

Highways Committee

18 January 2008

Unclassified Melbeck Drive Ouston Traffic Calming



Report of John Richardson, Corporate Director, Environment

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To advise Members of objections to a Traffic Calming scheme at Melbeck Drive, Ouston (see attached plan).
- 1.2 This report requests that Members consider the objections of the residents of Melbeck Drive, Ouston and endorse the recommendations.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Concerns regarding the speed of vehicles using the estate road of Melbeck Drive were raised by residents through the Local Member. As a result of a meeting with the Local Member and a community representative in July 2007 it was decided to proceed with the usual consultation exercise for schemes of this nature. Members are advised that this is one of two reports being presented for neighbouring streets (see item no 3).
- 2.2 Speed surveys were undertaken to determine the nature of the problem and these demonstrated that although there wasn't a problem with drivers breaking the 30mph speed limit, a large majority were well above the speed expected for a residential area, e.g. 33% exceeded 20mph.
- 2.3 A draft scheme, comprising 5 speed humps was prepared.

Each of the 215 properties received a letter, a plan of the scheme and a pre-paid reply card inviting them to inform us of their comments. The letter also stated that if the pre-paid reply card was not returned then the resident would deem to be in favour of the scheme.
- 2.4 A total of 72 (33%) cards were returned. Of these, 41 (19%) indicated support for the scheme and 31 (14%) raised at least one point of issue and the remainder who did not respond (67%) were deemed to be in support of the scheme. One letter of objection was also received which raised several points. The majority of positive responses raised concerns over the safety of children and pedestrians and the speed of vehicles on the estate.

2.5 The formal advertisement of the proposal, in the press and on-site, started on 29 November 2007 and ended on 24 December 2007. This formal consultation resulted in three letters being received. Only one of these objected to the scheme and the Ambulance Service providing their usual general response.

2.6 The Police have indicated their support for the proposals.

3.0 Representations

3.1 Since the number of respondents is high and most raised several different issues with the scheme, each topic of representation will be reported together with the number of respondents who raised the particular issue and the County Council's response.

3.2 Representation 1

“No requirement – apart from anecdotal. No statistics produced to show a need”

“A winding narrow road to cul-de-sac with cars parked on road – virtually impossible to speed”

“Unnecessary – the present road layout is sufficient to minimise speed”

“Enforce the speed limit”.

These and similar points were raised by eighteen respondents.

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.

With regard to statistics, first, the motivation for this type of scheme is not solely the accident record of, or conviction rate on the road in question. Traffic calming is provided as a measure to address the concerns of residents who have complained about the speed of traffic. It is also provided on new estates as a preventative measure. Secondly, however, in the last seven years there have been two accidents resulting in two slight personal injuries, one of these involved a 9 year old child.

3.3 Representation 2

“A waste of money” or “money could be better spent”

This point was raised by eight respondents.

Response: The scheme is being funded from the 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 3

“Speed humps are old technology and getting removed elsewhere”.

“Speed humps don’t work”.

These points were raised by two respondents.

Response: Before and after studies show that speed humps are an effective means of reducing vehicle speeds on residential roads. It is true that some Authorities have removed speed humps in some locations, however, these have generally been on more major routes rather than within residential streets.

3.5 Representation 4

“Speed humps cause damage to cars”.

This point was raised by eight 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 humps are negotiated at a reasonable speed, they will not cause discomfort or constitute a danger to any road user or damage vehicles.

3.6 Representation 5

“Speed humps are bad for the environment”.

“Speed humps are unsightly”.

These points were raised by two respondents.

Response: 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 are designed to include traffic calming features such as the proposals and they are considered useful when selling properties, as they are an enhancement to road safety within the estate. Speed humps do little to detract from the visual amenity within estates although individuals have differing views regarding what is considered unsightly within housing estates.

3.7 Representation 6

As an alternative to humps, **“Make it a 20mph zone” or “introduce a 15mph limit and enforce it”.**

These points were raised by five respondents.

Response: The principle provided by current relevant legislation states that 20mph zones should be self enforcing using suitable traffic calming methods. The County Council policy for 20 mph Zones was approved by Cabinet on 27 November 2003. This policy states that zones should be self enforcing using traffic calming measures. They may be introduced in areas around schools and areas with above average number of accidents, particularly where child accidents are involved or in areas adjacent to facilities for vulnerable road users where demand is significant enough to justify such measures.

3.8 Representation 7

“Use pinch points”

This point was made by one respondent.

Response: Alternative methods of speed reduction were considered but, taking all factors into consideration, it was decided that speed humps were the most appropriate measure for this location.

3.9 Representation 8

- “Parking both sides is the problem”.**
- “Stop people from parking on the footways”.**
- “There is not enough space due to parked cars”.**

These points were raised by three respondents.

Response: The presence of parked vehicles assists in reducing vehicle speed by narrowing the available carriageway space and/or forcing motorists to stop and give way to oncoming vehicles. Parking on footways is an increasing problem and a difficult one to resolve. If vehicles obstruct the footway then an obstruction offence may have been committed and this is enforced by the police, however, there is not a specific offence for parking on a footway.

3.10 Representation 9

- “Parking on humps is a problem”.**
- “Drivers will cause accidents as they will be concentrating on the humps”.**

These points were raised by three respondents.

Response: There is nothing to stop a motorist from parking a vehicle on a speed hump. Experience shows that traffic calming measures of this nature do not increase the likelihood of an accident, but have the reverse effect.

3.11 Representation 10

- “I don’t pay road tax to have roads made unfriendly to cars”.**

This point was raised by one respondent.

Response: The purpose of speed humps is to reduce inappropriate vehicle speed within an area, in this case residential. The Highway Code strongly encourages motorists to reduce their speed in residential areas whereby in doing so it could reduce the severity of an accident involving a pedestrian, especially a child.

4.0 Local Member Consultation

4.1 The Local Member, Councillor Colin Carr, has been consulted and fully supports the proposal.

5.0 Recommendations and Reasons

5.1 Members are recommended to endorse the proposal to set aside the objections and proceed with the scheme as proposed.

Background Papers

Scheme File

Copies of responses and correspondence

Report to Cabinet on 27 November 2003 Item No 9

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

Contact: David Battensby Tel: 0191 332 4404

Appendix 1: Implications

Local Government Reorganisation

(Does the decision impact upon a future Unitary Council?)

None

Finance

To be funded by the Local Member from the Local Area Measures Allowance.

Staffing

None

Equality and Diversity

None

Accommodation

None

Crime and Disorder

The measures will reduce the problem of inappropriate driving within Melbeck Drive.

Sustainability

Possible improvements in the residential amenity.

Human Rights

None

Localities and Rurality

As detailed in the report.

Young People

Possible safer highway environment due to reduction in traffic speeds.

Consultation

Consultation on the proposed measures was undertaken.

Health

None