

WIRRAL COUNCIL

HIGHWAY AND TRAFFIC REPRESENTATIONS PANEL – 8 NOVEMBER 2010

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF TECHNICAL SERVICES

OBJECTIONS: SPEED LIMIT REVIEW PROPOSALS – VARIOUS LOCATIONS

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report considers objections received to proposals recommended as part of the Speed Limit Review study for various locations across the Borough.
- 1.2 The report recommends that the Panel notes the objections and that the proposals as shown on the attached consultation papers be recommended to Overview & Scrutiny Committee for approval and implementation.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Following new guidance for the setting of local speed limits published by the Department for Transport, local authorities are required to undertake a review of speed limits on all A and B classified roads and implement any necessary changes by 2011.
- 2.2 The layout of the road network in Wirral means that there are a number of C classified roads which form important local distributor routes linking A or B classified roads. Additionally, officers are mindful that inappropriate speed on rural roads also creates many issues for other road users. In order to ensure uniformity throughout the highway network, Wirral Council have also taken the opportunity to review speed limits on a number of these other strategic routes.
- 2.3 New guidance issued by the Department for Transport recommends various factors to be considered when determining the appropriate speed limit for a length of highway. These factors include the existing measured speeds driven on the road, length, traffic flows, road user types, type and amount of development and road safety history.
- 2.4 I reported these criteria and methodology to Cabinet at its meeting of 23 July 2009 which set out key principles and processes for the determination of speed limits.
- 2.5 To ensure a robust analysis and review was undertaken, a Panel consisting of:
 - an independent consultant (AECOM),
 - Traffic Management Officers
 - Head of Service (Technical Services)
 - Network Traffic Manager
 - Road Safety Manager
 - Traffic Police (Traffic Management Officer)
 - Local Police (Inspector in charge of local roads policing)was formed to evaluate the review and carry out the necessary assessments.

3.0 SPEED LIMIT REVIEW PANEL

- 3.1 The Speed Limit Review Panel assessed the suitability of existing speed limits and considered a number of different factors including road safety analysis, cost and safety benefits, enforcement, maintenance of proposed

schemes, changes in driver behaviour and the consistency of speed limits. Discussions have also been held with neighbouring local authorities over cross boundary routes to ensure a consistent approach is maintained.

- 3.2 Following this analysis, the Speed Limit Review Panel proposed a number of speed limit recommendations, which are based on robust evidence and follow the guiding principles published within Department for Transport guidance.

4.0 STATUTORY CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Legal notices advertising the speed limit review proposals were placed on the roads and in the press on the 22 September 2010, with an objection period from 22 September to the 15 October 2010. All Party Spokespersons and Ward Members were informed.
- 4.2 Consultation papers showing the extents of the proposals were delivered to all frontages directly affected. The proposals were also available to view on-line via Wirral Council's web site.

5.0 OBJECTIONS

- 5.1 During the statutory advertisement period two unresolved letters of objection were received from the Cyclists' Touring Club and Merseyside Cycling Campaign (Wirral Group). The content of the objector's concerns and my officer response is outlined in Appendix A.

6.0 ENFORCEMENT OF SPEED LIMITS

- 6.1 In making decisions on these orders members should be aware that the Police only have very limited resources for enforcing existing or new speed limits.

7.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 As set out in the Cabinet report dated 10th December 2008, the cost of the project will be met from the existing LTP Capital 2008-2011 budget, as follows:

2010/11 - £155k

- 7.2 There will be ongoing maintenance costs in maintaining the resulting assets to be contained within the Department's existing revenue budgets.

8.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Existing staff resources will be used for the design and will be used for the supervision of the works.

9.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES/EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 There are no specific ethnic minority or elderly person implications, although lower speed limits should make the road safer.

10.0 HEALTH IMPLICATIONS/IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 10.1 The proposed scheme would have positive health implications through improvements in road safety.

11.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Properly configured speed limits should have a positive impact on the number of collision occurrences on Wirral's roads.

12.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 There are no implications under this heading.

13.0 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 There are no implications under this heading.

14.0 ANTI-POVERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 There are no implications under this heading.

15.0 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 There are no human rights implications arising from this report.

