
Meeting of Executive Members for City Strategy and Advisory Panel

10 December 2007

Report of the Director of City Strategy

PETITION FROM RESIDENTS OF NORTH MOOR ROAD RE HUNTINGTON PRIMARY SCHOOL SAFETY ZONE

Summary

1. This report advises Members of the receipt of a petition from 16 residents who object to having the current speed humps, which form part of the Huntington Primary School Safety Zone, adjacent to their properties. They claim that they are continually disturbed by heavy vehicles, causing properties to shake and vibrate whenever their wheels clip the edges of the humps. Although the residents recognise the requirement for measures to be in place to reduce traffic speeds outside the school, they are asking the Council to consider alternative measures that will not cause distress to local residents.
2. Members are asked to consider the options outlined in this report, and approve the recommendation of this report not to make changes to the current arrangements.

Background

3. In December 2001, the Planning and Transport (North-East Area) Sub-Committee approved a package of measures to improve road safety around Huntington Primary School. The proposals sought to address the problems of speeding traffic and pedestrian safety in the vicinity of the school. The scheme involved the introduction of a 20mph School Safety Zone with traffic calming measures. The layout of this scheme is shown in **Annex A**.
4. Since implementation in 2002, the traffic calming measures have reduced vehicle speeds and improved pedestrian safety. In particular, the speed table introduced adjacent to the main pedestrian entrance to the school provides the School Crossing Patrol Warden with a safer and less intimidating location from which to operate. Speed surveys indicate that average speeds through the Safety Zone are around 22mph compared to around 33mph without any measures in place.
5. A review of the scheme was conducted during 2004. This highlighted problems with parking congestion within the Zone and proposals to introduce parking restrictions were developed. A public consultation exercise was conducted in August 2004, and four residents of North Moor Road raised concerns about the vibration effects of traffic riding over the traffic calming features within the Zone.

At that time, the residents claimed that cracks had appeared in the walls of their properties as a result of traffic induced ground borne vibration from buses and larger vehicles. Some also claimed that the vibrations were noticeable in their properties, and that this situation was having a detrimental effect on their quality of life.

6. To gain an appreciation of the situation, Officers and a local Ward Councillor met with two residents in June 2004. During the visit (which lasted approximately an hour and a half), a wide range of vehicles were observed to pass over the speed cushions, including buses and heavy goods vehicles. None of the Council representatives experienced any perceptible vibration levels, and therefore concluded that the situation was not causing a significant nuisance problem. Some minor cracks were observed where a ceiling coving met a wall, but these were thought very unlikely to be linked to traffic vibrations.
7. However, residents felt that things could be improved if motorists were made more aware of the traffic calming measures through the use of additional road markings and improved signing. Officers agreed it was possible to do this, but warned that this might not achieve a significant improvement in driver behaviour.
8. In October 2004, the Planning and Transport (North-East Area) Sub-Committee approved the proposed measures to enhance the existing School Safety Zone. This included placing school warning signs on yellow backing boards, applying additional markings to the tops of the speed cushions, and the introduction of parking restrictions to manage parking congestion outside the school. These measures were subsequently introduced in the early part of 2005, and are shown in **Annexes B** and **C**.
9. Since then, no further complaints or concerns were raised by residents about vibration levels until early September 2007, when a previous complainant contacted Officers claiming that vibration levels had become significantly worse. In response, one of the Officers that previously visited the residents in July 2004 went again to assess the situation.
10. The Officer's assessment is that the levels of vibration experienced had not significantly worsened since the previous visit just over three years ago. From sitting on a stool in one of the bedrooms at the rear of the property, where the resident considers the worst effects to be experienced, only minor effects could be detected. These included a delicate ornament quivering occasionally (this was placed on a window ledge), and what sounded like a creak from the roof timbers. However, the Officer did not feel any significant vibrations through the floor. It should be noted that the nearest traffic calming feature, a pair of speed cushions, is approximately 20m from the front wall of the property on North Moor Road. There are many properties within the York area that are located much closer to traffic calming measures, and yet very few complaints about vibration effects have been received. In a small number of cases, the Council has previously conducted vibration monitoring at some properties where the measures have been much closer to the property, but all the results have shown low levels of vibration. Indeed, extensive research, both nationally and here in York, has shown that vibration levels linked to traffic calming schemes

