

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Highways Committee** held in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham on **Thursday 8 October 2015 at 9.30 a.m.**

Present:

Councillor G Bleasdale in the Chair

Members of the Committee:

Councillors B Armstrong, D Bell, H Bennett, R Ormerod, F Tinsley, J Turnbull and R Young.

Also Present:

Councillors K Davidson and K Henig.

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Allen, I Geldard, O Gunn, D Hicks, K Hopper, O Milburn, S Morrison, J Robinson, J Rowlandson and P Stradling.

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute members.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 5 June and 24 July 2015 were agreed as correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest in relation to any item of business on the agenda.

5 A689 Rose Terrace, Stanhope

The Committee noted a report of the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services which updated the Committee since changes to the speed limit were made to the A689 Western approach to Stanhope which the Committee had endorsed at a meeting held on 21 November 2014 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Committee received a presentation detailing the speed limit changes, before and after photographs of the areas in question and the following speed limit changes that had been observed during recent speed surveys, namely:

- A689 Allerton Bridge (was 30mph now 40mph)

- A689 at the Town Hall (within 30mph limit)
- B6278 at the Community Hospital (was 30mph now 40mph)
- B6278 at the speed limit (was 30mph now 40mph)

The Strategic Highways Manager informed the Committee that the scheme had worked extremely well and by increasing the speed limit from 30mph to 40mph had created a more credible speed limit for the area in question, which motorists had been more inclined to adhere to.

In response to a question from Councillor Tinsley, the Strategic Highways Manager informed the Committee that Highways Officers worked closely with the Police and take incidents and concerns into account in looking for the best solution for each area.

The Strategic Highways Manager informed the Committee that no further correspondence with objectors had been received following the introduction of the scheme.

6 C91 Waldrige Village and Waldrige Link Road, Chester le Street - Various Speed Limits

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services regarding objections received to a number of proposed speed limit changes around Waldrige Village and Waldrige Link Road (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Committee then received a presentation which detailed the location, the proposal, with supporting maps and the objections raised (for copy of presentation see file of Minutes).

The Strategic Highways Manager informed the Committee that traffic speeds on the C91 through Waldrige Village had been raised as a concern by local Councillors, the local Parish Council and residents of Waldrige Village. Requests had been made to both the County Council and Durham Constabulary to consider reducing the speed limit in the areas outlined in the report and presentation which sought three changes;

- i. to reduce the speed limit through Waldrige Village from 40mph to 30mph;
- ii. increase the speed limit on the Waldrige link road from 30mph to 40mph which currently did not comply with Department for Transport guidelines and was not credible. Speed surveys had supported this theory which had been raised by Durham Constabulary as a concern; and
- iii. to reduce the speed limits on the Waldrige Park Estate and Meadow Drive Estate from 30mph to a 20mph zone.

Consultation on all of the proposals took place between 3 June and 3 July 2015 to gauge the initial views of stakeholders. 25 responses had been received. 14 were in favour of the proposals whilst 11 were against. A further letter was then sent to those who were opposed to the proposals as a means of clarifying and answering questions that had been raised. Following this further consultation, 19 people were in now favour of the proposals and 6 remained opposed to the proposal. The statutory consultation process took place between 2 and 24 July 2015.

The Strategic Highways Manager informed the Committee that a 110 signature petition had also been passed to him prior to the meeting in support of the 20 mph zones in both housing estates and support for a 30mph speed limit through Waldrige Village.

Councillor K Henig, one of the local Members for the area explained that Waldrige Village had a history of multiple cases of cars leaving the road. Residents and users of the village hall had experienced real difficulties exiting the area due to the speed of vehicles in the area. 80% of residents were in favour of the 20 mph was in line with council policy and Department for Transport guidance. Councillor Henig also referred to guidance issued by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents which stated that local authorities were responsible for determining where 20mph zones and limits should be introduced and should take advantage of opportunities to introduce them where they are needed.

Councillor K Davidson, also a local Member for the Waldrige area supported the comments expressed by Councillor Henig and added that despite the small number of objections, it was felt that the proposals had widespread support from the local community.

The Committee then heard from four objectors to the scheme, whose representations are summarised as follows:

Objector one:

- appreciated the 20 mph speed limit and suggested that the current traffic calming measures had been introduced over a period of time and not been in place since the development was constructed, as had previously been stated;
- there were numerous estates in the immediate area where a 20 mph zone was not being proposed and queried why; and
- felt that there was not enough compelling evidence querying accident rates and the closeness of the nearby school.

The Strategic Highways Manager explained that the layout of the area was not being changed. However, the installation of six 20 mph signs would be placed at the entrances of the estate. This would remind drivers to keep to those speed limits. It was accepted that vehicle speeds were low however the idea was to reinforce to motorists that they were entering a 20 mph, traffic calmed zone.

The Committee then head from a second objector who felt that the proposed increase of the speed limit on the link road from 30 mph to 40 mph lacked any evidence for change. The objector felt that the current 30 mph speed limit should remain unchanged. The objector also commented that the following factors were key considerations and had not been outlined:

- a crash map detailed three serious incidents on the road which had not been referred to in the report;
- 'changing circumstances' had not been explained;
- There was no evidence of other road users being consulted; and
- police statistics for deployment on road prosecutions had not been included.

Referring to the issues raised by the objector, the Strategic Highways Manager had researched incidents that had taken place on the road and explained to the Committee that one incident, which may have appeared to look serious involved no personal injuries.

Two drink driving alcohol related incidents had occurred and one incident involved a vehicle which had overtaken a cyclist and collided with one of the central islands. None of the incidents were speed related.

Objector Three explained that the long straight nature of the road encouraged vehicles to travel at speed and felt that there was a strong argument to reduce the speed in the more built up areas. The objector queried how a motorist travelling from a proposed 40 mph zone into a 20 mph zone would give due consideration to other road users such as cyclists, walkers and horse riders. The objector claimed that peoples pets had been run over, road furniture had been demolished and there had been a number of accidents, albeit not fatal. The objector felt that these issues needed to be taken into account and monitored and felt that the Council had ignored vulnerable road users.

The Traffic Asset Manager informed the Committee that vehicles would naturally be slowing down for the junction mouth from the 40 mph to the 20 mph zone. The installation of 20 mph signs would help influence lower vehicle speeds and a road safety culture which would in-turn encourage more walkers and cycling.

The County Council took the concerns of Durham Constabulary very seriously and the proposed speed limit was credible, explaining that the lower speeds wouldn't increase and the higher, top-end speeds would decrease. From past schemes in other areas of the County there was no evidence to indicate that vehicle speeds would increase making reference to the earlier A689 Stanhope presentation to the Committee.

The final objector explained that one of the key elements of the proposal fell within 600 metres of the Hermitage Academy and highlighted a number of roads on a map within the same distance that were not being proposed as 20 mph zones. The objector felt that the solution to this problem centred around a link access road which had not been built upon the completion of the development and exacerbated the problems in the area.

Councillor B Armstrong agreed with the proposals detailed in the report.

Councillor Tinsley explained that the 20 mph signs would reinforce the message to motorists in Walldridge Village and had studied the photos of the estate. He felt that the surveys conducted by officers had been positive, despite the relatively low turnout and felt that the scheme was credible.

Resolved

That the Committee endorse the proposal detailed in the report having considered the objections and representations to the scheme.