

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Highways Committee** held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Monday 6 September 2021 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor D Boyes (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors C Kay, K Earley, J Higgins, C Hood, J Howey, G Hutchinson, R Manchester, D Oliver, I Roberts, M Roberts, K Robson, A Simpson, A Sterling and M Wilson

Also Present:

Councillor C Bell, J Blakey and M McKeon

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Duffy, Moist, Ormerod and Tinsley.

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute members.

3 Declarations of Interest

Councillor G Hutchinson declared an interest as the local members for Tursdale in relation to Item 5.

4 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 April 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

5 Tursdale - Prohibition of Motor Vehicles Traffic Regulation Order 2021

The Committee received a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth that advised of the proposed introduction a prohibition of motor vehicles restriction on the access road/layby to the east of the A688, approximately 40m north of Tursdale village and asked that they consider the

objections made during the informal and formal consultation period (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Traffic Management Section Manager gave a detailed presentation which showed that the restriction would run between its northern junction with the A688, in an easterly then southerly direction to its junction with Ramsey Street, a total distance of approximately 75 metres. He advised that a lot of HGV drivers were using the carriageway and it had become a major concern for local residents. An article in the Northern Echo on 23 December 2020 had reported a man urinating in the area and there was photographic evidence of human faeces and toilet paper in the layby. This had presented a health and safety concern.

The Traffic Management Section Manager added that various solutions had been explored however as the layby was required for highways maintenance a permanent closure and fencing off of the area was not an option. Therefore, it was proposed to use a lockable boom gate.

Further to the advert of the proposed traffic regulation order there was one objection received, detailed within the report. Part of the objection said that toilet facilities should be provided as parking at the services in Bowburn was expensive, and that it did not impact the residents. The response to the objector stated that this was impacting upon the quality of life for local residents due to the anti-social behaviour of littering and people using the layby as a toilet. It impacted upon pedestrians and was causing road safety concerns. There were facilities available at Bowburn services less than a mile away at a cost of £25 per night per HGV with a £10 voucher to spend on drink and food.

The Chair invited representations from local members present.

Councillor J Blakey said that this issue had begun in 2010 with the proposal of the Amazon site at Integra 61 and she had expected the planning process to deal with the envisaged problems. In 2010, former Councillor Mac Williams had requested a roundabout which had not been approved. Following that the stretch of road in question had the removal of trees to try and stop the anti-social behaviour. She advised that this worked for a while but problems have since returned. She was concerned that local residents put up with refrigeration vehicles running all night and lights on vehicles being left on during the night. This affected one street in particular and she added that it was not right that people had to put up with this. There was a new play area which the children could not use due to what was going on in the layby. She asked the committee to support the recommendations and have sympathy with the residents.

Councillor M McKeon thanked the officers for working closely with local members on this project. Referring to the objection received she said that there was a facility just up the road so there was alternative provision available. The layby was originally intended as a turning circle and belonged to Durham County Council.

The people affected by this lived in a small village and had to put up with a lot of upheaval. They should not be expected to walk past human faeces. She fully supported the officer recommendation for the people living in Tursdale.

As the officers present did not have any further comments to make and as the objector was not present the chair moved on and asked for questions and comments from the committee members.

Councillor Kay said that this was a small village which had been impacted by the opening of the Amazon site and he believed that they should have provided off site parking, and should have been part of the planning process. He said that the HGV drivers should use the services available at Bowburn. He was concerned that this village had had to endure anti-social behaviour which had caused angst within the community. He fully supported the recommendations to close off the layby.

The Chair asked if there was sufficient capacity at the facilities nearby and was advised by the local members that there was capacity for parking. They believed the issue to be the cost of using these facilities and commented that the Amazon site also had capacity to house these vehicles.

Councillor Kay moved and Councillor Simpson seconded the recommendation.

