

## Highways Committee

8<sup>th</sup> October 2015



### **C91 Waldrige Village and Waldrige Link Road, Chester le Street Various Speed Limits**

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

#### **Councillor Brian Stephens, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Local Partnerships**

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##### **Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To advise committee of representations and objections received in respect of proposed changes to speed limits around Waldrige Village and Waldrige Link Road.

##### **Background**

- 2 Speeding on the C91 road through Waldrige Village has been raised as a concern by Waldrige Parish Council and residents of Waldrige Village.
- 3 In January 2015, local ward Councillors K. Henig and K. Davidson approached the Council and Durham Constabulary requesting a reduced speed limit from 40mph to 30mph through Waldrige Village.
- 4 Having reviewed the speed limits in the area linked to the C91 Waldrige Village request, Durham Constabulary raised concerns regarding the nearby Waldrige Link Road. This road is subject to a 40mph speed limit over most of its length, with a section of 30mph speed limit at the northern end of the road, from its junction with Embleton Drive to the roundabout junction with the C91 Waldrige Road. See Appendix 2 & 3.
- 5 Within the 30mph section of Waldrige Link Road there is a lack of immediate roadside frontage property development, with open fields on the west side and the back of Waldrige Park Estate on the east side of the road. Speed surveys that have been undertaken indicate motorists are ignoring the 30mph speed limit, which suggests the road is not self-explaining to motorists as a built-up area. Therefore the 30mph speed limit lacks credibility.
- 6 Durham Constabulary have offered their support for a 30mph speed limit through Waldrige Village but have requested that the current 30mph speed limit on Waldrige Link Road be changed to a 40mph speed limit along its entire length, from the A167 to the roundabout junction of the C91 Waldrige Road. This is necessary to ensure the overall credibility of the posted speed limits in the area are both meaningful to motorists and consistently applied to suit the environment and character of the road network.

- 7** Durham Constabulary have carried out speed enforcement campaigns on Waldrige Link Road utilising Community Speed Watch and the Road Policing Unit including the deployment of the Police Safety Camera Van. These campaigns have identified that traffic speeds on the 30mph section of Waldrige Link Road continue to be an enforcement problem.
- 8** Traffic speed surveys have also been undertaken by the Council within both the 30mph speed limit and 40mph speed limit sections of Waldrige Link Road. These results show motorists are perceiving the environment of the current 30mph section of Waldrige Link Road as being a 40mph speed limit, which suggests a 40mph speed limit as a more suitable speed limit for the entire length of Waldrige Link Road. A location plan showing the location of the speed surveys and a summary of the results is attached in Appendix 6.
- 9** The speed limit review which has taken into consideration Waldrige Village, the C91 Waldrige Road and the Waldrige Link Road 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'.
- 10** DfT circular 01/2013 states speed limits should be evidence-led and self-explaining and seeks 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.
- 11** When considering reducing the speed limit through Waldrige Village to 30mph, DfT Traffic Advisory Leaflet 01/04 prescribes 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. The guidance gives the definition of a village as having 20 or more houses fronting the road (on one or both sides of the road).
- 12** Research and experience gained nationally and also at other locations within the County has proven that the installation of speed limits which are credible and consistent with the environment through which the motorist is travelling results in improved driver compliance with the speed limit.
- 13** In addition to changing the speed limit through Waldrige Village and Waldrige Link Road, the local ward Councillors have made a further suggestion to introduce and fund 20mph speed limit zones on both Meadow Drive and Waldrige Park Estate linked to the Council's Cabinet decision in December 2014 associated with the review of the Council's Policy on 20mph Speed Limits and Zones. See Appendix 4 & 5.
- 14** The Cabinet decision sets out to implement part-time 20mph speed limits on main/distributor roads in the vicinity of 33 schools that were identified as having child accident rates of twice the average. Hermitage Academy located in the immediate vicinity of Meadow Drive and Waldrige Park Estate and the C91 Waldrige Road was one of the 33 schools identified for this programme of works.
- 15** In accordance with the Council's Cabinet decision, Meadow Drive and Waldrige Park Estate rests within the 600metre radius area of influence of Hermitage Academy, used at that time to assess accident statistics. Subject

to funding being secured from sources other than the funding set aside for delivery of the Schools 20mph Speed Limit project, consideration could be given towards introducing 20mph zones on a demand-led basis.

