

Highways Committee

20 December 2011

Durham Gate Speed restrictions and access restrictions



Report of Ian Thompson Corporate Director Regeneration and Economic development

Councillor Neil Foster, Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Economic Development

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To advise Members of the objections received to the formal consultation on the proposed traffic regulation orders controlling speed limits and access restrictions at Durham Gate, Thinford.
- 1.2 To request members to consider the objections made during the formal consultation exercise.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 At the planning stage of the Durham Gate development, it was intended that traffic for the Industrial estate, commercial centre, and residential development should be segregated. This is to be achieved through providing access for residential traffic from Green Lane roundabout Enterprise Way, access for commercial traffic from Thinford Roundabout and access for Industrial traffic via the A167 and York Hill Road roundabout. This strategy required restricted access to the Industrial Estate traffic.
- 2.2 The approved development at Durham Gate will generate demand for access from car drivers, public transport users, cyclists and pedestrians. It is estimated that up to an additional 7,000 car trips per day, 525 pedestrian trips per day and 680 public transport trips per day could be made to the development in addition to the current traffic on the network.
- 2.3 The Industrial Estate traffic is to be directed to use the York Hill Road access from the A167 via appropriate highway signage. To assist in controlling access, traffic regulation orders have been promoted which would introduce No Entry restriction on Enterprise Way and a no right turn/ left turn at the York Hill Road/ Meadowfield Avenue junction.

- 2.4 In order to accommodate the increased traffic levels, Thinford roundabout is to be signalised and the central island and approaches re engineered. It is therefore considered appropriate to amend the speed limits at the roundabout approaches to reflect the amended deflection at the junction and the increased vehicular and vulnerable road user activity.
- 2.5 In order to facilitate safe movement of vehicles and vulnerable road users at the junction approaches it has been proposed that the current 60mph speed limit is reduced to 40mph.
- 2.6 Early proposals were subject to consultation at the planning stage. The Fire and Rescue service based on York Hill Road responded to the proposal to prohibit vehicles from Enterprise Way by requesting a relaxation of the restriction for their vehicles on emergency call.
- 2.7 A proposal was developed to introduce the 'No Entry except emergency service vehicles' at Enterprise Way, north of Watson Court. This was deemed acceptable by the Fire and Rescue Service. Durham Constabulary were consulted at the planning stage and offered no objection to the No Entry proposal. No objection to this specific measure was offered by the Green Lane residents association at the planning stage.
- 2.8 Following formal advertising of the Council's intention to introduce access restrictions and amended speed limits two objections have been received. One from Green Lane Residents Association (GLRA) and one from Durham Constabulary.

3.0 Objection 1 Green Lane Residents Association

- 3.1 The GLRA have engaged with the developers, officers of the Council and the Cabinet Portfolio holder to raise a number of concerns relating to the development. Specifically they sought to restrict vehicular use of Green Lane by development generated traffic. The cabinet portfolio holder has sought to allay concerns and address issues raised. The resident's association have taken the opportunity to raise these issues again through the formal consultation for traffic regulations and are pressing for a prohibition of entry except for access at the Green Lane / Enterprise Way junction.
- 3.2 The grounds for objection to the Enterprise Way 'No Entry', the York Hill Road restrictions and the amended speed limits are:-
- a) The omission of a bus gate from the final development proposals.
 - b) The potential for 'rat running' through Green Lane from and to the development.
 - c) The York Hill Road restriction will divert traffic to Green Lane

4.0 Response

- 4.1 In developing the highway network to serve the Durham Gate development a number of factors have been considered, not least the distribution of traffic on the network and where possible addressing impact through mitigation.
- 4.2 Proposals sought to deter 'rat running' traffic which may seek to avoid the Thinford signalised junction. Initial proposals sought to achieve this with a bus only restriction within the development. However, land ownership issues prevented its introduction. This proposal was subsequently replaced with a highway network design which discouraged through traffic. The bus gate issue is separate to that of the restrictions under consideration.
- 4.3 The GLRA concerns about rat running through Green Lane are noted. However, it is contested that the introduction of the 'No Entry' on Enterprise Way will discourage Industrial Estate traffic from using Green Lane. The restrictions at York Hill Road and speed limits would appear to have little relevance to the issue of rat running through Green Lane.
- 4.4 Restrictions at York Hill Road are designed to prevent Industrial Estate traffic from entering or leaving Meadowfield Avenue other than using the A167 York Hill Road Roundabout. The objector's concerns are on the grounds that, if vehicles are prevented from turning right from York Hill Road into the development, they will instead use Green Lane as access to the development.
- 4.5 The proposed restriction on Enterprise Way would prevent access to the Industrial. It is highly unlikely that traffic will choose to use Green Lane as an alternative access to the development. Commercial traffic will enter the development via the Thinford roundabout junction and residential traffic will use the A688 / Enterprise Way junction. The A688 provides a more suitable convenient and faster access to the development than Green Lane.