Upon a vote being taken it was

Resolved: That the proposal in principle to proceed with the implementation of the Tursdale Prohibition of Motor Vehicles Traffic Regulation Order with the final decision to be made by the Corporate Director under delegated powers, be endorsed.

6 Annfield Plain - Parking and Waiting Restrictions Order 2021

The Committee received a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth that advised of the proposed changes to the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) in Annfield Plain (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Traffic Management Section Manager gave a detailed presentation that highlighted the proposed restrictions on West Road, which included:-

- To introduce 'no waiting at any time' restrictions on both sides of the carriageway for the nearby businesses and residents.
- To change a small section of existing 'no waiting at any time' to 'School Keep Clear' markings outside of the entrance to Greencroft Community School.
- To formalise the current lining in this location.
- The proposals are to address obstructive parking, to improve accessibility and visibility for both road users and pedestrians.

The Traffic Management Section Manager added that it was a busy section of carriageway with several business and schools. Visibility for road users and pedestrians and access for pedestrians along the footway had been impacted, forcing wheelchairs users and those with pushchairs onto the carriageway. He added that road safety had to be a primary concern and appreciated that if people were stopped from parking in place then they would move on to park elsewhere. However, where vehicles were parking along the carriageway and footway reduced visibility and obstructed pedestrians from using the footway.

Following the advert of the proposal one objection was received from a local business owner during the informal consultation. This objection still stood despite amendments to the original proposal.

The Chair invited representations from the local member present.

Councillor C Bell said that it was really bad for people who could not walk safely along the path and for those on their way to school or to their homes. A number of disabled people travelled along that footpath to the special needs school or elderly people trying to access their home. She was concerned that this was an accident waiting to happen and had caused considerable anxiety for residents. She suggested that there was a car park available, which although was a distance to walk, could still be utilised.

The Chair invited Mr Marshall, who was objecting to the proposal to make his representations.

Mr Marshall said that it was difficult when people were only aware of one side of the story. He stressed that he always leaves enough room for people passing in wheelchairs and pushchairs. He said that he was trying to survive as a local business and knew his community very well, carrying out food drives, food banks, soup kitchens and did a lot for the area. He said that he always offered to move vehicles if they were an obstruction and for a time he was parking vehicles on a grassed area. Residents also used this grassed area together with those attending football training from the school. Residents were in favour of this and had even asked him to park further along the grassed area. Following a visit from highways officers he was informed that he could not park on the grass and had to park on the road. He had been cutting the grassed area to keep it tidy and had asked if the area could be rented. He stressed that no one uses the grassed area but it has since been fenced off. Mr Marshall believed the problems started when he arranged a scare wash for Halloween last year which had gone out of control attracting a lot of vehicles. He now has a booking system in place to alleviate that issue. He was aware that wheelchairs could get passed the vehicles and had scratched some of the cars parked there, and said that a double buggy could also pass. Mr Marshall said that he would like to be able to use his business as he wanted to so that he could invest back into the local community.

The Traffic Management Section Manager commented that they could not condone someone driving over a footway to access the grassed area and that people should park in a designated area.

The chair asked how far away the car park in question was and the local member advised that it was not that far.

The chair moved on and asked for questions and comments from the committee members.

Councillor Sterling said that she knew the area very well and had sympathy with the objector, as a business owner herself in these very tough times. She did confirm that no one used the grassed area in question but agreed that this was not a car park. She believed that there were too many cars parked along the carriageway which was unsightly and suggested that if a wheelchair user had scratched a vehicle suggested that there was not enough space to get passed. She was concerned about the special needs children being able to safely get to school and the elderly and infirm people who lived in the bungalows being able to access the footpath. She concluded that there were too many vehicles for the business but did comment that the car park mentioned was too far away.

Councillor Sterling moved and Councillor Howey seconded the recommendation.

Upon a vote being taken it was

Resolved: That the proposal in principle to proceed with the implementation of the Annfield Plain Parking and Waiting Restrictions Order 2021, with the final decision to be made by the Corporate Director under delegated powers, be endorsed.