- 16 DfT circular 01/2013 states that '20mph zones are designed to be "self-enforcing" due to traffic calming measures which are necessary to complement the change in the speed limit. Speed humps, chicanes, road narrowing, and other measures are typically used to both physically and visually reinforce reduced speeds'.
- 17 Both Meadow Drive and Waldrige Park Estate have existing traffic calming measures in the form of speed humps and speed cushions, which are designed to keep traffic flow to a design speed of 20mph to 25mph. The introduction of a 20mph zone by simply erecting additional traffic signs at the entrances to both housing estates makes for a cost effective measure where the potential exists to further influence a reduction in traffic speed and therefore possibly improve overall road safety. The inclusion of the 20mph zone is considered cost effective due to its combination with the other measures proposed in the adjacent area.

### **Proposals**

- 18 It is proposed to make a Traffic Regulation Order to introduce a 30mph speed limit through Waldrige Village; to make Waldrige Link Road a 40mph speed limit over its entire length; and to introduce a 20mph Zone on Meadow Drive and Waldrige Park Estates.
- 19 The proposal would include the introduction of a gateway feature at Waldrige Village at the transition point between the current 40mph speed limit on Waldrige Road and the new 30mph speed limit upon entering Waldrige Village.
- 20 On sections of road where the speed limit is 40mph, the Department for Transport allows the use of speed limit "repeater" signs and road markings which act as useful reminders for motorists to moderate their speeds. Repeater signs cannot be used on roads that are subject to a 30mph speed limit when a system of street lighting is present. The use of repeater signs and road markings will be provided on Waldrige Link Road.

### **Consultation**

- 21 Consultation on the proposals was undertaken between 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2015 and 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2015 to gauge the initial views of stakeholders and statutory bodies.
- 22 As part of the consultation exercise, public notices were placed throughout the area between 9<sup>th</sup> June 2015 and 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2015 detailing the proposals.
- 23 A total of 25 responses were received, of the 25 responses, 14 were in favour of the proposals whilst 11 were against. A further letter was sent to those who were opposed, clarifying the issues they raised, and as it stands, based on the proposal put forward, 19 are in favour of the proposals and 6 remain opposed to the proposal.

- 24 Statutory consultation as part of the legal Traffic Regulation Order making process was carried out between 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2015 and the 24<sup>th</sup> July 2015, which included advertising the Traffic Regulation Order through the use of public notices on-site and in the local press.
- 25 The statutory consultation resulted in receipt of 1 formal objection (duplicating the previous representation) and 5 emails of support. These figures are included within paragraph 23 above.

## Objections and Responses

- 26 Objection 1 & Representation 1

(1 respondent stated this reason)

The Waldrige Link Road – The 30mph speed limit should be extended to 10metres south of the bungalow. Increasing the speed limit to 40mph is likely to increase the speed at which motorists travel. A speed limit change from 40mph to a 20mph zone on the side roads is too great. There have been 2 serious accidents in the past 8-9 months.

*Response: The section of 30mph speed limit on the link road lacks credibility and is not in accordance with the guidance set by the Department for Transport. By extending the speed limit to a point 10m south of the bungalow would increase the overall length of the 30mph section of speed limit by approximately 300m which wouldn't be supported by Durham Constabulary or by the Council.*

*It is not considered that the proposal will result in an increase in vehicle speeds as 83% of vehicles already exceed the 30mph speed limit due to the lack of credibility of the existing posted limit.*

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

*It is recommended by the DfT that speed limits should be established according to the mean speed of free flowing traffic. This means the limit should be set at or above the level at which the majority of people are driving. Numerous studies have shown that the mean and 85th percentile speeds are key factors in determining the setting of a speed limit. In the case of Waldrige Link Road the mean speed is 36.9mph and the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed is 43.5mph, which would suggest a 40mph speed limit is appropriate.*

*A speed limit change from 40mph to 20mph would be too great on a straight carriageway. In this case, as the 20mph zone commences on the side roads, the vast majority of motorists will be travelling at low speed as a result of the junction turning manoeuvre from the main road. Speed surveys on both Embleton Drive and Falstone Drive side roads show the 'mean average speed' recorded as 21mph. This mean speed is below the DfT criteria of*

*24mph for permanent zones and the roads feature existing traffic calming measures.*

*A check on the 'personal injury' accident database which we share with Durham Constabulary has shown one accident within the past 4 years. This incident occurred in September 2013 at the roundabout, being typical of many roundabout accidents where a driver has failed to give way.*

*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 a maximum and not a target speed.*

## **27** Representation 2

*(1 respondent stated this reason)*

*The Waldrige Link Road - The increasing of the speed limit is going to encourage motorists to travel at greater speeds.*

*Response: The section of 30mph speed limit on the link road lacks credibility and is not in accordance with the guidance set by the Department for Transport.*

*It is not considered that the proposal will result in an increase in vehicle speeds as 83% of vehicles already exceed the 30mph speed limit due to the lack of credibility of the existing posted limit.*

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

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*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 Waldrige Link Road the environment is mainly rural with open fields on the west side, with two junctions on the east side of the road. In addition, property development is set well back from the road and is generally behind fences and vegetation creating an 'open' rural feel to the road. 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.*

**28** Representation 3

(4 respondents stated these reasons)

20mph Zone – there is no need to penalise residents of the local area any further by decreasing the speed limit on the Waldrige Park Estate, whereas the nearby Garden Farm Estate remains untouched, the existing traffic calming measures keep the traffic moving slowly and there is no need to enforce a lower speed limit.

