

Highways Committee

21 November 2014

A689 Western Approach to Stanhope 40mph Speed Limit



Report of Terry Collins, Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services

Councillor Brian Stephens, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Strategic Environment

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To advise committee of the representations and objection received in respect of the proposed changes to the speed on the A689 western approach to Stanhope.

Background

- 2 Speeding on the A689 approaching and through Stanhope has been a PACT (Police and Communities Together) priority since September 2012, with residents raising speeding concerns on numerous occasions.
- 3 The Police have undertaken speed enforcement in the form of Community Speed Watch, Road Policing Unit Deployments and by the Deployment of the Police Safety Camera Van. A summary is provided in Appendix 3.
- 4 Speed surveys have also been undertaken by Durham County Council on the A689 at two locations 1) on Allerton Bridge and 2) Outside the Town Hall as per the plan in Appendix 4, a summary of which is offered below;

Criteria	Allerton Bridge	Town Hall	Difference between the Sites
85 th percentile speed	42.2mph	35.3mph	6.9mph
Mean average speed	33.4mph	29mph	4.4mph
Percentage of vehicles travelling above 30mph	61.02%	37.68%	23.34%
Percentage of vehicles travelling above 36mph	37.85%	11.06%	26.79%

- 5 In March 2014, Durham Constabulary made representation to Durham County Council as the Highway Authority, asking for a review of the speed limit on the A689 approaching Stanhope, as they believed the current 30mph speed limit was unrealistically low and was not a credible speed limit leading to a lack of driver compliance and that a 40mph “buffer zone” should be considered to reduce the speeds approaching and through Stanhope.
- 6 The speed limit review has been completed in accordance with current best practice guidance produced by the Department for Transport (DfT), known as Circular 01/2013 Setting Local Speed Limits.
- 7 DfT circular 01/2013 states speed limits should be evidence-led and self-explaining and seek to reinforce the driver's assessment of what is a safe speed to travel. Speed limits should encourage self-compliance and should be seen by drivers as the maximum rather than a target speed.
- 8 DfT Traffic Advisory Leaflet 01/04 offers good practice for achieving lower speed limits in villages. It suggests a definition of what constitutes a village environment, for the purpose of applying a village speed limit of 30 mph. It terms a village as having 20 or more houses fronting the road (on one or both sides of the road).
- 9 Research and experience gained at other locations within the County have proven that the installation of speed limits which are credible with the environment through which the motorist is travelling results in improved driver compliance with the speed limit. A similar project has shown a reduction in the average speed of 2.6mph and the 85th percentile of 2.3mph within the urban area.
- 10 The review of the speed limit was undertaken jointly with Durham Constabulary on the 28th March 2014, reviewed the roads and agreed to seek consent to the implementation of 40mph buffer zones, combined with relocating to more appropriate sites the 30mph terminal traffic signs to assist in enhancing compliance with the speed limits.
- 11 The review identified that the current 30mph speed limit commenced some 300m west of what is considered to be the natural start of the town. This 300m section of road being mainly rural with sporadic property development.
- 12 The review also took into consideration the current 30mph speed limit on the B6278 which runs in a southerly direction from the A689.
- 13 The 30mph speed limit on the B6278 is only 140m in length and the DfT do not recommend a speed limit length of less than 300m.

Proposals

- 14 To make a 40mph speed limit Traffic Regulation Order on the A689 western approach to Stanhope and the adjoining B6278 road.

