
Meeting of the Executive Members for City Strategy and Advisory Panel

11 December 2006

Report of the Director of City Strategy

EASTFIELD AVENUE (Haxby) – PROPOSED 20 MPH Zone

Summary

1. This report discusses the possible introduction of a 20 mph Zone to help reinforce the existing traffic calmed area of Eastfield Avenue. This is in response to on-going local concerns over traffic speeds, and particularly the speed of buses going through the area. A decision is sought on carrying out area-wide consultation on a proposed scheme, in parallel with the advertisement of the Traffic Regulation Order necessary to introduce a 20 mph Zone.

Background

2. Eastfield Avenue is a busy distributor road that serves a large residential area in Haxby. In addition to the high number of locally generated trips, it carries some through traffic moving between Mill Lane in Wigginton and York Road in Haxby. It also forms part of a high frequency bus route. To help ensure that traffic moves through this residential area at an appropriate speed, extensive calming measures were put in place around twelve years ago. The layout of the existing measures is shown in **Annex A**.
3. The traffic calming measures along Eastfield Avenue are mainly speed cushions. These are generally very effective at reducing overall traffic speeds, but have less affect on larger vehicles which can straddle them. They tend to be employed on important bus and emergency vehicle routes, such as Eastfield Avenue, with the aim of minimising possible adverse affects on journey times and passenger comfort.
4. Over the last few years the local Ward Councillors and some residents have expressed concerns about the speed of buses and other large vehicles travelling along Eastfield Avenue. This concern intensified following the introduction of higher frequency bus services and the use of double-decker buses. Although road safety is an associated issue, the main concerns raised by residents have focussed on noise and vibration effects linked to buses going over the speed cushions at inappropriate speeds. Therefore, to help address these issues, it was suggested that a formal 20mph Zone should be

created. This would put a legal obligation on all drivers to slow down to 20mph, regardless of their vehicle size and effectiveness of the speed cushions.

5. In response to these concerns, funding was allocated within the Speed Management block of the 2005/2006 Transport Capital Programme for the possible introduction of a 20mph Zone on Eastfield Avenue. As part of the subsequent development of a detailed scheme Officers carried out a number of speed surveys in the area, identified suitable locations for “gateway” features at the start of the Zone, and consulted key stakeholders, including those residents living closest to where new signs were proposed. The outcome of this work was reported to the East Area (Planning and Transport) Sub-Committee in February 2006.
6. At this meeting, some Sub-Committee Members expressed doubts over the scheme having much effect on actual vehicle speeds (surveys had shown that average traffic speeds were around 20mph, with average bus speeds about 22mph), and there was concern over the visual impact of the necessary 20 Zone "gateway" features (consultation with those living close to the proposed "gateways" had produced some negative comments). Some Members were also concerned about the value for money the scheme offered given the potentially small benefits it might achieve. For these reasons, the Sub-Committee decided that the 20mph Zone proposal should not proceed.
7. Since this decision was taken, the local Ward Councillors have continued to receive complaints from local residents over the speed of traffic in the area, with buses remaining a specific concern. The Councillors therefore believe that the idea of introducing a 20mph Zone is worthy of further consideration. Hence this report has been brought forward. To help Members of the Advisory Panel to understand the key issues, the main sections of the previous Sub-Committee report are reproduced below.

Speed Surveys

8. In order to assess existing traffic speeds on Eastfield Avenue, and the potential benefits of introducing a 20mph Zone, speed surveys were carried out at ten locations along the road. These included sites close to the traffic calming features, and other sites mid-way between them. Buses were individually identified so their speeds could be analysed separately.
9. The overall results, based on an average of all ten monitoring sites, are shown below:-

Overall Averages

| Direction | All Traffic | Buses Only | All Traffic Except Buses |
|----------------|-------------|------------|--------------------------|
| To York Road | 21mph | 22mph | 21mph |
| From York Road | 21mph | 22mph | 21mph |

Overall 85th Percentiles

The 85 percentile speed is defined as the speed at or below which 85 vehicles out of 100 in free flowing conditions are travelling.

| Direction | All Traffic | Buses Only | All Traffic Except Buses |
|----------------|-------------|------------|--------------------------|
| To York Road | 25mph | 24mph | 25mph |
| From York Road | 26mph | 24mph | 25mph |

Highest Speeds

The highest speeds recorded at each of the 10 locations varied between 26 and 34mph.