16.0 SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS

- 16.1 There are no implications under this heading.

17.0 LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

- 17.1 This report has implications for Members in the Bebington, Clatterbridge, Greasby, Frankby and Irby, Hoylake and Meols, Moreton West and Saughall Massie, Prenton and Upton Wards.

18.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1 Letters and emails received from the Cyclists' Touring Club and Merseyside Cycling Campaign (Wirral Group) objecting to the Speed Limit Review recommendations have been used in the preparation of this report.

19.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 19.1 Panel is requested to:

- a) Note the objections received and the officers' responses; and
- b) Recommend to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee that the Speed Limit Review recommendations (as shown on the enclosed consultation papers) be approved for implementation.

DAVID GREEN, DIRECTOR
TECHNICAL SERVICES

APPENDIX A – SPEED LIMIT REVIEW OBJECTIONS

B5137 Brimstage Road, Bebington

Proposal – Relocation of existing 30mph / National Speed Limit gateway

Objection – We object that the 30mph limit / gateway is not being altered to finish/start at the Clatterbridge roundabout.

Response – The principle behind increasing the speed limit along this short link was supported by evidence that drivers coming from a largely rural road network or motorway had not sufficiently reacted to the existing 30mph speed limit signs (possibly due to their proximity to the complex signalised motorway junction). The section of road concerned does not have any frontage and does not have the usual attributes drivers associate with a 30mph speed limit, although street lighting is present on one side of the road.

The proposed amendment offers an opportunity to create a highly visible gateway approaching a built-up area. The Panel considered that such a gateway, in advance of the Toucan crossing, closer to the built up area is likely to achieve greater respect by drivers thus reducing vehicle speeds and improving road safety on the approach to its junction with Beechway and the residential area.

Recommendation – It is recommended that this proposal is implemented as advertised.

A5137 Brimstage Road / Whitehouse Lane, Brimstage

Proposal – Reduce from National Speed Limit to 50mph

Objection – We object that the limit is not being reduced from national speed limit to 40mph. The road is narrow meaning that it is particularly hazardous when motorists are passing other vulnerable road users including horse-riders, cyclists and pedestrians of which there are high numbers given the rural area. It has a number of bends, junctions and accesses. It is unlit apart from the area of the defined village community.

We object that the current 30mph limit in the village area is not being extended to west of Talbot Avenue in recognition of National Cycle Route 56 to better protect the large number of cyclists who use it.

Response – This route, running from the A540 to the west and the M53 Junction 4 Interchange to the east has two sections where proposed speed limit changes are proposed (Old Lane to Talbot Avenue and the link from east of Brimstage Lane to M53 Junction 4). Both sections are largely rural in nature and are located on an A class road. The guidance recommends that the speed limit in rural areas should be 50/60mph for most high quality strategic A and B roads with few bends, junctions or accesses. It is also noted that this route was subject to full carriageway reconstruction during April 2010.

The Panel also recommended including Whitehouse Lane in the speed reduction proposals to improve consistency and compliance.

The Panel considers that given the overall layout of this A class road, together with its road safety record, it is appropriate to reduce the speed limit to 50mph. The Panel believe that further reduction in the speed limit to 40mph will not necessarily bring any greater road safety benefits, and is likely to lead to a high rate of non-compliance. Guidance issued by the DfT also supports the Panels views. Following our widespread approach to setting local speed limits our Panel

considers that a 40mph speed limit is suited to routes where frontage development is dominant or where there is a significant number of vulnerable road users.

Recommendation – It is recommended that this proposal is implemented as advertised.

A551 Upton Bypass, Upton

Proposal – Increase from 30mph to 40mph

Objection – We object to the increase of the speed limit from 30mph to 40mph in a short stretch between two roundabouts in an area that is a network of minor rural lanes.

Response – This route provides a by-pass of the built up area of Upton and stretches from Arrowe Park Road in the south to the start of the M53 Junction 2 to the north. The route has very limited development and frontage access and is a single carriageway standard with street lighting present. The proposed speed limit change would improve the management and suitability of speeds along this route and assist in achieving more appropriate vehicle speeds thus encouraging compliance. Recorded 85th percentile speeds are much higher than the set limit and the road meets the criteria for a higher speed road.

