

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Highways Committee** held in Committee Room 2 - County Hall, Durham on **Tuesday 28 June 2011 at 10.00 am**

Present:

Councillor G Bleasdale (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors B Arthur, A Bainbridge, D Hancock, S Hugill, A Naylor, P Stradling, L Thomson, E Tomlinson, J Turnbull and A Wright

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Burn, D Marshall, J Maslin, J Shiell, T Taylor, R Todd and C Woods

Also Present:

Councillor A Savory

1 Minutes

The Minutes of the Meetings held on 11 and 19 April 2011 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to the following amendments:

Minutes - 11 April 2011

Item 2 – Village Green Registration: Belle Vue Playing Fields, Consett

The final paragraph to read “Councillor D Marshall proposed that the application be refused for the reasons set out in the report. He was seconded by Councillor Todd.”

Minutes – 19 April 2011

Item 4 – B6277 Speed Limit Review

Resolution to be replaced with:

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee endorses the proposal to set aside the objections in respect of the northbound approach (B6277) to Middleton in Teesdale and the ‘Lancelands’ (C165 Clint Lane) approach to Cotherstone.
- (b) That the Traffic Regulation Order to regulate speed limits on the B6277 and adjoining roads between Startforth and Langdon Beck be implemented.

- (c) That further consideration be given to the extension of the speed limits on the B6277 road south of Fitzhugh Court and on the C162 road (Briscoe Lane) west of 'Balder Croft', in accordance with the representations made by Cotherstone Parish Council and as detailed in the report.

Matters Arising

Minutes - 11 April 2011

Item 2 – Village Green Registration: Belle Vue Playing Fields, Consett

Mr C Simmonds, Solicitor advised that a letter had been received from the applicant indicating that he intended to request a judicial review. A response was being drafted and Members would be updated on progress.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 C154 Sawmills Lane, Brandon, Parking Restrictions

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services which advised of representations received to the proposed No Waiting and No Loading Restrictions for the C154 Sawmills Lane, Brandon (for copy, see file of Minutes).

Representations had been received regarding the ongoing problem of uncontrolled parking along Sawmills Lane, particularly close to the area around Stoneacre Garage. Areas of concern were parking near the location of the school crossing patrol and outside the doctor's surgery which resulted in vehicles backing onto the A690.

A consultation exercise had been undertaken and proposals presented to the local Residents Association as well as public meetings where the local MP was present.

Mr D Wilcox, Strategic Highways Manager gave a presentation on the proposals. It was proposed to introduce various parking restrictions along C154 Sawmills Lane which included No Waiting at Any Time, No Waiting/No Loading at Any Time and bollards to prevent pavement parking. A plan showing the restrictions was attached at Appendix 2.

Five representations and responses had been received and were detailed in the report.

Stoneacre Garage had a planning application pending for use of adjacent land which may alleviate some of the problems they had in the movement and storage of retail cars.

Councillor Taylor had been unable to attend the meeting but supported the proposals. He had explained that the restrictions were much needed and would go some way to alleviating the difficult and dangerous highway situation.

Councillor Turnbull explained that he would support the proposals. There was a problem with parked cars, congestion around the school crossing and a build up of traffic outside the doctor's surgery. The school crossing patrol had resigned after 21 years as she had felt her life was being threatened by the obstructions.

RESOLVED that the implementation of waiting and loading restrictions as per the plan in Appendix 2 be agreed.

4 Proposed Tables And Chairs Licence - Stanley Jefferson Public House, 5 Market Place, Bishop Auckland

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director, Regeneration which gave details of the representations received with regard to an application under the provisions of Section 115E of the Highways Act 1980 to place tables and chairs on the highway outside the Stanley Jefferson Public House, Market Place, Bishop Auckland (for copy, see file of Minutes).

Mr D Wilcox, Strategic Highways Manager gave a presentation on the details of the proposals and explained that there were currently three premises with tables and chairs licences in the vicinity.

The application received included a planning permission that had been granted for change of use to provide a café seating area. The premises licence authorised the sale of alcohol for consumption inside and outside the premises.

Concerns to the application had been received by the Police and local Member. The Police raised concerns regarding emergency access/egress along with concerns regarding the effect of the reduced footway width during peak taxi operating times and objected on grounds of public order and road safety. The local Member raised concerns regarding safety due to the proximity of the proposed tables and chairs to the taxi rank at evenings, particularly on a weekend.

Additional conditions had been proposed as follows:

- Time restriction – tables and chairs must be removed by 9.30pm
- Temporary barrier installed to prevent table creep and define the consent area. 2.3m width to be maintained at all times
- Tables and chairs must not obstruct emergency access/egress
- Tables and chairs must not be placed on market days

RESOLVED that the application be approved subject to the conditions detailed in the report.

5 Stanhope Ford

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services which gave an update on the safety issues surrounding the continued use of Stanhope Ford and the responses received to the statutory public consultation

exercise linked to the publication of a traffic order to permanently close the ford to vehicular traffic (for copy, see file of Minutes).

Mr D Wilcox, Strategic Highways Manager explained that Stanhope Ford was an unclassified road forming an optional crossing point on the River Wear in Weardale, linking the B6278 with the A689. The B6278 had a recorded 'Annual Average Daily Traffic Flow' of 724 vehicles per day. In contrast, from surveys undertaken in January 2007 at the southern approach ramp to the Ford, the 7 day average flow for that particular week was recorded at 60 vehicles per day.

Over the past 10 years, there had been 23 reported incidents at the Ford. Motorists had become stranded when attempting to traverse the Ford during adverse weather conditions. In some cases, necessitating rescues by the Emergency Services.

Following a number of management team meetings and public a consultation, a Traffic Regulation Order was approved in 2007 which would seasonally prohibit the use of the Ford by vehicular traffic between 1 October to 31 March each year.

An incident in April 2008 resulted in the Emergency Services being called and the Police had used their emergency powers to re-impose a road closure of the Ford.

It had become clear in recent years, that the incidents were not confined to certain times of the year, therefore the seasonal traffic order did not afford the protection of the public. Following concerns of the Police and incidents elsewhere in the country involving vehicles being swept from Fords, it had become necessary to implement a temporary road closure order which remained in place to date.

The County Council had published a traffic order to revoke the seasonal order and was proposing to implement a permanent 'Prohibition of Driving' Traffic Order. Thirteen responses of support and twenty one objections had been received. In addition, objections had been received from three specialist motoring organisations.

A handwritten petition to 'Save Stanhope Ford' had been received containing 82 signatures. Non-statutory representations had also been made via Facebook which recorded 1007 Members resulting in 350 objections when viewed in November 2010. Local Members also offered objections to the proposals believing Stanhope Ford to be essential to the heritage and tourism.

Having regard to the volume of objections and the complexity of the evidence and legal issues involved, it was considered good practice to hold a non statutory public inquiry. An inspector with expertise would be appointed, consider all the evidence and make recommendations to the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services.

Councillor Stradling commented that it was a sensitive issue and felt it appropriate for a non statutory public inquiry to be held to enable representations to be considered.

Councillor Hugill explained that he had used the Ford for 53 years and drivers needed to use their common sense. He felt the incidents were as a result of bad driving.

Councillor Savoury advised that she welcomed a public enquiry. Stanhope Ford was unique, part of the heritage and to remain open was part of the County Durham Plan. The majority should not be penalised and be able to use the Ford.

RESOLVED that the Committee endorse the Director's proposal to appoint an inspector to hold a Public Inquiry to consider the objections received and thereafter provide a report and recommendations for the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services to implement as he considers appropriate.