- 15 It is considered that the proposal will have a beneficial effect on road safety by better reflecting the character and environment of the road. Experience of where the speed limit reflects the type of road has revealed a reduction in the higher speeds and an overall reduction in the lower speeds.
- 16 It is proposed to amend the current speed limit of 30mph to 40mph “buffer zone” commencing at the current start of the 30mph speed limits up to where it is considered to be the natural start of the town at Rose Terrace as per the plan in Appendix 2. This will reinforce the transition, in the mind of the motorist, to the change in the road’s environment from rural to urban. This should lead to enhance compliance with the speed limit through the predominantly residential area. The 85th percentile speed measured at this location is 42.4mph despite it being within the posted 30mph limit.
- 17 DfT circular 01/2013 states ‘*In some circumstances it might be appropriate to consider an intermediate speed limit of 40 mph prior to the 30 mph terminal speed limit signs at the entrance to a village, in particular where there are outlying houses beyond the village boundary or roads with high approach speeds. For the latter, traffic authorities might also need to consider other speed management measures to support the message of the speed limit and help encourage compliance so that no enforcement difficulties are created for the local police force*’.
- 18 The proposal would include the introduction of a gateway feature at Rose Terrace, and additional repeater signs / enhanced road markings will be provided throughout the proposed 40mph speed limit on the A689 and B6278. Rose Terrace will also be included within the Council’s rotation programme for the deployment of a rotational speedvisor “flashing” sign.

Consultation

- 19 The statutory consultation was undertaken between the 24th April 2014 and 23rd May 2014.
- 20 An informal consultation encompassing all affected properties in the immediate vicinity of the proposal was undertaken between the 2nd May 2014 and 30th May 2014.
- 21 Of the 43 informal consultation letters sent to properties directly affected by the proposals, a total of 14 responses were received. Of the 14 responses, 5 were in favour of the proposals whilst 9 were against. The remaining consultees who did not respond are deemed to have no preference. A further letter was sent to those who objected, clarifying a number of issues, and as it stands, based on the proposal put forward, 7 are in favour of the proposal and 7 remain as objections.
- 22 The statutory Traffic Regulation Order was advertised on site and in the local press between the 13th August 2014 and 3rd September 2014.

- 23** Following the advertisement of the statutory Traffic Regulation Order, a petition comprising 61 signatures, and 1 objection was received objecting to the proposal.

Objections and Responses

- 24** Objection 1 (Petition)

The petition comprises 3 reasons for objection:

- I. The moving of the 30mph restriction on the A689 by a distance of 300 metres will have little effect and increase accident risk at the cross roads (B6278 junction).

Response: Research undertaken by the Department for Transport and similar projects undertaken by Durham County Council have shown that by introducing credible and intermediate speed limits does decrease vehicular speeds within the built up areas.

A check on the personal injury database which we share with Durham Constabulary have shown that there has been 'one' slight personal injury accident within the past 4 years being our standard search criteria.

This accident occurred on Wednesday 11th June 2014 on the B6278 at the entrance to Weardale Community Hospital. The Police investigation concluded that excess speed was not a contributing factor, instead the driver was charged and convicted of driving whilst under the influence of alcohol.

- II. Traffic leaving Stanhope on the A689 in a westerly direction will not be affected therefore vehicles will continue to exceed the speed restriction.

Response: It is not considered that the proposal will result in an increase in vehicle speeds; however, it does allow for the speed limit on the major road to be reduced in steps from Unrestricted (60mph) to 40mph then to 30mph as traffic enters the village where the speed limit signs will have maximum impact. It is proposed to commence the 30mph limit at a point providing the motorist greater opportunity to reduce speed before entering the built-up area.

Introducing a credible speed limit increases the likelihood of greater compliance. Speed surveys undertaken by Durham Constabulary and Durham County Council have shown that the majority of motorists are driving on this stretch of the A689 as if it was signed as a 40mph speed limit.

It is recommended that speed limits should be established according to the 85th percentile speed of free flowing traffic. This means the limit

should be set near the level at which 85 percent of people are driving. Numerous studies have shown that the 85th percentile speed is the most appropriate to set a speed limit, in the case of the A689 the 85th percentile is 42.2mph, which would suggest a 40mph speed limit.

- III. The current speed limit of 30mph on the 140 metre section of the B6278 runs between properties with high walls in close proximity to the edge of the highway with a blind hill and sharp incline. The vehicle accesses from the Community Hospital and No's 1 -6 Horn Hall on the east side of the road have very limited visibility. On the west side the newly opened Tea Rooms at Horn Hall Farm also has limited visibility from their Car Park. Consequently, any increase in the permissible speed limit is ludicrous and can only result in an increased number of accidents.

