

# Highways Committee

March 2012

## Durham Gate Speed and access restrictions



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### Report of Ian Thompson Corporate Director Regeneration and Economic development Councillor Neil Foster : Portfolio Holder Regeneration and Economic Development

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#### **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 To advise Members of the objections received to the proposed traffic regulation orders controlling access at Durham Gate, Thinford.
- 1.2 Members will recall that a report was presented in November 2011 considering objections to speed and access restrictions for this development. At that time members were minded to endorse the proposed restrictions. However, it has since emerged that the main objectors to the proposals had not been invited to attend committee to present their objections to committee.
- 1.3 The legal notification and objection period to the proposed restrictions has been extended to accommodate the requirements of the Green Lane Residents Association in preparing their grounds for objection.
- 1.4 This report sets out the grounds for objection and asks members to consider the objections received 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 was to be achieved through providing access for residential traffic from A688/ Enterprise Way, access for commercial traffic from Thinford Roundabout and access for Industrial traffic via the A167 and York Hill Road roundabout. This strategy requires 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 and through the internal highway design. To assist in controlling access, traffic regulation orders have been promoted which would introduce a 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 Early proposals for the development network management were subject to consultation at the planning stage. To prevent Industrial Estate traffic from entering the development directly via the A688 and Enterprise Way it was proposed a prohibition was placed on Enterprise Way. The Fire and Rescue service based on York Hill Road responded to the initial proposal to prohibit vehicles from Enterprise Way by requesting a relaxation of the restriction for their vehicles on emergency call.
- 2.6 It was therefore agreed that a 'No Entry except emergency service vehicles' restriction at Enterprise Way, north of Watson Court should be promoted. This was deemed acceptable by the Fire and Rescue Service. Durham Constabulary were consulted at the planning stage and offered no objection to this No Entry proposal. No objection to this specific measure was offered by any parties at the planning stage.
- 2.7 Proposed restrictions include limiting vehicular movements at the Meadowfield Avenue/ York Hill Road junction. The proposed prohibition of right turn into Meadowfield Avenue and left turn out of Meadowfield Avenue will discourage use of York Hill Road by Industrial Estate traffic and encourage use of the A688/A167 as an alternative route for access to the Development.

### **3.0 Objections**

- 3.1 Following formal advertising of the Council's intentions to introduce an amendment to the speed limit and access restrictions, two objections have been received. One from Green Lane Residents Association (GLRA) and one from Durham Constabulary.
- 3.2 The GLRA have engaged with the developers, planning, development control and transport officers of the Council and the Cabinet Portfolio holder to raise their concerns relating to the highway layout at the development. Substantial correspondence has been exchanged between the GLRA, Council officers and the Cabinet member, to exchange views about the potential impact of development generated traffic. This has included protracted discussions about the technical detail included in the Transport Assessment produced by the developer's consultants. Several meetings have also been held between the GLRA representatives, officers of the Council and local members to discuss these issues.
- 3.3 The GLRA have offered their own solutions to resolve their concerns including a junction redesign to prohibit access from Enterprise Way to Green Lane from the north and east, and, a redesign of York Hill Road to Meadowfield Avenue which includes direct access into the development from the A167, a priority junction to York Hill Road from Meadowfield Avenue, and a prohibition of drive for vehicles over 7.5tonnes entering York Hill Road.

### **4.0 Objection 1 Green Lane Residents Association (GLRA)**

- 4.1 GLRA have outlined their objections with a detailed submission together with separate support documentation. The objection is made to the prohibition of left turn from Meadowfield Avenue to York Hill Road and the prohibition of right turn from York Hill Road to Meadowfield Avenue. The objection is to the prohibition of cars and commercial vehicles but not to the prohibition of HGV's. No objection has been offered to the proposed restriction on Enterprise Way or to the proposed speed limit amendments.
- 4.2 In summary their main grounds for objection are made because the proposed restrictions on Meadowfield Avenue will result in local traffic diverting to Green Lane to access the development. The objectors have made the following points:-
- 4.3 **More predicted traffic will use Green Lane than York Hill Road**
- 4.4 Historically Green Lane has carried significantly more traffic than York Hill Road. This was due to the highway layout, geometry and function of the different roads.

