an area.

3.5 Representation 5

“Traffic calming is unnecessary / there is currently no problem”

This point was raised by 12 objectors.

Response: The necessity or otherwise of a traffic calming scheme is somewhat subjective depending upon one’s viewpoint. However, the County Council is confident that, if it is implemented, vehicle speeds will be reduced which will be an improvement in road safety terms, especially for pedestrians and other vulnerable road users.

3.6 Representation 6

“Consider weight limit restrictions for heavy traffic”

This point was raised by 3 objectors.

Response: The introduction of a Weight Limit restriction has been considered at this location in the past, however it was decided not to proceed with this as the restriction would hinder the delivery of goods to residents in the village and of course affect the local bus service. A

Weight Limit would need to apply to all large vehicles in order to allow effective enforcement of such.

As you will appreciate, since the C5 road is a main distributor road running through the heart of the village, it would be impossible to enforce a Weight Limit restriction, even if 'except for access' was incorporated, without significant police resources. Even then, most HGV drivers are aware of the 'loop holes' to avoid prosecution.

3.7 Representation 7

“Traffic Calming measures will increase noise, emission and vibration from vehicles” and “Excessive noise from large wagons, particularly when empty”

This point was raised by 9 objectors.

Response: Research has shown that overall traffic noise is actually reduced when traffic calming is implemented on roads where the traffic flow consists mainly of light vehicles. A number of the HGVs that use this road are likely to be empty when passing over the cushions and it is possible that there may be some noise generated as a consequence, however it is acknowledged that motorcycles and larger vehicles including HGV's are less affected by road cushions due to their wider wheelbase. These types of measures allow emergency services to maintain response times, and for public transport services to maintain their schedules with minimal delay (with all vehicles required to obey the speed limit unless it is clear that an emergency is being attended to). Whilst it is understood that a small number of vehicles can pass the traffic calming measures unhindered, it is considered that the road safety benefits that can be achieved through the reduction of traffic speeds of the majority of traffic, including cars and small vans, outweigh the negative impact of those larger vehicles passing unhindered.

Research has also shown that if motorists maintain a constant lower speed through a traffic calming scheme, then vehicle pollution will actually decrease.

3.8 Representation 8

**“Speed humps don't stop 'boy racers' or vehicles speeding”
“Speed humps don't work” or “do nothing to reduce speed”**

This point was raised by 4 objectors.

Response: 'Before and After' studies show that speed humps are an effective means of reducing vehicle speeds on residential roads.

3.9 Representation 9

“The proposals are in the wrong place”

“The proposals will cause access problems to the residents living in houses adjacent to main road”

This point was raised by 1 objector.

Response: The proposed speed humps were positioned in the most appropriate places that also took account of the many constraints along the road, such as driveways, junctions and bends

3.10 Representation 10

“There are too many cushions suggested for the distance involved”

This point was raised by 11 objectors.

Response: The number of cushions proposed is based on recommendations set down by the Department for Transport for the introduction of traffic calming measures. These recommendations suggest that features should be sited between 60 and 80m apart. In this particular instance guidance has been relaxed to reduce the number of cushions along the route to approximately 100 to 120m apart at some locations, whilst effectively reducing vehicles speeds to an acceptable level.

3.11 Representation 11

“Roads within the estate will be used as rat runs”

This point was raised by 5 objectors.

Response: It is the Council's opinion that it is unlikely that drivers who currently travel through Ouston would divert to other roads within the estates as a 'rat-run' in order to avoid a series of traffic calming features on the C5 Ouston. Even if drivers were to reduce speed significantly when negotiating the features through the main carriageway, it would still be a better and more direct route than using the roads within the estate. In fact they are likely to encounter the existing traffic calming measures in place. In addition traffic emerging from the side roads would have to give way to traffic that had continued along the C5 causing further delay for them.

3.12 Representation 12

“The proposal will affect the value of my property”.

This point was raised by 3 objectors.

Response: This objection is often raised by residents but both the Department for Transport and the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors have no evidence to suggest that the installation of traffic calming reduces house prices. It should also be noted that traffic

calming is provided on new housing estates in County Durham and there is no evidence to suggest that sales are affected.

4.0 Statutory Representations

- 4.1 With regard to statutory consultees, responses of support were received from Royal Mail, the North East Ambulance Service and Durham Constabulary as well as Ouston Infant School.
- 4.2 Extensive consultation with the recently formed Ouston Village Association has been undertaken, although many of their wishes are outside the scope of this traffic calming project. Their outstanding concerns in relation to the traffic calming scheme are included with the representations within the body of this report.

5.0 Local Member Consultation

- 5.1 County Councillor Colin Carr provides full support for the proposals.

6.0 Recommendations and Reasons

- 6.1 The Committee is recommended to endorse the proposal, set aside the objections and approve the scheme.
- 6.2 The scheme is designed to reduce a long standing speeding complaint and improve road safety for the villagers of Ouston, especially more vulnerable road users.

7.0 Background Papers

The background correspondence is on the Office File.
Copies of correspondence have been placed in the Members' Resource Centre

Contact: David Battensby Tel: 0191 332 4404

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance

Funding will be provided by the County Councillor Local Area Measures Allowance.

Staffing

None

Equality and diversity

None

Accommodation

None

Crime and disorder

The proposal is likely to result in a reduction of some anti-social speed related offences

Environment

None

Human rights

None

Localities and Rurality

None

Young people

None.

Consultation

Consultation, both informal and statutory, with affected residents and proprietors in addition to statutory organisations.