Response: Speed limits less than 300m in length are not recommended by the DfT. It is not uncommon for historic established private accesses to properties having limited visibility sight lines. Many accesses across the County are subject to higher speed limits than is proposed at this location and this will not necessarily make the access or egress any more or less hazardous. Drivers should, as recommended by the Highway Code 'read the road ahead' and travel to the conditions that prevail, remembering that a speed limit is not a target speed.

25 Objection and Representation 2

(1 objection and 3 representations stated these reasons)

Exiting Horn Hall onto the B6278 is already dangerous and problematic with the current speed limit being 30mph. Increasing the speed limit to 40mph is going to make it worse. The situation is made worse due to the close proximity of the access / egress into Horn Hall and the blind summit.

A traffic mirror should be installed opposite the exit to Horn Hall similar to those at the Community Hospital and Tea Rooms. Traffic calming measures should also be introduced on the B6278.

Parking outside of the Community Hospital is resulting in vehicles being close to the centre of the road.

Response: It is not uncommon for historic established private accesses to properties having limited visibility sight lines. Many accesses across the County are subject to higher speed limits than is proposed at this location and this will not necessarily make the access or egress any more or less hazardous.

Speed limits should be seen as maximum speeds and not target speeds. By increasing the speed limit on the B6278 from 30mph to 40mph we do not envisage that traffic speeds will dramatically increase, instead we believe the

speeds will be similar to the current vehicular speeds. Should the 40mph speed limit be introduced, monitoring will be undertaken upon completion of the scheme allowing comparisons to be made to previous surveys.

Speed surveys have been undertaken by Durham County Council on the B6278 at two locations 1) At the Community Hospital and 2) At current start of the 30mph speed limit as per plan in Appendix 4.

Criteria	Community Hospital	Start of speed limit (near to Horn Hall entrance)	Difference between the Sites
85 th percentile speed	27.4mph	38.7mph	11.3mph
Mean average speed	23.5mph	32.6mph	9.1mph
Percentage of vehicles travelling above 30mph	6.6%	60.33%	53.73%
Percentage of vehicles travelling above 36mph	0.32%	25.76%	25.44%

Due to the road layout of the B6278 at this location, it is not possible for the Police to undertake enforcement action from the roadside but in-car equipment is available to detect offenders.

Traffic Mirrors are not prescribed sign under the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2002. The placing of a mirror brings with it issues that could affect road safety. The following may well arise from the placement of a mirror on the highway which could impact on road safety:

- Distortion of reflected image, glare from sunlight or headlamps affecting the driver's vision.*
- Visibility issues during bad weather (rain, snow, frost).*
- Difficulty judging speed of an approaching vehicle from the mirror image.*
- Maintenance issues – mirrors could be prone to vandalism maintenance of their alignment and cleanliness is critical.*
- Reliance on the mirror's restricted image may compromise the safety of other road users (pedestrians and cyclists) who do not appear in the mirror, as drivers concentrate their attention on the mirror as opposed to what is happening in front of them.*

The mirrors which have been provided at the Tea Rooms and The Community Hospital have not been provided or authorised by the Highway Authority and have been erected upon private land.

26 Representation 3

(1 respondent stated this reason)

Too Fast.

Response: The objector resides in a property in close proximity of where the current 30mph speed limit commences, speed surveys undertaken approx. 200m further east within the current 30mph speed limit have shown that speeds are far in excess of 30mph, it would be envisaged that these speeds would be even greater in the immediate vicinity of the objectors property.

Research and experience gained at other locations within the County have proven that the installation of speed limits which are credible with the environment through which the motorist is travelling results in improved driver compliance. In the case of the A689 the environment is mainly rural with open fields and some sporadic property development on the approach. As such, the imposition of a 40mph speed limit is the most suitable speed limit for this location which hopefully will result in a reduction in “top-end” excess speed.