- 4.5 In developing the highway network to serve the Durham Gate a number of factors have been considered, including the predicted generation and distribution of traffic on the network. The design concept sought to assign Industrial Estate Traffic, commercial development traffic and residential traffic to different parts of the highway network. Proposals also sought to deter traffic from south west of the development from seeking to avoid the Thinford signalised junction by travelling through the development via Enterprise Way and Meadowfield Avenue.
- 4.6 It is agreed that the proposed restriction will lead to an increase of locally generated traffic from Spennymoor and Tudhoe using Green Lane to access the development instead of York Hill Road. It is also agreed that the predicted magnitude of change in traffic levels on Green Lane due to the proposed restrictions is approximately 127 vehicles during the am peak hour in 2019. (Approximately 2 vehicles per minute increase).
- 4.7 Green Lane has historically carried significantly more traffic than York Hill Road. No restrictions were in place to prevent traffic from the former Industrial Estate development using Green Lane. Green Lane is different in layout, design and use from York Hill Road. It is a 30mph residential distributor road 7.3m wide at its eastern end and 7.9m wide at its western end. It has footways on both sides of the carriageway and is bounded by development throughout. York Hill Road is 5.5m wide at its western end widening to 7.3m wide along a new section from the Fire Station heading east to the A167. It has footway on one side of the carriageway only, carries an unrestricted speed limit for part of its length and is unbounded and of a rural nature along some sections.
- 4.8 The predicted traffic levels for 2019 are based on a number of factors including a survey of similar sites, the site being fully occupied by 2019, no change in mode of travel to the site to more sustainable modes such as walking and cycling, and a continuation in economic growth to 2019.
- 4.9 **Objectors question the validity of the traffic models used by consultants to evaluate junction operation**
- 4.10 The developer's consultants have used industry standard modelling techniques and software programmes to attempt to accurately predict the operation of the highway network. These predictive models have been accepted as being indicative of the likely operation of the network following full development of Durham gate.

- 4.11 **Concerned that no restrictions to access are proposed for Green Lane**
- 4.12 No proposals have been brought forward by the developer or highway authority to restrict vehicular access to Green Lane. It is considered that the highway can accommodate safely the predicted generated traffic without significant detrimental impact to the highway network efficiency or safety.
- 4.13 **Concerned that removal of a bus gate from development proposals enables rat running to take place.**
- 4.14 Initial proposals included introduction of a bus gate between Enterprise Way and the development hub. It was considered the bus gate would deter rat running through the development from A688/ Enterprise Way to the A167 roundabout at York Hill Road. Land allocation and land acquisition issues resulted in the bus gate being omitted from the final highway design layout. However, it is considered that the need to negotiate an indirect highway layout and five junctions would have a similar effect to discourage rat running from the A688 to A167 via the development.
- 4.15 **Concerned that all modes of traffic and vehicle types will be permitted to use the Enterprise Way access to the development.**  
The introduction of a restriction at Meadowfield Avenue / York Hill Road will not impact on or determine the type of traffic mix accessing the development from the A688/ Enterprise way junction. It is agreed that all modes of traffic could use the development road network to reach the Industrial Estate. However, as explained previously the network design would discourage this. The use of the A688/ A167 will provide a more attractive route for traffic.
- 4.16 **Concerned that the Enterprise Way access is the principle access to the development.**  
The principle access and gateway to the development will be via a prestigious boulevard entrance to the development hub off Thinford roundabout. The original design concept included a dedicated left turn on Thinford roundabout for east bound traffic to the development. However, due to design and land constraints this was not possible to construct. Traffic using that left turn was therefore assigned and accommodated within the Enterprise Way access. The objectors are concerned that higher volumes of traffic will enter the development site from the A688 Enterprise Way than from the other access points. The reassignment of traffic as a result of the omission of the left turn filter increases traffic on Enterprise Way. However the Meadowfield Avenue / York Hill Road restriction is not a contributory factor in this increase.

4.17 **Concerned that the internal road layout linking Enterprise Way and the development hub directly will encourage rat running.**

The internal layout includes a development hub with raised tables to slow vehicles, any driver rat running to avoid Thinford traffic signals would need to give way or negotiate five junctions within the development. (Including the A167 and A688) negotiating these junctions would deter drivers and negate any time saving perceived through avoiding Thinford Traffic Signals.

4.0 **Objection 2 Durham Constabulary**

4.1 Agreement has been reached with Durham Constabulary 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.

5.0 **Response**

5.1 It is acknowledged that a small minority of drivers may choose to ignore any type of signed restrictions. Throughout the highway network signing is used to restrict vehicular movement and speed. The majority of drivers adhere to the restrictions regardless of the visible presence or otherwise of Police enforcement. Similarly, in this instance it is envisaged that the majority of drivers will adhere to the restriction and a similar level of enforcement will be required as is the case for all other moving traffic or speed restrictions.

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 **Support**

Correspondence has been received from the Tudhoe Residents Committee expressing their support for the proposed restrictions.

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 'turning restrictions at Meadowfield Avenue/ York Hill Road , the 'No entry' restriction on Enterprise Way and the reduced speed limit on the A167 North to South through the Thinford signalised junction. .

**Background Papers**

All correspondence and documentation can be viewed in the members library and is held in the Traffic Office File .

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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**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 on parts of the network where it is undesirable to do so. 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. Consultation meetings have been held with the Green Lane Residents Association and local Council members.

**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.