*Response: Residents of Waldrige Park Estate are not being penalised by the introduction of a 20mph zone. This estate is already traffic calmed using speed cushions to achieve a design speed of 20mph to 25mph. The introduction of 20mph zones, are designed to be "self-enforcing" due to traffic calming measures that are in place. As such, motorists will already be travelling at low speeds because of the traffic calming.*

*The introduction of a 20mph zone will involve the erection of additional traffic signs at the entrances to Waldrige Park Estate making for a cost effective measure where the potential exists to further influence a reduction in traffic speed and possibly improve overall road safety. The adjoining Garden Farm Estate is not traffic calmed therefore the introduction of a 20mph zone cannot be considered in this area.*

*Traffic speed surveys have been undertaken within the Waldrige Park Estate concentrating on the distributor roads namely Warkworth Drive, Embleton Drive and Falstone Drive. The range of 'mean average speeds' is recorded as follows:*

- *Warkworth Drive is between 20.6mph and 21.6mph.*
- *Embleton Drive is between 21mph and 21.5mph.*
- *Falstone Drive is between 18.6 and 21.1mph.*

*These figures show that traffic speeds on Waldrige Park Estate are self-enforcing, by the presence of the traffic calming measures. The introduction of the 20mph zone may help to influence lower speeds and will not necessarily result in extra enforcement by the Police beyond current routine patrols.*

**Supporters**

**29** Representation 4

(1 respondent stated this reason)

Fully supports the proposed speed limit changes especially in reducing the speed limit to 20mph within Meadow Drive and increasing the speed limit to 40mph on the Waldrige Link Road.

**30** Representation 5

(11 respondents stated this reason)

In full support of the proposed 20mph zone on the Waldrige Park Estate.

**31** Representation 6

(2 respondents stated this reason)

Are wholly in favour of reducing the speed limit on the Waldrige Park Estate, and has been campaigning for over 2 years to reduce the speeds in the residential estate in order to provide a safer environment for children to play. Should the 20mph speed not be introduced in Waldrige Park Estate, the respondents would not want to see the speed limit increased to 40mph on Waldrige Link Road.

**32** Representation 7

(2 respondents stated this reason)

Is in full support of increasing the speed limit on Waldrige Link Road, as the respondents could never understand why this road is a 30mph speed limit.

**33** Representation 8

(3 respondents stated this reason)

In support of the proposals, especially in reducing the speed limit through Waldrige Village and increasing the speed limit to 40mph on Waldrige Link Road as the respondents can see no justification as to why the northern section of Waldrige Link Road is 30mph.

**Statutory Consultation Representations**

**34** Statutory consultation as part of the legal Traffic Regulation Order making process was carried out between 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2015 and the 24<sup>th</sup> July 2015, which included advertising the Traffic Regulation Order through the use of public notices on-site and in the local press.

**35** Durham Constabulary has offered their full support to the various speed limit changes. However, they would relinquish their support should the proposal to create a 40mph speed limit over the entire length of Waldrige Link Road be withdrawn. A 40mph speed limit is necessary to ensure the overall credibility of the posted speed limits in the area, to ensure that they are both meaningful to motorists and consistently applied to suit the environment and character of the road network.

**36** The North East Ambulance Service responded to the consultation giving their support to the proposal.

**37** Waldrige Parish Council responded to the consultation offering support.

**Local Member Consultation**

**38** Local Ward Councillors Katherine Henig and Keith Davidson have promoted the proposal at the outset and offer their support.

### **Recommendations and reasons**

- 39** It is RECOMMENDED that the Committee endorse the proposal having considered the objection and representations, and to proceed with the implementation of the speed limit changes as per the plans in Appendices 2 to 5.
- 41** The proposal will assist in providing credible speed limits whilst addressing community concerns regarding vehicle speed.

### **Background papers**

- 42** Correspondence on Office File.

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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**Finance** – Cllrs Katherine Henig and Keith Davidson 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