27 Representation 4

(1 respondent stated this reason)

Insufficient time to slow down prior to getting to the play area and swimming pool entrance. This road is too fast already and is dangerous.

Response: Speed surveys undertaken have shown that the 85th percentile speed is between 42.2 mph at Allerton Bridge and 35.3mph at The Town Hall. The entrance to the play area and swimming pool is approx. half way between the two survey points and therefore it is reasonable to assume that speeds in this area would be somewhere between 35.3mph and 42.2mph.

Research and experience gained at other locations within the County have proven that the installation of speed limits which are credible with the environment through which the motorist is travelling results in improved driver compliance. In the case of the A689 the environment is mainly rural with open fields and some sporadic property development on the approach. As such, the imposition of a 40mph speed limit is considered the most suitable speed limit for this location which should result in a reduction in “top-end” excess speed, and in turn would reduce the speed of traffic going into Stanhope.

28 Representation 5

(1 respondent stated this reason)

Would prefer the 30mph speed limit to start earlier than proposed.

Response: The location identified for the commencement of the repositioned 30mph speed limit, links to the change of environment from mainly rural to the

start of the dwellings at Rose Terrace, and as such the commencement of the Town properties. Additionally, the road narrows slightly at this location. This will create a greater visual awareness to the motorist helping to inform them as to a change of environment and the subsequent change of speed limit.

29 Representation 6

(1 respondent stated this reason)

The A689 traffic flow comprises a large proportion of heavy lorries and motorcycles, throughout the year, with the majority ignoring the 30mph limit and arriving at the B6278 junction at frightening speeds.

The unclassified road which joins the A689 (opposite the B6278) is used by agricultural farm traffic, forestry vehicles, 9 dwellings and holiday cottages. Ramblers, hospital staff, visitors and local residents use the B6278 as pedestrians with a lack of footpaths near to Horn Hall.

Response: The A689 is one of the main arterial routes for traffic heading from the A68 to the County Boundary and into Cumbria, and as such, it is inevitable that a large proportion of heavy goods vehicles etc will use this route.

Research and experience gained at other locations within the County have proven that the installation of speed limits which are credible with the environment through which the motorist is travelling results in improved driver compliance. In the case of the A689, the environment is mainly rural with open fields and some sporadic property development on the approach. As such, the imposition of a 40mph speed limit is the most suitable speed limit for this location which should result in a reduction in "top-end" excess speed, and in turn reduce traffic speeds going into Stanhope.

It is not uncommon in rural situations for there to be numerous accesses to farm land, small holdings, and small settlements.

On the B6278 there is currently a footpath which runs from the A689 up to the Community Hospital entrance. There is insufficient verge width for the continuation of a footpath from this point.

Statutory Representations

30 The Statutory Notice for the implementation of the speed limit was advertised on site and in the local press between the 13th August 2014 and 3rd September 2014.

31 Durham Constabulary who in part have promoted the scheme, and the North East Ambulance Service responded to the consultation giving their support to the proposal.

32 Stanhope Parish Council responded to the consultation offering their support to the proposal.

Local Member Consultation

- 33** Local Councillors John Shuttleworth and Anita Savory have been consulted and have offered their support to the proposal.

Recommendations and reasons

- 34** It is **RECOMMENDED** that the Committee endorse the proposal having considered the objections and proceed with the implementation of the speed limit on the A689 and B6278 at Stanhope as per the plan in Appendix 2.

Background papers

- 35** Correspondence on Office File

Contact: Brian Buckley Tel: 03000 268097

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance – Cllr Anita Savory AAP Neighbourhood Budget

Staffing – None

Risk – None

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty – None

Accommodation – None

Crime and Disorder – None

Human Rights – None

Consultation – As described in the report

Procurement – Works to be delivered by Highway Services

Disability Issues – None

Legal Implications – The measures are being introduced in accordance with the current legislation.