Recommendation – It is recommended that this proposal is implemented as advertised.

Heron Road, Hoylake / Pump Lane, Greasby / Saughall Massie Road, Saughall Massie

Proposal – Reduce from National Speed Limit to 50mph along Heron Road and Pump Lane. Increase from 30mph to 50mph along part of Saughall Massie Road.

Objection – We object that the speed limit is not being reduced to 40mph. Heron Road / Pump Lane is narrow meaning that it is particularly hazardous when motorists are passing other vulnerable road users including horse-riders, cyclists and pedestrians. It has a number of bends. It is largely unlit.

Response – Heron Road and Pump Lane are rural in nature, there is very limited development and frontage access along the routes and they all meet the criteria for a higher speed road.

Following the resurfacing of Heron Road and introduction of safety measures including SLOW and edge of carriageway markings, marker posts, cats eyes and signage, road safety has significantly improved on this road. Introducing a 50mph speed limit reduction would provide significant benefits including the opportunity to improve consistency with adjoining link roads including Saughall Massie Road to the east and the existing 50mph speed limit on the western section of Saughall Massie Road. In addition I consider that this consistent approach will achieve greater respect by drivers and improve compliance. Following our widespread approach to setting local speed limits our Panel considers that a 40mph speed limit is suited to routes where frontage development is dominant or where there is a significant number of vulnerable road users.

Recommendation – It is recommended that this proposal is implemented as advertised.

Storeton Village, Storeton

Proposal – Reduce from National Speed Limit to 30mph within Village area and relocation of existing 30mph / National Speed Limit gateway along Lever Causeway.

Objection – We support the proposed speed limit reductions and alteration to 30mph gateway. We object to what seems an extension to the national limit for a short distance on the approach to the village from the east.

We take this opportunity to record our disappointment that the Review retains the national speed limit of 60mph on the Lever Causeway, itself. It is an accident black spot. We feel that a reduction in speed on the open stretch is essential alongside installation of road lighting and/or development of a segregated green way to either side of the carriageway for shared use by walkers, runners, horse-riders and cyclists.

Response – Lever Causeway currently has minimal frontage development and access and the accident rate is below the DfT threshold levels for action. Although there have been a small number of KSI casualties, these have not been due to the speed of traffic. The route also has good forward visibility.

Relocating the existing gateway along Lever Causeway will provide the opportunity to create a highly visible gateway approaching a built-up area. The Panel considered that such a gateway, in advance of the village, closer to the built up area is likely to achieve greater respect by drivers thus reducing vehicle speeds and improving road safety.

A Local Safety Scheme incorporating enhanced signing, extensive road markings and marker posts has been introduced on Levers Causeway during the last two years. Following detailed investigation into the crash history, this scheme does not warrant further speed reduction measures, however an ongoing programme of monitoring is in place. Road safety has improved and there have been no recent recorded injury accidents.

The programme of work for footway / cycleway measures for this year has been approved by the Council and this location was not identified as a priority within the programme. As with all roads throughout the Borough, it will be considered again when drawing up future programmes.

Recommendation – It is recommended that this proposal is implemented as advertised.

B5136 Thornton Common Road / B5151 Willaston Road, Clatterbridge

Proposal – Reduce from National Speed Limit to 50mph

Objection – We object to the reduction of the speed limit to only 50mph between Clatterbridge and the Thornton Common Road roundabout, and, on to the Willaston Road and Thornton Common Road. There are a number of bends, junctions and accesses, at times affording little clear sight of other vulnerable road users. As would be expected in what is a rural area, there is a high mix on these roads of horse-riders, cyclists, walkers and runners. A speed of 40mph is far more appropriate.

Response – Thornton Common Road and Willaston Road are both rural in nature, have very limited development and frontage access and meet the criteria for a higher speed road. Both routes have recently been subject to carriageway

surface dressing and there are also proposals to introduce Local Safety Schemes comprising of enhanced warning signage and road markings.

The proposed speed limit change along Willaston Road is also consistent with proposals being considered by our neighbouring authority Cheshire West and Chester Council, as this is a cross boundary route.

Recommendation – It is recommended that this proposal is implemented as advertised.