

FAO: Jenny Howarth, Statutory Scrutineering Officer,
Scrutineering Office, Durham County Council.

30th October 2017

Dear Jenny

I am writing on behalf of the 317 people who signed the petition to introduce a 30 MPH limit and have a road safety review at Neville's Cross and the surrounding areas. This petition was not upheld by the council and I am writing to appeal against this decision.

We believe that this decision should be reviewed on basis that the council has not taken full account of Department for Transport (DfT) legislation and guidance during the review processes, specifically:

1. Nature of the road and its surroundings: The surroundings of the A167 and A690 in the area consists mainly of residential housing, student accommodation and local shops. The roads also run near to two primary/infant schools and directly past a secondary school. The council will shortly be introducing a 20mph limit outside Neville's Cross primary school and are also reviewing the introduction of the same outside Durham Johnston and St Margaret's schools. Surely these decisions only back up our case for a 30mph limit?
2. Local needs: Councillors Elizabeth Scott and Liz Brown won the local election earlier this year with a manifesto calling for the introduction of a 30mph speed limit. They duly won the election and this indicates widespread support in the area for such a limit.
3. Local needs: The introduction of school crossing patrols at Durham Johnston School recently in response to concerns raised by the school, and parents, that it was highly likely that a pupil would be knocked down due to the speed of vehicles travelling and the nature of the road.
4. Existing highway infrastructure: This consists of two way traffic, ie it is not a dual carriageway. There are a few central island crossing points along its course but these are mainly after junctions and directly in the path of cars racing away from traffic lights. There are also long stretches where there are no islands to cross and these factors create a risk to anyone wishing to cross the road.
5. New housing developments: Ustinov College has just relocated to Neville's Cross and includes only a hand full of car parking spaces. Building works are also

underway for a large student housing development on what was the Berendsen site, at Neville's Cross traffic lights, again with limited parking. In addition there will be accommodation for a further 1850 students at Mount Oswald and this has been declared a "car free" development. In total therefore they will be a further 3000 residents in the area, the majority of which will get around on foot or by cycle.

6. The credibility of the speed limit: Motorists are aware they are driving through a built up area and therefore with clear signage would adopt a 30mph limit. There are 30mph limits on similar sections of road elsewhere in the area, examples include Birtley and the approach to Darlington. Other councils have interpreted the guidance differently and introduced 30mph limits where the roads are wider than at Neville's Cross, houses set further back and where there are no schools adjacent to the road. An example is Benton Road, Longbenton, North Tyneside – see photo below.



7. Accident history: There is no mention of death of Laura Burrows-Scholfield aged 10, on May 19th 2004 at Neville's Cross. Surely we shouldn't have to wait for the death of another child before the Council takes this request seriously? The campaign has also been contacted by a mother from Guisborough, who sons aged 12 was killed in a 40mph limit. What is doubly shocking is that she had previously unsuccessfully campaigned for a reduction in the speed limit after the death of a pedestrian in the area. After her son's tragic death the council eventually introduced a 30mph limit... David also details some of the police investigations into other accidents along the A167 stating that excessive speed was not a contributory factor. If we assume therefore that the vehicles were travelling at 40MPH surely it should be acknowledged that had they been travelling at 30MPH there would have been a chance that the collisions may have been avoided?

Overall the tone of the response to the petition gives the impression that decisions are heavily biased towards motorists and not the residents of the area. Surely it is time for this to change?

In addition to the above points there seems to be a lack of joined up policies at the Council: The Council's policy on schools producing Travel Plans which encourage cycling and walking is out of step with the refusal to consider 30mph. The Council also works in partnership with Living Streets to deliver sustainable travel initiatives in schools as well as encouraging use of the WOW travel tracker. Basically they want everyone to walk or cycle so we are arguing that they need to provide safe infrastructure. I'm also advised that the Council also uses the online travel planning system, Modeshift STARS, which is a Department of Transport backed scheme and that this would gain a higher score with the wider adoption of more sustainable forms of transport, such as walking and cycling. If the width of the carriageways is an issue then the Council could take the opportunity to narrow the road by adding in marked cycle lanes on the carriageway. The markings that are currently on the footpaths are in need of redoing so it wouldn't be a huge additional expense to re-mark the roads instead (the narrower lanes would also help emphasise a reduced speed limit).

One final plea. I have lived in Neville's Cross since 1999. I have two children, both went to St Margaret's School, my son also attended Durham Johnston and my 13 year old daughter is three years into her schooling there. As a parent I worry every day about her safety. Not only during school days but during the holidays and at weekends, when I've witnessed many a near-miss on the local roads and seen many cars travelling at excessive speed. My daughter regularly walks home from school and I would really appreciate the peace of mind of a 30MPH limit.

In addition to the above I would appreciate the opportunity to speak at your next meeting in December and would be grateful if you could also advise how many other representatives I can bring with me to the meeting to witness events – there is a very strong feeling amongst residents that the limit should change (I realise that only I will be allowed to speak at this meeting). Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Boughton