

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Highways Committee** held in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham on **Friday 8 March 2013 at 10.00 am**

Present:

Councillor G Bleasdale in the Chair.

Members of the Committee:

Councillors B Arthur, A Bainbridge, N Foster, D Hancock, S Hugill, A Naylor, L Thomson, R Todd, E Tomlinson, J Turnbull, M Wilkes, A Wright and R Young.

Also Present:

Councillors N Martin and J Wilkinson.

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Robinson, D Burn, D Marshall, J Maslin, J Shiell, P Stradling, T Taylor and C Woods.

2 Substitute Members

Councillor Wilkes substituting for Councillor C Woods.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2013 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4 Declarations of interest

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

5 Change to Order of Business

The Chairman informed the Committee that there would be a change to the order of business and the Committee would consider Item 9 as the first item of business and the revert to the order detailed on the agenda.

6 The County Council Of Durham, (Tudhoe) (Prohibition Of Stopping and Waiting) (Amendment No. 1) Order 2012

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director, Regeneration and Economic Development regarding the proposed introduction of a road traffic regulation order at Meadowfield Avenue, located on Green Lane Industrial Estate, Spennymoor (for copy see file of Minutes).

The road was used for for access to the premises of Black and Decker, Boots distribution centre, Thorn Lighting and other companies and was utilised by heavy goods vehicles. One objection to the proposal had been received from a gentleman who operated a burger van business from the location. The Committee were informed that the business was operating from the location without permission, as the land was owned by the County Council. A new link road from the Durhamgate development would be opening soon and would increase traffic at the location.

Councillor Foster, local member for the area explained that it was unfortunate that the business would be affected, however, given the fact that the business did not have permission to be located at the site, the potential road safety concerns with the increased traffic on the opening of the new link road, it was imperative that the traffic order be introduced. Councillor Foster added that the Council would assist the business affected by the proposal.

Resolved

That the recommendation contained in the report be agreed.

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

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services which provided details of a public consultation to the possibility of lowering the speed limit on the A690 between Gilesgate and Carville to 50mph (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Strategic Highways Manager made a presentation to the Committee which detailed the background to the consultation which had followed on from a previous consultation process regarding Kepier Crossing (for presentation see file of Minutes).

The Committee were informed that a number of improvements at Kepier crossing which comprised of the installation of reflective bollards, cutting back of foliage and new signage which had improved visibility.

Councillor Thomson, local member for the area thanked the officers for their presentation and highlighted the following issues:

- there had been numerous accidents not referred to in the report;
- the bus lane was unlit and would soon be utilised soon by taxis and motorbikes;
- there had been an increased number of buses utilising the bus lane with the relocation of the Arriva Bus Depot onto a nearby Industrial Estate;
- cited a number of road safety related issues associated with a nearby caravan park located to the west of Carville intersection which often resulted in traffic stopping in the central reservation.

Councillor Thomson agreed that the signage and cutting back of foliage had greatly improved the crossing point and queried the cost of £100,000 detailed in the report and that a breakdown of those figures be provided to him. In summing up, Councillor Thomson felt that a 50mph speed limit would be enforceable and more appropriate. He added that the two local county councillors along with Belmont Parish Council were in favour of a reduced speed limit and wished to see no further facilities on the stretch of road.

Councillor Wilkes commented that there had been definite improvement with the works undertaken in the area, however, there still appeared to be difficulties with visibility and suggested that the foliage be cut back further. Councillor Wilkes also suggested that a reduced speed limit would bring a number of other benefits to the area, particularly in terms of driver and pedestrian safety, reduction of noise pollution to local houses and would provide an overall, more balanced speed limit.

The Strategic Highways Manager informed the Committee that Durham Constabulary had responded to the proposals and their view was that the current speed limit reflected the correct level of speed for the road in accordance with the Department for Transport guidelines.

Councillor Arthur shared Councillor Wilkes' concerns about the foliage but expressed concern that during the spring and summer months the foliage would become large and overgrown and would grow towards the roadside. In terms of the proposed speed reduction, Councillor Arthur accepted that a very tragic accident had occurred but felt that the current speed limit was appropriate for the road and should be unchanged. Councillor Arthur moved the recommendation contained in the report, provided a programme of maintenance could be incorporated into the recommendation.

Councillor Todd supported the comments made by Councillor Arthur and agreed to second the proposal, providing the additional works relating to foliage could be undertaken.

The Strategic Highways Manager acknowledged the foliage issues raised by Councillors Wilkes and Arthur and highlighted that a programme of cyclic maintenance should be carried out at the location to maintain a good level of visibility.

