
Meeting: Traffic Management Meeting
Date: 3 May 2017
Subject: Heath Road, Leighton Buzzard – Petition for school safety measures
Report of: Paul Mason, Assistant Director Highways
Summary: This report is to note the receipt of a petition submitted to Central Bedfordshire Council and suggest a way forward.
Recommendation: That the lead petitioner be informed of the contents of this report and the outcome of the meeting.

Contact Officer: Paul Salmon
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Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: Leighton Buzzard North
Function of: Council

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

The petition is in relation to the safe and efficient use of the highway network.

Financial:

Work will be funded from the 2017/18 Integrated Works budget.

Legal:

None from this report.

Risk Management:

None from this report.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

None from this report.

Equalities/Human Rights:

None from this report.

Community Safety:

None from this report.

Sustainability:

None from this report.

Background and Information

1. A petition has been received, signed by 320 people, requesting the Council to introduce a 20mph speed limit and yellow lines outside Heathwood and Dovery Down lower schools.
2. Supporting statements from the lead petitioners and both schools have asked for a number of other measures to improve road safety in the area, including:-
 - (i) Measures to address parking in close proximity to the existing zebra crossing at Heathwood Lower School.
 - (ii) Improved school signage.
 - (iii) Enforcement of the speed limit and waiting restrictions.
 - (iv) School crossing patrol at peak school travel times.
 - (v) A new pedestrian crossing at Dovery Down Lower School.
 - (vi) A 20mph speed limit on Heath Road.
 - (vii) Consideration of traffic calming measures, including coloured surfacing, speed cameras and speed humps.
3. Heath Road is one of the main traffic routes into and out of Leighton Buzzard, so carries a reasonable volume of traffic, particularly at peak times. However, over a number of years, the Council has sought to reduce the number of vehicles on this road, by positively encouraging the use of more suitable routes and implementing weight restrictions. Heath Road is relatively wide and straight which tends to encourage higher speeds, although the volume of on-street parking at the start and end of the school day helps moderate speeds. Heath Road also hosts a cycle route linking Heath and Reach with Leighton Buzzard schools, railway station and town centre.
4. The zebra crossing of Heath Road close to the Heathwood School entrance was constructed in 2011-12. It was part of a range of measures to improve the safety of pupils travelling to school. The improvements were designed in consultation with both lower schools and funded from monies secured from developers of the Forticrete site.
5. The measures introduced in 2011-12 also included the introduction of waiting restrictions in Chiltern Gardens, Sandy Lane, Heath Park Road and Broomhills Road in locations where school-run parking was generating safety issues. This 'Safer Routes to School' project considered the case for a variable 20mph speed limit on Heath Road operating during the school run period. However, measures taken at the time showed this to be unnecessary as school-run parking had the effect of reducing traffic speeds on this section of Heath Road.

