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**Meeting:** Traffic Management Meeting

**Date:** 15 April 2010

**Subject:** Ridgmont - Proposed traffic calming and 20mph Zone

**Report of:** Basil Jackson, Assistant Director of Highways & Transport

**Summary:** The purpose of this report is to consider objections received as a result of statutory consultation for the introduction of a 20mph Zone in Ridgmont and the implementation of associated traffic calming, and to seek approval for the implementation of the project.

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**Contact Officer:** Sopella Zvekare  
[Sopella.Zvekare@amey.co.uk](mailto:Sopella.Zvekare@amey.co.uk)

**Public/Exempt:** Public

**Wards Affected:** Ridgmont

**Function of:** Council

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

**That the Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities and Healthier Lifestyles note the responses received and approve the proposal to introduce the 20mph Zone and Traffic Calming as detailed in this report.**

**Background**

1. Ridgmont is a residential rural village that is located to the north east of Woburn Safari Park and lies within a conservation area. The High Street was part of the A507 prior to the construction of the Ridgmont by-pass and now provides a link between the A507 and the new Ridgmont by-pass. Ridgmont Lower School is located on the High Street at the junction with Eversholt Road. The volume of through traffic has reduced significantly in Ridgmont following the completion of the Ridgmont by-pass.
2. Speeds in excess of 30mph were recorded on the High Street, Station Road and Eversholt Road. The 85%ile speeds on High Street is approximately 32 mph with a traffic flow of around 1954 veh/day, and on Eversholt Road is approximately 38mph with a total flow of around 1525 veh/day. The speeds experienced give rise to concern and anxiety from residents – especially the elderly and those with children. The excessive speeds of the minority also deter walking and cycling and have a negative effect on road safety and the local environment.

3. Examination of the accident records for Ridgmont show that there have been one serious injury accident and twelve slight injury accidents in the last five years. All accidents occurred along the High Street.

### **Proposal**

4. A package of proposed road safety improvement measures has been designed. These measures include the introduction of a 20mph Zone with a system of traffic calming features in High Street and Eversholt Road. The form of traffic calming chosen are flat top humps (65mm high) at 6 locations and a round top hump (65mm high) at 1 location. Flat top humps have been chosen as the High Street is part of a regular bus route (Stagecoach Route 160/165, Leighton Buzzard to Bedford). Flat top humps have minimal impact on the comfort of bus drivers and passengers, whilst the majority of private cars have to slow down considerably to pass over the flat top hump. A round top hump has been chosen to be installed in Eversholt Road as it is not a bus route and a round top hump results in the smallest increase in vehicle emissions. An uncontrolled humped crossing is proposed on High Street adjacent to the pedestrian entrance to Ridgmont Lower School.
5. Meetings have taken place between the Bedfordshire Highways and the Parish Council with regard to the proposed 20mph and traffic calming scheme. The Parish Council are in agreement with this proposal.

### **Consultation**

6. Statutory consultation was carried out by the normal method of erection of site notices, publication of the proposals in the press and direct mailing to the statutory consultees. A consultation letter containing the public notice and plans was delivered to properties on the High Street within the proposed 20mph speed limit zone.
7. Within the objection period 6 letters of objection were received, 1 e-mail objecting to the scheme, a letter of support from the Police, 3 letters of support and 5 e-mails supporting the scheme. A letter was also received from the Ridgmont Parish Council supporting the scheme.
8. **Points raised by the objectors include the following:-**
  - a. The proposed traffic calming measures are excessive and not justified.
  - b. The proposed measures will not reduce vehicle speeds on Eversholt Road.
  - c. Road humps are unsightly and result in increased noise pollution, ground borne vibrations, carbon emissions, greater fuel consumption, damages vehicles and delays emergency service vehicles.
  - d. Proposed traffic calming does not address the collision problem at the entrance to Woburn Safari Park off the High Street.
  - e. Traffic calming is required at the junction of High Street and Mount Pleasant to improve road safety for children travelling to the school.

- f. In favour of horizontal deflection traffic calming measures such as chicanes and are opposed to road humps.

**9. In response to the objections it should be noted:**

- a. The aim of the scheme is to slow traffic to encourage and assist cyclists and pedestrians, deter through and speeding traffic, and improve the amenity of the area for the residents. The proposed traffic calming will discourage excessive / inappropriate speeds as well as improve traffic and pedestrian safety.
- b. Vehicles travelling over road humps at appropriate speeds should not suffer damage, provided the humps conform to the Highways (Road Hump) Regulations. A study investigated the effect of repeatedly traversing road humps on vehicles and no damage to any of the vehicles was seen, despite repeated passes at speeds up to 40 mph.
- c. Extensive research failed to find any conclusive evidence that traffic-induced vibrations can cause significant building damage and it is very unlikely that the introduction of the road humps pose a significant risk of even minor damage to property.
- d. Smooth, low speed driving, in as high a gear as possible, will result in relatively low emissions. The effect on emissions, therefore, of any traffic calming scheme will depend on how the scheme influences both the average speed of traffic and the amount of speed variation.
- e. Although some traffic management measures can result in increased emissions per vehicle, they also generally result in a reduction in the volume of traffic. Thus, even though emissions per vehicle may increase, this can be offset by the reduction in traffic.
- f. No response has been received from the emergency services and cycle groups accept the need for road humps.
- g. Any discomfort experienced by motorists should be minimised by traversing road humps at an appropriate speed. The proposed flat topped road humps are much less severe than round topped road humps.
- h. Horizontal carriageway deflections, such as localised narrowings and chicanes, are not always effective in reducing vehicle speeds. In the case of kerb build-outs and pinch points, the narrowed carriageway, even if reduced to a single lane, still allows most vehicles to be driven relatively quickly through the available gap, unless there is opposing traffic to prevent this occurring.
- i. Attitude surveys conducted into traffic calming schemes suggest that the public dislike horizontal deflections, such as chicanes, more than they dislike road humps.

- j. Regularly spaced traffic calming features are required in 20mph zones and road humps are the most effective at reducing speeds when there is no opposing traffic, and in comparison to other traffic calming features are economic to construct.

## Conclusion

- 10 In conclusion although there are a considerable number of points made by the objectors, many of them have already been considered within the design works as outlined within the responses. Current regulations still require traffic calming features to be implemented to create 20mph zones and this scheme is in accordance with those regulations. There are currently new 20mph proposals being issued by the DfT for consultation, but even those would require specific authorisation on a scheme by scheme basis before the number of traffic calming features could be relaxed.

This scheme is in accordance with the general aspirations of Central Bedfordshire Council and Ridgmont Parish Council to promote road safety, promote walking and cycling, deter through traffic and improve the environment for local residents.

This scheme will be monitored after installation so that the effectiveness of the measures in terms of safety and speed reduction can be demonstrated.

## CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

### Council Priorities:

Reduction of vehicle speeds through traffic calming to encourage walking and cycling, make it safer for all road users, improve amenity for residents and further deter through traffic. Reduction of vehicle speed also improves safety and can assist in reducing vehicle emissions.

### Financial:

Cost of implementation of overall scheme is likely to be in the region of £56K.

### 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:**

Possible reduction in number and severity of accidents, together with a reduction in anxiety of residents caused by vehicles travelling at excessive / inappropriate speeds.

**Sustainability:**

Slowing and reduction in number of vehicles together with encouraging walking and cycling.

**Appendix A – Plans**

**Appendix B – Public Notice**

**Appendix C – Objections / Comments**

**Background Papers:**

None

**Location of papers:** Priory House, Chicksands