5.0 Objection 2 Durham Constabulary

- 5.1 Durham Constabulary have objected to two elements of the proposed restrictions. Agreement has been reached regarding the restriction at York Hill Road, however an objection to the Enterprise Way 'No Entry' restriction has been submitted. The objection is based on the grounds that the constabulary consider it is 'unsatisfactory' that compliance can only be achieved by signage and the physical presence of the Police.

- 5.2 An objection has also been made to the proposed speed restrictions on the approach to Thinford roundabout. Initial objection to the proposed limits on the link to the development roundabout hub (40mph) and the East and West leg approaches to the signalised junction have been withdrawn. However Durham Constabulary maintain the objection to the proposed 40mph speed limit on the A167 on the approach to and through the roundabout.
- 5.3 Durham Constabulary object to the 40mph speed limit on the basis they 'see no credible reason why the A167 should be subject to anything other than the national speed limit of 60mph.' This view is based on the physical environment of the highway and knowledge of current road traffic accident data from the existing road layout.

6.0 Response

- 6.1 As stated the physical layout of the roundabout junction will change significantly with the introduction of a signal controlled junction. As such the operational performance of the highway will change and it is contested that historic physical environment or historic accident records are not relevant to the assessment of future performance.
- 6.2 In designing the signalised junction to accommodate increased demand, it has been necessary to increase capacity of all approach lanes and to move the location of the central island of the roundabout in a westerly direction. As such deflection parameters for vehicles travelling north south have been relaxed. This lack of deflection may lead to inappropriate approach speeds outside peak periods.
- 6.3 The significant increase in activity as a result of the development will see increased demand for local facilities and public transport facilities from vulnerable road users. Pedestrian activity will be accommodated at the signalised roundabout, however, there will be increased demand for access to bus stops on the section of carriageway between Thinford and York Hill Road and to fast food outlets and bus stops south of Thinford roundabout.
- 6.4 Current Department for Transport guidance sets principles for local speed limits. This guidance has been adopted when assessing the appropriate speed limit for the approaches to the signalised Thinford Roundabout. The guidance reflects on the perception of the driver of the road environment together with the consideration of vulnerable road users.
- 6.5 The guidance states 40mph speed limits are generally on higher quality suburban roads with good width layout, parking and waiting restrictions in operation and buildings set back from the road. The guidance also sets out parameters for a 40mph road. These include those roads where there is substantial development and where the road is used by considerable numbers of vulnerable road users. (DfT 01/2006/108)

6.6 It is maintained that the A167 between the new York Hill Road roundabout and Thinford falls into the above category. The increase in volume of vulnerable road users and the change in physical layout would support the view to reduce the speed limit to 40mph.

4.0 Local member consultation

4.1 The Local members Councillor Neil Foster and Councillor Barbara Graham have been consulted and offer no objection to the proposals.

5.0 Recommendation

5.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** that the committee set aside the objections and endorse the introduction of the traffic regulation order containing the 'No Entry' on Enterprise Way and reduced speed limit on the A167 to 40 mph, North to South through the Thinford signalised junction. .

Background Papers

Correspondence and documentation on Traffic Office File and in members library.

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance Signing and lining to be financed from developer contribution

Staffing No long term staffing implications for the County Council

Risk : There is a high risk that omitting the prohibitions of movement may result in increased levels of traffic through residential areas. Not implementing the reduced speed limit could result in a medium risk to increase in casualty statistics.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty : The proposals will improve use of the highway network for vulnerable road users

Accommodation : None

Crime and Disorder The proposals will provide effective traffic management, although recorded incidents of contravention of regulations may increase

Human Rights : None

Consultation A full consultation on the development master plan has been undertaken at the planning stage. Informal and formal consultation has been undertaken in accordance with the relevant statute for

Procurement: None

Disability Issues: None

Legal Implications: All orders have been advertised by the County Council as highway authority and will be made in accordance with legislative requirements.