6. Over the period 2011 – 2016 there were five reported vehicle collisions in the vicinity of either lower school. Of these, three involved drivers running into vehicles waiting to turn. One involved a motorcyclist hitting a deer. In one collision between two vehicles the causality is unclear. None of the collisions involved pedestrians.
7. In response to the specific measures being requested, officers' views are as follows:-
 - (i) Consideration be given to extending waiting restrictions to address localised issues near Heathwood Lower School, accepting there is a risk that constraining on-street parking increases speeds. Such changes to be processed alongside other requests in the town over the coming months.
 - (ii) There are already school warning signs in place on Heath Road with some accompanied by "SLOW" markings on red surfacing. There is little scope to improve these and any changes are likely to have minimal impact on drivers' speed and/or behaviour.
 - (iii) Enforcement of the speed limit is mainly a police function. The Council's parking enforcement officers could be asked to undertake some additional patrols, but there are currently few enforceable restrictions in Heath Road.
 - (iv) It is unlikely that a school crossing patrol is justified given that all lower school pupils are accompanied by a parent/guardian and in the absence of any significant collision history involving vulnerable road users in the vicinity of either school.
 - (v) The 2011/12 Safer Routes to School project assessed the case for crossing provision and found that there were insufficient crossing movements outside Doverly Down Lower School to justify the provision of a second controlled crossing. It is considered unlikely that this situation has changed during the intervening period.
 - (vi) In recent correspondence with petitioners, the Council agreed to review the case for measures on Heath Road once the eastern link road is open. However, whilst 20mph speed limits are increasingly common on residential roads there is guidance that states these should only be introduced when measures are in place that 'self-enforce' slower speeds. This has the advantage of reducing the heavy enforcement burden placed on the police. Because of the nature of Heath Road, a 20mph speed limit would need to be accompanied by extensive physical traffic calming measures, such as chicanes, road humps and/or raised tables. Evidence shows that these measures are not universally welcomed.
 - (vii) As is noted above, reducing average speeds on Heath Road to 20mph would require extensive physical measures or the installation of safety cameras capable of monitoring average speeds. At issue is whether the considerable investment this would require could be justified against other competing schemes designed to reduce the incidence of injurious road collisions.
7. It remains the Council's view that a review of Heath Road should take place once the eastern link road, serving the Chamberlain's Barn development, has opened. In the intervening period, the case for introducing waiting restrictions on Heath Road in the vicinity of the zebra crossing will be progressed.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Petition

Appendix B – Lead petitioners' letter

Appendix C – Heathwood Lower School letter

Appendix D – Dovery Down Lower School letter

Appendix E – Location plan

Appendix A

Petition for reduction of speed to 20mph and yellow
lines outside Heathwood Lower School and Doverly
Down Lower School

Name	Street; Town/Village
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Appendix B

Re: Road Safety for Parents and Children of Heathwood and Dovers Down schools on Heath Rd

Further to your conversations with Nicky Miller we have worked with our schools and through a petition gathered support for road safety initiatives on Heath Rd to safeguard the parents/guardians & children of Heathwood and Dovers Down Lower schools at school drop-off and pick-up times.

We have had over whelming support and gathered over 300 parents and local residents signatures (attached).

We also have support from the Governors of Heathwood Lower school (letter attached) and Dovers Down Lower School as well as the local police .

We have also made contact with Andrew Selous (SW Bedfordshire MP) who has written on our behalf to Director of Highways for Central Bedfordshire Council. The issue has also recently been raised by concerned parents/ guardians in the Leighton Buzzard Observer.

Given that traffic flow along Heath Road is continuous and fast it means it is very difficult to judge the appropriate moment to cross. We are most concerned that it is only a matter of time before an accident happens especially given that in the 2/3 of a mile stretch of Heath road between Green Hill and Shenley Hill Rd there are:

- 3 schools
- 6 bus stops
- School crossing at Heathwood
- A playground at Adam's Bottom

We are calling on Central Bedfordshire Council to take urgent steps to improve road safety along Heath Road and believe there is a need for traffic calming measures to be installed to:

- Reduce excessive speeding on Heath Rd
- Reduce parking by the Zebra crossing on Heath Road
- Overall, ensure we safeguard parents and children of Heathwood & Dovery Down schools so they can safely cross Heath Rd

In our opinion we believe the following should be considered:

Matter of urgency	For consideration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extended double yellow lines either side of Zebra crossing by Heathwood school - Cleaner, better and additional school signage on Heath Rd - Enforcement of 30mph speed limit & parking restrictions on Heath Rd - 20mph speed limit between school drop off and pick up times - 'Lollipop' crossing attendants at peak periods at Dovery Down and Heathwood Schools - Full investigation into speed of & traffic flow during peak school drop off and pick up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Additional school crossing for Dovery Down school - 20mph speed limit at all times on Heath Rd <p>Traffic calming measures such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coloured tarmac - Speed camera's - Speed humps

We would respectfully ask given the level of support and concern for this matter these options are given due consideration.