Councillor Bainbridge referred to the reduction of the speed limit at Chester Moor and felt that the stretch of the A690 was potentially more appropriate to have a 50mph speed limit in place given that there was a dedicated crossing and public right of way.

Councillor Wilkes commented that Councillors should not have to take into consideration whether or not the police could enforce a reduction in speed limit, the fact of the matter remained that if the Committee wished to endorse a reduction in speed limit then enforcement would be a matter for the police to undertake. Councillor Wilkes moved a counter proposal that the speed limit should be reduced which was seconded by Councillor Thomson.

The Committee then heard from a local resident who explained that his partner travelled the route every morning to commute to work and often witnessed people crossing the road. Whilst she slowed down on seeing people cross the road, it was not unusual for other road users to increase their speed and overtake, which had resulted in a number of near misses for pedestrians.

Upon a vote being taken it was

Resolved

- (i) That the findings of the consultation be noted and that the existing speed limit be retained; and
- (ii) That the Strategic Highways Manager arrange for a programme of cyclic maintenance to be undertaken in the area to ensure that foliage was cut-back to ensure optimum visibility at all times.

8 North Durham Academy, Stanley - Waiting Restrictions

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services regarding a proposed scheme of waiting restrictions around the vicinity of North Durham Academy, Stanley (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Strategic Highways Manager informed the Committee that the scheme had been devised as part of a planning condition granted in 2011 for the North Durham Academy Campus.

The scheme itself would include the introduction of various waiting restrictions around the vicinity of the academy to help deter parking problems around the school gates which would inevitably lead to congestion and access problems.

The Committee were informed that much consultation had taken place at the informal stage and questionnaires with two options had been sent to local residents affected by the proposals. One objection had been received at the formal, statutory advertisement stage in relation to visibility on Mona Street, lay-bys in front of shops and issues of cars parking in various streets (Murray Park and Slaidburn Road).

In response to the objections received, the Strategic Highways Manager informed the Committee that work involving junction improvements, repositioning of give way markings and a right hand turn prohibition as detailed in the report would be undertaken at Mona Street. In relation to the other restrictions, the Committee were informed that Slaidburn Road would be the main access route for pupils and for access to the staff car park which would not be wide enough to allow parking on both sides of the road, as well as maintaining two way traffic. Congestion would occur during peak hours if no parking restrictions were introduced on the Academy side of the road.

Resolved

That the recommendation contained in the report be agreed.

9 C17 Woodland Road, Auton Stile, Toll House Road and Aldin Grange Terrace, Bearpark and C18 Whitehouse Lane, Ushaw Moor

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services which provided details of a proposed road traffic order concerning speed limits in and around the Bearpark area (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Strategic Highways Manager informed the Committee that the scheme had been devised following numerous requests from various sources to investigate the possibility of amending the speed limits on the C17 and C18 to accord with the character and environment of the road and to enhance compliance and enforcement of speed limits. The Council had reviewed the roads with Durham Constabulary and consent had been sought to implement 40mph buffer zones.

Councillor Turnbull informed the Committee that he was not opposed to the scheme generally, however, he expressed his serious concerns in relation to the proposed increase of the speed limit (from 30mph to 40mph) on the C17 leading down to Whitehouse Lane, Ushaw Moor. Councillor Turnbull informed the Committee that the road lead into an existing housing estate and was the main point of access for transport and pupils attending Durham Community Business College.

Councillor Wilkinson, local member for the area supported the views made by Councillor Turnbull and agreed in principle with the scheme with the exception of the proposed 40mph speed limit from from the C17 leading down Whitehouse Lane. Councillor Wilkinson expressed concerns about public safety and the close vicinity of the local comprehensive school.

Councillor Wilkes, local member for the Bearpark area commented that he had been pushing for some of the proposed changes detailed in the report, not specifically the section that Councillors Turnbull and Wilkinson had referred to. Councillor Wilkes suggested that the overall proposal would make the road much safer for pedestrians and other road users.

The Strategic Highways Manager informed the Committee that there was no expectation that vehicle speeds would increase by the introduction of 40mph speed limit at the location referred to by Councillors Turnbull and Wilkinson and was being proposed in accordance with guidance. The Committee were assured that signage would be provided and the 40mph limit would provide motorists with two opportunities to reduce from the national speed limit.

The Committee then heard representations from a spokesperson of Durham University. They were supportive of the review of the speed limit but had reservations about certain sections of the speed limit, with particular reference to the Durham University Cycling Club who used the road regularly. They queried elements of the proposals where speed limits were being increased from 30mph to 40mph, when the average speed at the point in question was 37mph. The University could see no reason for an increase of the speed limit at certain locations and referred to the new Department of Transport Circular 01/2013 which stated that consideration should be given to the rural setting and vulnerable road users. It was considered that cyclists using a nearby cycle path and other recreational users had not been taken into consideration.