10. The results show that the vast majority of traffic is travelling well within the 30mph speed limit. Indeed average speeds are very close to 20mph. This means that a 20 mph Zone would be practically self-enforcing, as required by the legislation, without the need for additional traffic calming measures. Only the appropriate signing would need to be placed at the entry points to the Zone. However, with existing speeds being so low, it is very unlikely that the introduction of a 20 mph Zone would lead to any significant further reductions in overall traffic speed.
11. It is also very important to note that the overall speed of buses is only slightly higher than that of other traffic. With a current average of just 22 mph, it is unlikely that the speed of most buses would be significantly reduced by the introduction of a 20 mph Zone. However, the presence of 20mph signing could have some positive effect in moderating the speed of the small minority of drivers who may occasionally travel through the area too fast and cause the most concern to local residents. The existence of a legal 20mph speed limit could also make it easier for the bus operator to issue, and enforce, specific instructions to drivers on the maximum speed they should drive along Eastfield Avenue.
12. Given that the introduction of a 20mph Zone could have some positive benefits, albeit small, a scheme layout was developed for initial consultation with interested parties. The main design issue concerned the careful positioning of the entry "gateway" features, balancing the needs for them to be highly visible to approaching motorists, whilst causing minimum impact on residents living nearby. The proposed positions of the "gateway" features are shown on the plan in Annex B.

Consultation

13. In January 2006 a consultation letter and plan was sent to Haxby Town Council, the emergency services, and First bus company seeking their views on the proposed 20mph Zone. Detailed information was also sent to 19 households situated close to the proposed "gateway" positions to enable them to raise any specific concerns about the sign positions. Feedback is summarised below :-

14. The **Police** do not support the proposal, as the measured speeds are slightly higher than required for the scheme to be considered self-enforcing. Ideally, the average speed should be 20mph or lower, and the 85thile speed should not be higher than 24mph. The survey results show an existing average of 21mph, and an 85-percentile of 26mph.

Officer Response

It is accepted that the measured speeds are currently slightly higher than those required for a 20mph Zone to be considered self-enforcing. However, it is hoped that the presence of 20mph Zone signing would have some effect on driver behaviour. Even a small reduction in the number of drivers proceeding at speeds significantly above 20mph should bring down the average and 85-percentile figures to acceptable levels. However, it is important to note that the Police would not provide any enforcement of the Zone, even if residents remained concerned over the speed of some drivers. The only way to address this would be for additional physical measures to be introduced to further strengthen the self-enforcing nature of the Zone, and this could be unpopular given residents' current concerns over noise and vibration effects.

15. The **Fire and Rescue Service** supports the proposal.

Officer Response - noted

16. **Haxby Town Council** have indicated their overall support for the scheme.

Officer Response - noted

17. **First** (bus operator) have indicated that they are not against the 20mph speed limit in principle, but have concerns that it could cause timetabling problems.

Officer Response – No significant delays would be caused by buses proceeding at 20mph along Eastfield Avenue. Most are going only slightly faster now, and proceeding at higher speed to maintain a timetable is not considered acceptable.

18. **Residents**

From the 19 households consulted, five responses were received. Most do not object to the principle of the Zone, but concerns have been raised over the potential visual impact of the “gateway” signs and road markings.

Officer Response

The proposed signs and markings would be an essential part of introducing a 20 mph Zone. The “gateway” locations have been carefully chosen with the aim of balancing the need for them to be highly visible to approaching motorists, whilst causing minimum impact on residents living nearby. All the proposed locations have been reviewed in light of feedback from residents, and some minor modifications can be made to address some of the concerns. However, it is felt that the best locations have been chosen, and therefore it is likely that some residents would remain unhappy if the scheme was introduced.

Road Safety Audit

19. An independent Risk Assessment concluded that there are no fundamental road safety concerns over the proposed introduction of a 20mph Zone on Eastfield Avenue. Therefore, only a Safety Audit on the completed scheme was recommended. This would be unlikely to identify any problems that could not be easily rectified, but if any significant issues were to arise Members would be informed.

Options

20. Advisory Panel members have the following options to consider: -
 - Option (a)** - To approve, in principle, the proposals as shown in **Annex B**, and authorise area-wide local consultation to be carried out in conjunction with the advertisement of the necessary Traffic Regulation Order.
 - Option (b)** - To reject the request for a 20 mph Zone to be introduced.