Appendix C

At the last meeting of Heathwood School’s Governing Body on XX March 2017, the Board resolved to write to Central Bedfordshire Council to highlight our concerns about road safety along the Heath Road, in front of our School, and the risks increasingly posed to the safety and well being of our pupils and their parent/guardians in crossing this very busy road, each morning and afternoon, to drop off and pick up children from the school.

We have noticed that cars are regularly being driven along Heath Road well in excess of the current 30 mph speed limit. In addition, cars are increasingly being parked on the Heath Road itself & in particular close to the Zebra crossing. This not only hinders visibility for pedestrians wishing to use the crossing but also drivers approaching the crossing. Given that traffic flow along Heath Road is continuous and fast, it is very difficult to judge the appropriate moment to cross. We are most concerned that it is only a matter of time before an accident happens.

Parents at both the Schools on Heath Road have organised a petition, which we understand has been signed by over 200 parents and local residents, calling on Central Bedfordshire Council to take urgent steps to improve road safety along Heath Road. You will have seen that the issue has also been raised by concerned parents/ guardians in the Leighton Buzzard Observer.

As a Governing body we endorse this campaign and would encourage Central Bedfordshire Council to actively consider the measures to improve road safety which have been proposed by the campaign, which we set out below.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extended double yellow lines either side of Zebra crossing by Heathwood school - Cleaner, better and additional school signage on Heath Rd - Enforcement of 30mph speed limit & parking restrictions on Heath Rd - 20mph speed limit between school drop off and pick up times - ‘Lollipop’ crossing attendants at peak periods at Dovery Down and Heathwood Schools - Full investigation into speed of & traffic flow during peak school drop off and pick up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Additional school crossing for Dovery Down school - 20mph speed limit at all times on Heath Rd <p>Traffic calming measures such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coloured tarmac - Speed camera’s - Speed humps
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We look forward to hearing from you what steps the Council proposes to address these widely shared concerns.

Appendix D

At the last meeting of Doverly Down School's Governing Body on Tuesday 14th March 2017, the Board resolved to write to Central Bedfordshire Council to highlight our concerns about road safety along the Heath Road.

As you are aware, the road runs in front of our School and we feel it increasingly poses a risk to the safety and well-being of our pupils and their parent/guardians in crossing this very busy road, each morning and afternoon, to drop off and pick up children from the school.

We have noticed that cars are regularly being driven along Heath Road well in excess of the current 30 mph speed limit. In addition, cars are increasingly being parked on the Heath Road itself which, coupled with cars coming out of the school and neighbouring driveways, mean that those crossing the road need to step out into the road, in order to check whether the road is clear to cross.

Given that traffic flow along Heath Road is continuous and fast, it is very difficult to judge the appropriate moment to cross. We are most concerned that it is only a matter of time before an accident happens.

Parents at both the Schools on Heath Road have organised a petition, which we understand has been signed by over 200 parents and local residents, calling on Central Bedfordshire Council to take urgent steps to improve road safety along Heath Road. You will have seen that the issue has also been raised by concerned parents/ guardians in the Leighton Buzzard Observer and the matter has been taken up by our MP, Andrew Selous.

As a Governing body we endorse this campaign and would encourage Central Bedfordshire Council to actively consider the measures to improve road safety which have been proposed by the campaign, which we set out overleaf.

Road Safety measures such as:

- Extended double yellow lines either side of Zebra crossing by Heathwood school
- Cleaner, better and additional school signage on Heath Rd
- Enforcement of 30mph speed limit & parking restrictions on Heath Rd
- 20mph speed limit between school drop off and pick up times
- Full investigation into speed of & traffic flow during peak school drop off and pick up
- 'Lollipop' crossing attendants at peak periods at Doverly Down and Heathwood Schools
- Additional school crossing for Doverly Down school
- 20mph speed limit at all times on Heath Rd

Traffic calming measures such as:

- Coloured tarmac
- Speed camera's
- Speed humps

We look forward to hearing from you what steps the Council proposes to address these widely shared concerns.

Appendix D