The Strategic Highways Manager also referred to representations made by a local resident and volunteer ranger for Sustrans who had submitted a written representation relating to the issue. The objections raised were similar to those made by Durham University where the proposal was to increase the speed limit from 30mph to 40mph upto the edge of Bearpark. Concern was expressed that an increase of the speed limit would make crossing route 14 of the National Cycle Network more dangerous and discourage the use

of the cycle route. Views had also been expressed about potentially better compliance and enforcement with a 30mph speed limit on the whole section of the road which would make the road safer for everyone.

The Assistant Traffic Engineer informed the Committee that enhanced road markings would be used to encourage motorists to decrease speed earlier on the particular stretch of road in question. An explanation was also provided to the Committee about research into driver habits and a reassurance was given that the proposals did accord with the relevant criteria and vulnerable road users had been taken into account.

Councillor Naylor referred to the earlier issues raised by Councillor Turnbull and asked if anything could be done to resolve the issue.

The Strategic Highways Manager informed the Committee that the scheme could be implemented as per the report and appropriate review of effectiveness could be undertaken. Councillor Turnbull clarified that he did not object to the scheme, but wished to see further discussions take place in relation to Whitehouse Lane and could not support the scheme without any such discussion.

Upon a vote being taken it was

Resolved

That the recommendation contained in the report be agreed and that a review of the effectiveness of the scheme be undertaken in due course.

10 Unc Burns Terrace, Shotton Colliery - Traffic Calming

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services regarding a proposed scheme of traffic calming measures in the vicinity of Burns Terrace, Shotton Colliery (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Strategic Highways Manager informed the Committee that the scheme had been devised following the submission of a 45 named petition requesting the County Council provide road humps in order to slow traffic in a residential street where children often played.

Councillor Todd, local member for the area informed the Committee that nearby Moor Terrace had gained a certain reputation during recent times with much heightened police activity being undertaken in the area. Councillor Todd welcomed the proposal for the speed humps and hoped that they would slow traffic down to more sensible speeds for the residential area.

Resolved

That the recommendations contained in the report be agreed.

11 Unc. Rotary Way, Pity Me, Durham

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services which presented further findings in relation to a petition request for a pedestrian refuge at Rotary Way, Pity Me (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Strategic Highways Manager informed the Committee that the issue had been considered at previous meetings of the Highways Committee on 23 March and 19 April 2012 where decisions had been deferred to enable a site visit to be carried out in order for the Committee to familiarise themselves with the layout of the area and to enable further research be undertaken on other possible options available, together with a further traffic survey.

A further risk assessment had been undertaken of the various options discussed by the Committee in April 2012 and were presented in Appendix 3 of the report.

Councillor Martin informed the Committee that he had raised the issue as a private matter as a resident of the Hag House estate and not as a Councillor and provided the following representations to the Committee:

- many residents crossed the location at the point currently;
- questioned the proposed cost of the footpath detailed in the report;
- people would still cross the road at the same location, regardless of whether the unrecognised cut was not in place at the 'Pets at Home' store;
- the actual location of where people would cross was currently hatched and was appropriate for a pedestrian island and would allow motorist to turn right or left from Hag House Estate;
- since the original petition had been submitted the Draft County Durham Plan contained an actual crossing point at the location in question;
- a reduction in the speed limit for the area, not referred to in the report would provide for sense of comfort for residents and the general public crossing the road.

The Strategic Highways Manager informed the Committee that he was comfortable with the cost of the £15,000 quoted for the installation of a footpath, with 160mm depth with kerb edging. This would be the preferred option and would be achievable for the costs quoted in the report.

Councillor Foster commented that there could be future possibilities as alluded to by Councillor Martin during his representation and a crossing may be part of a future programme of works. Under the circumstances, Councillor Foster stated that there was no budget for any work to be undertaken and could only support the recommendation contained in the report. Councillor Naylor seconded the proposal.

Councillor Wilkes expressed concern in relation to an option that appeared to suggest that pedestrians should walk to the nearest roundabout to cross the road which was an option difficult to comprehend given the level of foliage and the amount of moving traffic that used the roundabout. Councillor Wilkes suggested that a facility be provided in accordance with the wishes of the residents, by way of the installation of a pedestrian refuge which was seconded by Councillor Thomson.

Upon a vote being taken for each proposal it was,

Resolved

That the recommendation contained in the report be agreed.