
Meeting: Traffic Management Meeting
Date: 15 April 2010
Subject: Petition – To Change Speed Limits at Husborne Crawley
Report of: Basil Jackson, Assistant Director of Highways & Transport
Summary: The purpose of this report is to present a petition received from the residents of Husborne Crawley for changes to speed limits and to seek approval for a response to it.

Contact Officer: Nick Chapman
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Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: Woburn and Harlington
Function of: Council

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

Financial:

None as a result of this report

Legal:

None as a result of this report.

Risk Management:

None as a result of this report.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

None as a result of this report.

Equalities/Human Rights:

None as a result of this report.

Community Safety:

Reduced speed would improve safety

Sustainability:

None as a result of this report

RECOMMENDATION(S):

The Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities and Healthier Lifestyles is requested to note the contents of the report and to approve the suggested response to the lead petitioner

Background and Information.

1. In November 2009 a petition was sent Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) and forwarded for investigation to the Transportation Manager at Bedfordshire Highways. The petition requests that the current 40mph speed limits on roads in and around Husborne Crawley be reduced to 30mph and that a 20mph speed limit be introduced at the lower school.
2. The roads specifically referred to in the petition are A4012 Turnpike Road, School Lane and Bedford Road.
3. The petition comprises 161 signatures from residents and visitors, 43 from children, 27 from parents of schoolchildren and 5 school staff.
4. The petition document contains a report that sets out the concerns of the petitioners and offers some preferred actions. There is a general view expressed that motorists are generally exceeding the existing 40mph limit. This is supported to some extent by speed measurements taken by Beds Highways. These show that on School Lane near Crow Lane 85th percentile speeds were 45.9mph northbound and 43.5mph southbound whilst closer to the school site itself speeds were 51.5 mph northbound and 46 mph southbound. These speeds close to the school are within the range of prosecutable speeds.
5. On the A4102 Turnpike Road things are slightly different. This is an A road and takes vehicles of all classifications. Mill Road and Turnpike Road form part of the access from the Ridgmont bypass to Woburn and average daily flows are between 6000 and 7000 not particularly high for an A road. At the interface between the national speed limit and the 40mph restriction on Turnpike Road measured 85th percentile speeds are 50.5mph inbound and 51.5mph outbound neither of which are particularly surprising given the clear road beyond. By the time vehicles are approaching the School Lane junction these speeds are 35.3mph inbound and 38.2mph outbound, within the posted speed limit.
6. Turnpike road, although it has a number of properties on one side, is fairly open and rural in nature. The presence of the park wall on one side with only 3 openings and the fact that all the houses are behind the highway boundary reinforces this impression to drivers. Speeds on this section are generally not outside what could reasonably be expected. Whilst the 85th percentile speeds are as quoted the mean average speeds of all vehicles passing the 40/de-restriction signs are in the low to mid 40mph bracket. It is extremely unlikely that this would alter significantly if the limit were to be reduced to 30mph given the nature of the approach.

7. Between 1/1/01 and 31/12/09 there have been 10 recorded injury incidents on the stretch of Turnpike Road from School Lane to the parish boundary. These resulted in 1 fatal, 1 serious and 12 slight injuries. 5 of these (1 serious 4 slight) were at the School Lane junction and are generally junction related. Three involve rear end shunts to vehicles waiting to turn out and two relate to vehicles pulling out in front of oncoming traffic. There is no evidence to suggest speeds in excess of the posted limit contributed to any of these incidents. The fatal incident occurred close to the change in speed limit and was a head on collision between a car and a goods vehicle.
8. On School Lane there have been two slight injury accidents to the north east of the school but nothing close to the school in the same time period. Neither of these incidents mentioned included pedestrians and / or school children travelling to or from the school.
9. Generally the area is served by reasonable footways and there are opportunities to cross with good visibility where necessary.
10. Bedfordshire Highways are currently implementing a safer routes to school scheme at the lower school. Currently parents that drop children off by car use the nearby pub car park and walk through the playing field to the school. This offers a safe off-road walking route. It is appreciated however that not all children arrive this way. The scheme therefore will improve the footway on School Lane from Turnpike Road to the school on the SW side and at the same time will introduce flashing 'wig-wag' orange school warning lights and signs together with a gateway and a school safety zone sign. There will be new road markings and the existing markings will be refreshed at the school and these will also have a no stopping order on them. These measures will further highlight the presence of the school and the probability of parent / child movements.
11. Looking at the C94 Bedford Road there is a similar picture with 4 slight and 1 serious incident at the junction with School Lane. Again these are largely related to junction manoeuvres and driver behaviour rather than excessive speed.
12. The request for a 20mph speed limit at the school is also not currently one that would be delivered. It would not be best practice to implement this in a 40mph speed limit.
13. **Conclusion and The Way Forward**
14. This petition and supporting statements have been carefully considered and discussed with Bedfordshire Police Traffic management representatives. The concerns of the residents are clearly very real with concerns that they live in an increasingly dangerous environment. This is an increasing source of correspondence from communities across Central Bedfordshire.
15. Neither the vehicle speeds nor the injury incidents in themselves indicate an intervention level that would automatically trigger any changes to traffic management. When the speed limit review of A and B roads was carried out over the last two years no changes were proposed.

16. The A4102 was surface dressed in 2009 and the road markings were replaced to current standards.
17. Discussions with the police confirm that they have carried out a considerable amount of enforcement in recent years. I can also confirm that Turnpike Road and School Lane have been placed on the speed maintenance list and as a result the beat manager will continue to collect speed data at locations where speeds appear high and enforce existing limits when appropriate.
18. The situation will therefore continue to be monitored by the police. It is the experience of both Beds Highways and the police that changing a speed limit and signing does not automatically change driver behaviour. The 40mph speed limit is deemed to be generally appropriate to the type and nature of the roads concerned. It would be difficult or impossible to enforce a 30mph or 20mph speed limit in the vicinity of the school without physical traffic calming measures to ensure compliance and at current intervention levels this would not be considered.
19. The area will be re-assessed for possible additional coloured patches and speed roundels if required to reinforce the existing speed limits. The area will also be placed on the list for the deployment of the mobile vehicle actuated speed signs owned by Central Bedfordshire and available for temporary use.
20. In addition to the continuing police presence, consideration is being given to the introduction of a community based speed monitoring programme that would enable local communities to carry out highly visible speed checks at approved locations to reinforce the police actions. The key to reducing speeds within inhabited areas is continuing and increasing driver education and the community input can be a valuable asset in this. This scheme is not yet in place but is currently being considered for communities across Central Bedfordshire.

Background documents:-

Petition
Accident stats (plan only)
Speed plan
Srts plan