Analysis

21. The speed survey results suggest that the introduction of a 20 mph Zone on Eastfield Avenue is unlikely to have a significant impact on overall traffic speeds, including the speed of most buses. However, the presence of 20mph signing could have some positive effect in moderating the speed of the small minority of drivers who may occasionally travel through the area too fast and cause the most concern to local residents. Therefore creating a 20mph Zone it is likely to be seen as a positive enhancement to existing traffic calming scheme by many residents, and is known to be supported in principle by the local Ward Councillors.
22. The introduction of a 20 mph Zone would also be a relatively inexpensive and simple scheme to implement. However, the benefits of the scheme are considered to be small, and must be weighed against an estimated implementation cost of around £15,000. The initial consultation has also shown that the necessary “gateway” features would be unpopular with some of the residents living nearby.
23. Creating a 20mph Zone requires a formal Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) to be put in place covering the reduced speed limit. As a minimum this would need to be advertised locally via on-street notices and in the local Press. However, a leaflet drop to all households in the affected area is also recommended to ensure everyone is aware of the proposal and has chance to comment before a final decision is taken.

24. In view of continuing local concerns over traffic speeds, and recognising that there would be some potential benefits in creating a 20mph Zone, option (a) is recommended. The next step would be further area-wide local consultation on the proposal, linked to formal advertising of the necessary TRO, followed by a report back to facilitate a decision on the scheme. To save some time, and thereby give Officers a realistic chance of implementing the scheme within the current financial year, it is proposed to delegate authority to the Director and Executive Member for City Strategy to consider the consultation feedback, including any objections to the Traffic Regulation Order, and make a decision on the scheme being progressed. The implementation of the scheme before then end of March 2007 would also be subject to the availability of funding (around £15,000 needed) in the 2006/07 Capital Programme (which is due to be reviewed under another item on this agenda).

Corporate Priorities

25. The introduction of a 20mph Zone should help to improve general road safety in the area. Reduced traffic speeds can also be a factor in encouraging more people to walk and cycle. Therefore the scheme should make a small contribution to the corporate priority which seeks to **“increase the use of public and other environmentally friendly modes of transport”**. It is also expected that the scheme will lead to less traffic noise and vibration problems for residents, thereby tackling the perceived nuisance behaviour of drivers travelling at inappropriate speeds through the area. In this way the scheme also has the potential to make a small contribution to the council priority which seeks to **“reduce the actual and perceived impact of violent, aggressive and nuisance behaviour on people in York”**.

Implications

Financial

26. The costs involved in further scheme design, consultation, and TRO advertisement can be accommodated from existing budget allocations within the 2006/07 Capital Programme. However, as explained in paragraph 24, implementation of the scheme before the end of March 2007 would require an additional £15,000 to be identified for the scheme as part of the current review of the 2006/07 Capital Programme (to be considered under another agenda item). If the scheme cannot be afforded this financial year, an implementation budget of £15,000 would need to be put forward as a spending option when the 2007/08 Transport Capital Programme is considered.

Human Resources (HR)

27. None

Equalities

28. None

Legal

29. The City of York Council, as Highway Authority for the area, has powers under the following Acts and associated Regulations to implement the measures in this report:-
- Highways Act 1980
 - The Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984
 - The Road Traffic Act 1988

Crime and Disorder Information Technology (IT)

30. None

Property

31. None

Risk Management

32. There are considered to be no significant risks associated with the proposal.

Recommendations

33. That the Advisory Panel advise the Executive Member to:
- (i) approve, in principle, the scheme as shown in **Annex B**,
 - (ii) authorise further area-wide local consultation on the proposed scheme, including advertisement of the necessary Traffic Regulation Order,
 - (iii) delegate authority to the Director and Executive Member for City Strategy to make a decision on the scheme progressing, including the making of the necessary Traffic Regulation Order (TRO), following consideration of the consultation feedback, including any objections to the TRO, at an Officer In Consultation (OIC) meeting.
 - (iv) to include the implementation of this scheme as a spending option when the 2006/07 Transport Capital Programme is reviewed (under another item on this agenda) or, if this is not possible, to be considered it when the 2007/08 Transport Capital Programme is determined.

Reason: To help address local concerns over traffic speeds.

Contact Details

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Report Approved Date 29/11/06

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Wards Affected: Haxby and Wigginton

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Eastfield Avenue (Haxby) – Proposed 20 MPH Zone – report to the Planning and Transport (East Area) Sub-Committee on 9 February 2006.

Annexes

Annex A – Current Traffic Calmed Layout and Location Plan

Annex B – Proposed 20mph Signing and Gateways