

Extract of the Minutes of the meeting of the Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday, 18 May 2010

SCOSC/10/7 Call In: Petition - To Change Speed Limits at Husborne Crawley

The Committee noted that on 15 April 2010 the Traffic Management Committee had considered a petition to reduce the speed limit on the following roads in Husborne Crawley from 40 miles per hour to 30 miles per hour (20 miles per hour in the vicinity of Husborne Crawley Lower School), A4012 Turnpike Road, School Lane and Bedford Road. Following discussion at the Traffic Management Meeting on 15 April 2010 the Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities and Healthier Lifestyles decided not to reduce the speed limit, but to re-assess the roads for additional coloured patches and speed roundels and to place the area on the list for mobile vehicle activated speed signs.

The Committee noted that the decision of the Traffic Management Meeting had been called in by Councillor Mrs Fiona Chapman, ward member for Harlington and Woburn. The Committee was asked to consider the call-in and Councillor Mrs Fiona Chapman's reasons for calling the decision in.

The Member calling the item in was invited to speak first and the reasons given for the call in were as follows:-

(a) it was not appropriate to turn down the request to lower the speed limit only on the basis that it was not enforceable, (b) the Portfolio Holder did not appear to listen to the local Parish Councillor or to both CBC Councillors who spoke in favour of the petition at the Traffic Management Meeting, nor was the Parish Council Chairman allowed to comment when they signalled a wish to speak during the Traffic Management Meeting, and (c) the speed limit outside the school (40 mph) was, in particular, too high for the safety of children.

In accordance with the Public Participation Procedure set out in Annex 1 of Part A4 of the Constitution the Chairman then invited the members of the public who had registered to speak on this item to do so. Each speaker was asked to keep their statement to three minutes.

Statements were received from a total of three public speakers who raised a number of concerns including:

- Recent police speed measurements showed a significant number of drivers drove through Husborne Crawley in speeds exceeding 50 miles per hour.
- Claims of discrepancies in the information provided in the report in relation to the number of accidents that had occurred.
- Statements that Bedfordshire Police said they would not support reductions to the speed limit in Husborne Crawley were not true, they would support it subject to Central Bedfordshire Council supporting the restrictions with engineering measures.

- Highways engineers had not visited Husborne Crawley to assess the roads at the time the decision of the Traffic Management Meeting was taken.
- The decision was not in keeping with decisions to reduce speed limits in other local areas of Central Bedfordshire.
- The Parish Plan identified reduction in speed limits as a key local priority.
- There was a particular risk to pedestrians on the pavement as HGVs drove through narrow roads at high speeds.
- Several cars had left the road and collided with hedges or the walls of properties. This could be fatal if a pedestrian had been on the pavement at the time.
- Loose chippings often flew up injuring pedestrians.
- Children regularly walked to and from the school and there were concerns for their safety when crossing the road and when waking on the roadside.

In response to the statements from Members of the public the Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities and Healthier Lifestyles and the Assistant Director for Highways and Transport explained that when the decision was taken by the Traffic Management Committee they had noted the concerns of villagers and the issue was not simply one of speeding cars, but also concerned the width of the roads and pavement. It was also stated that there were no known discrepancies in the report that had been submitted to the Traffic Management Meeting. Research had shown that reducing a speed limit from 40mph to 30mph would have a minimal effect unless physical measures were also introduced to enforce it, it would also criminalise a significant number of drivers. For a change in the speed limit to reduce speeds it would require additional design measures to slow the traffic down.

Representatives from Bedfordshire Police confirmed that it was their view that 20mph speed limits should not be put into place without physical measures also being put into place, however the Assistant Director for Highways and Transport did agree that recent guidance from the DfT allowed reduced speed limits to be considered without the need for associated speed reduction measures – though it was preferable to have such measures.

The decision had therefore been taken not to change the speed limit in Husborne Crawley at this time but it was agreed that an engineer liaise with the local Parish Council and discuss possible measures to slow traffic down.

In response to a question from the Chairman the Assistant Director for Highways and Transport confirmed that it had been a decision of the former legacy authority that there should be a 20mph speed limit outside all schools in the Central Bedfordshire area. However, because of the significant cost implications, and the fact that very few serious accidents were taking place outside schools, this policy had not been adopted by CBC.

Members discussed the issues at length and unanimously expressed concerns that the speed of vehicles travelling through Husborne Crawley needed to be reduced as soon as possible, in particular around the school and that HGVs should be encouraged to use Mill Lane instead of School Lane.

The Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Development drew everyone's attention to the need for the M1 – A5 link road to be built, this would reduce pressure on roads such as the A4012. Given the current economic situation there was some doubt that this scheme would come to fruition and members of the public were encouraged to contact their local MP and the minister for Transport in support of the link road.

RESOLVED

That the decision be referred back to the Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities and Healthier Lifestyles for reconsideration with the following alternative recommendation:-

- (a) the current speed limit in Husborne Crawley be reduced from 40mph to 30mph with the exception of the area around the school in which the speed limit should be reduced from 40mph to 20mph.**