

## Highways Committee

08 March 2013

### A690 Gilesgate to Carrville, Request to Reduce 70mph Speed Limit



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#### Report of Terry Collins, Corporate Director Neighbourhood Services

#### Councillor Bob Young, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Strategic Environment

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##### Purpose of the Report

- 1 To advise Committee of the findings following public consultation on the request to consider lowering the speed limit on the A690 to 50mph.
- 2 It is recommended that the Committee endorse the recommendation.

##### Background

- 3 A report was presented to the Highways Committee in November 2011 outlining the recommendations following the public consultation process regarding the crossing point on the A690.
- 4 The recommendations agreed by the Committee have now been implemented on site and have significantly improved identification of the crossing point both in daylight and darkness.
- 5 Following the debate the Committee requested that consideration be given to the request to lower the speed limit on the A690 and also provide street lights at the crossing.
- 6 A report (Appendix 2) was presented to the March 2012 Committee recommending that the speed limit and street lighting requests not be progressed. The report summarised some of the many points where a reduced speed limit conflicted with best practice and the national guidance. Following debate the Committee requested that the Council consult with the public on the proposal to lower the speed limit to 50mph.

##### Consultation

- 7 A public consultation was undertaken between the beginning of July and 31 August with a further notice appearing in the Durham County News at the end of August. The consultation period was extended to account for the article in Durham County News. Letters were sent to the directly affected properties and articles appeared in the Press; a sign advertising the consultation was provided on the A690 and responses were received by the Council's web site.

- 8 A total of 150 responses were received of which 34 (23%) were in favour of the proposal and 116 (77%) were against the proposal.
- 9 A large proportion of the responses against the proposal raised several points. The responses are summarised along with the number of respondents making the comments:
- 10 “The proposal is a completely unjustified knee-jerk reaction to a tragic accident”. This was raised by 32 respondents
- Response: It can not be denied that public opinion regarding the speed limit was heightened following the tragic accident, however the national guidance and best practice indicate that the existing national speed limit is the correct one for the road.*
- 11 “The road is not dangerous with the current 70mph speed limit”. This was raised by 27 respondents
- Response: The A690 has a good record considering the volume of traffic it carries. Of the few accidents which have occurred over the last three plus current year, speed was not considered to be a causation factor in any.*
- 12 “50mph would increase congestion”. This was raised by 21 respondents
- Response: Reducing the speed limit has the potential to reduce the capacity of the road in certain circumstances and may create issues on other parts of the highway network.*
- 13 “Do not understand why Councillors are going against their own Council officers and Police recommendations”. This was raised by 19 respondents
- Response: The consultation is part of due-process in considering public concerns*
- 14 “It would be better to build a footbridge”. This was raised by 17 respondents
- Response: A footbridge could not be justified for the small numbers of pedestrians crossing at this location*
- 15 “It would be better to remove the pedestrian crossing”. This was raised by 13 respondents
- Response: This option was considered and was the basis of the report to Committee presented in November 2011. The findings of the investigation was that the crossing should remain open and this was agreed by Committee.*
- 16 “The bus lane causes enough confusion and congestion”. This was raised by 12 respondents
- Response: The bus lane is signed in accordance with national standards and forms part of an integrated transport strategy for the City Centre.*
- 17 “A 50mph limit would not improve road safety”. This was raised by 29 respondents

*Response: Whilst there have been no incidents where speed has been a causation factor, it is accepted that an accident at lower speed may be less severe. However a reduction in the speed limit to 50mph is unlikely to reduce the severity of an incident involving a pedestrian.*

- 18 “The 50mph limit does not meet many of the criteria for a lower speed limit” or “It goes against the criteria for a lower limit”. This was raised by 8 respondents

*Response: It is agreed that the national standards and best practice indicate that the correct speed limit for a strategic route such as this should be the national speed limit. The national standard indicates that unrealistically low speed limits can lead to greater non-compliance and risk taking and also placing a greater enforcement burden on the Police.*

- 19 “50mph speed limit would not be policed”. This was raised by 5 respondents

*Response: The Police have a duty to enforce the speed limit, however the route does create difficulties for enforcement.*

- 20 “The road is already congested at peak times therefore a lower limit is not required”. This was raised by 13 respondents

*Response: It is agreed that at peak times, vehicle speeds are reduced due to the volume of traffic using the road. Outside of the peak periods vehicle speeds increase due to lighter traffic conditions.*

- 21 “Money could be better spent elsewhere”. This was raised by 6 respondents.

*Response: A reduction in the severity of an accident could provide some justification towards the cost of the scheme.*

- 22 Durham Constabulary raised many issues where the proposal conflicts with the national and local criteria, concluding that “it is the overall view that the route does not meet the necessary criteria for a lower speed limit and a 70mph speed limit should be retained.” (Copy included as Appendix 3)

## **Conclusions**

- 23 The cost of the scheme is estimated at £100,000 for which there is no budget provision and in light of the lack of justification it would be difficult to prioritise this at the expense of other commitments for highway funding.
- 24 Following consideration of all the relevant factors and responses received to the public consultation it is felt that the current speed limit is appropriate to the road and should be retained.

## **Recommendations and reasons**

- 25 It is **RECOMMENDED** that the Committee note the findings of the consultation and endorse the decision to retain the existing speed limit.

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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**Finance** – Introduction of the reduced speed limit would require a budget of £100k being identified from other commitments due to there being no available budget provision

**Staffing** – None

**Risk** – None

**Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty** – None

**Accommodation** – None

**Crime and Disorder** – Introduction of the lower limit is likely to lead to high levels of contravention by motorists

**Human Rights** – None

**Consultation** – As described in the report

**Procurement** – None

**Disability Issues** – None

**Legal Implications** – Higher rates of contraventions