
Meeting: Traffic Management Meeting
Date: 10 November 2010
Subject: Petition – Requesting a change in speed limit in Higham Road - Higham Gobion
Report of: Basil Jackson
Summary: The purpose of this report is to present a petition received in support of reducing the speed limit through Higham Gobion and to seek approval for a way forward.

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

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

Financial:

A minimum of £7.5k would be required to implement this restriction. With gateways this would rise to £23.5k. There is no allocation within the 2010/11 integrated schemes programme for this work.

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:

None directly but a reduced speed limit would improve perceived safety.

Sustainability:

None as a result of this report

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Portfolio holder for Safer Communities and Healthier Lifestyles is requested to agree the change in speed limit in principle and that it be placed on a list of schemes for future implementation.

Background and Information.

1. A petition of 128 signatures has been received supporting the reduction of the speed limit through Higham Gobion. This seems quite a high number for the size and scale of the community
2. The speed limit through Higham Gobion is currently the national limit i.e.60mph
3. Prior to receiving this petition a request had been received in July 2009 via the helpdesk from a resident for this to be undertaken
4. At the time the original request was made there was no budget to undertake speed review requests and a waiting list was compiled to await future funding.
5. Since the end of the school summer holidays we have been undertaking a number of the assessments from the waiting list. Assessments are not generally undertaken in school holidays as this significantly affects traffic volumes.
6. This assessment is now in the process of being undertaken. The visual site assessment has been undertaken. The police have taken traffic speed and volume measurements and these have been used to inform this report
7. There have been no recorded collision resulting in injury in a 500m length of the C140 centred on Higham Gobion in the last 8 years. There may have been damage only collisions but there is no record of these.
8. The residents have also requested a bus stop. Following a site meeting the police have indicated that they would not support this without a speed limit in place.
9. There are 10 residential dwellings in Higham Gobion and a number of businesses on the former Manor Farm that attract an increasing number of employees and visitors.

Conclusion and The way Forward

10. Under normal circumstances assessing this location using the DfT guidance for setting speed limits there would be no basis to introduce any speed limit at all other than for reasons of local concern. The community is too small to qualify as a village under DfT guidance and there have been no injury accidents. Thus a limit would not be appropriate on safety grounds
11. The situation in respect of the setting of speed limits in rural communities is, however, currently under review. The Executive requested at its meeting in

August that the process be reviewed and will receive a report at its December meeting from the Assistant Director for Highways for Highways and Transport setting out how this may be achieved.

12. The current DfT guidance states that villages should be assumed to be eligible for a 30mph speed limit. A village is defined within the guidance as *'having 20 or more houses on one or both sides of a road in a minimum distance of 600m'*.

Clearly Higham Gobion does not meet those criteria and that is one of the reasons that it, and other similar small communities, have not been considered for speed limits in the past.

13. This however does not address the very real concerns of those in smaller communities who feel vulnerable to the speed and volume of passing traffic. Those concerns can be addressed by reducing the threshold requirements where a speed limit may be considered appropriate and the report to Executive will suggest how this may be achieved.
14. It is also important that any speed limit that is set recognises the speed at which traffic currently uses the road. For example it would be unrealistic to apply a 30mph speed limit on a road where there is little or no habitation and the average speeds are in excess of 50mph. Speed limits must have a context for drivers and the presence of frontage development is key to supplying some of this contextual evidence to the passing driver. Without it compliance will be low.
15. In the case of Higham Gobion whilst the numbers of properties are low and on only one side of the road they are extremely visible as is the church. Thus some visual context is present. The speeds as measured indicate that the two way mean average speeds taken over a 5 day period are at or just below 50mph. There is therefore a reasonable chance that a 40 mph speed limit will have a beneficial effect on vehicle speeds but general compliance is unlikely.
16. Although not formally consulted in writing discussions with the Police representatives indicate that they would support the introduction of this limit having been party to a number of previous discussions relating to this site. Implementation would also facilitate the further discussion of a bus stop.
17. It is therefore recommended that the implementation of a 40mph speed limit in Higham Gobion be supported in principle. The speed limit would be implemented over at least 400m length to ensure that it is enforceable by the police.
18. Members are asked to note that the cost of implementation of this speed limit is likely to be as follows.
 - Advertisement and consultation of Traffic Regulation Order £3.5k to £5k
 - Purchase and erection of speed limit signs £1.5k
 - Road markings £1k
 - A total of approximately £7.5k.

If gateways were to be introduced with gates, dragon teeth and coloured patches these would cost in the order of £8k each i.e.£16k for the two required. Costs are subject to detailed estimate.

19. There is currently no allocation within the 2010/11 integrated schemes budget for the implementation of changes to speed limits. In 2011/12 and the following two years Central Bedfordshire Council has determined that the integrated scheme budget will be targeted specifically at the four priority areas of the Local Transport Plan 3. The exceptions to this will be casualty reduction schemes and structural maintenance that will be awarded on a 'needs first' basis.
20. Higham Gobion does not lie within an LTP priority area nor does the speed limit qualify on the grounds of casualty reduction.
21. Additionally, and because of the above, it will, in any event, be of low priority.
22. It is recommended therefore that the change in speed limit in Higham Gobion from national speed limit to 40mph be agreed and placed on a list for future implementation when funds become available. There will be other schemes that will no doubt come forward from the review of rural speed limits that will also be in that category.
23. Alternatively should local funding for the speed limit be found this work could progress.