are far below those that are likely to cause structural damage (usually by at least a factor of 10 below that level). Nevertheless, it is known that some people are perceptive to low levels of vibration and minor effects, such as ornaments rattling, can be alarming and irritating. Therefore, this is a drawback that must be balanced against the benefits of traffic calming.

11. During the course of the assessment, the resident of North Moor Road notified the Officer of his intention to submit a petition to the Council regarding residents' concerns about the adverse effects of the speed cushions. The petition was subsequently received and registered at the Council in September 2007. A copy of the petition is attached as **Annex D**. The residents who have signed this petition live in the area surrounding a pair of speed cushions situated on North Moor Road (directly opposite No.13). The petition is mainly from those living on North Moor Road opposite Garth Road, but also from residents of Garth End, and from those residing at the end of Pear Tree Close.

Options

12. There would appear to be two basic options, which are outlined below:

Option One – Do nothing;

Option Two – Make alterations to the scheme to reduce traffic vibration levels.

Analysis of Options

13. The residents have already stated that they accept the principles of the School Safety Zone and the associated traffic calming measures. Officers consider that the speed cushions in question are an important feature, which is needed to control entry speeds into the Zone. The resultant reduction in speed at this point is crucial, given that it prepares motorists in advance of the speed table, which the School Crossing Patrol Warden uses to assist children in crossing the road.
14. From the two aforementioned assessments conducted at No.13 North Moor Road, Officers consider that the vibrations experienced are already at very low levels. In considering the way forward under these circumstances, Officers consider it important that any actions to modify the scheme should represent good value in terms of the benefits gained against costs incurred, and crucially, must not reduce the effectiveness of the existing School Safety Zone.
15. With this in mind, Officers have considered reducing the reported levels of vibration. The following approaches have all been considered:

Vertical Traffic Calming Measures - all forms of vertical traffic calming measure are likely to cause some vibration, so it is not considered that any alternatives to the existing speed cushions would be appropriate under the circumstances.

Horizontal Traffic Calming Measures - horizontal traffic calming measures, such as chicanes, appear to be a feasible option, which could achieve the desired reduction in vibration, whilst maintaining an effective speed reduction

scheme. However, the implementation of chicanes is expensive in comparison to speed cushions, and they can create other problems associated with the necessary priority working arrangements, such as aggressive driver behaviour. In addition, the introduction of this measure into the existing layout would mean that the limits of the Safety Zone would need to be extended, which would require the advertisement of a revised Speed Limit Order. This is because Officers consider that a build-out located in the same position as the existing cushions to be replaced would not be suitable, due to the close proximity of Garth Road (approximately 17 metres away), which would make right turns from this side road potentially hazardous.

Other Measures - Dummy cushions, Vehicle Activated Signs and other warning signs have also been considered, but Officers feel that none would provide an adequate level of speed reduction to maintain an effective School Safety Zone.

16. The suggestion in the petition of finding an alternative measure to replace the speed cushions has thus been considered, and although there are obviously strong feelings held by nearby residents about the negative aspects in relation to traffic induced vibration, Officers consider that the vibration effects are not at a high enough level to warrant making changes to the layout.

Member Views

Ward Members

17. Keith Hyman, Keith Orrell and Carol Runciman have been made aware of the petition and asked for their views on the matter, but as yet are still to make comments. If these are received, they will be reported at the meeting.

Other Members

18. Councillors Ian Gillies and Tracey Simpson-Laing have also been made aware of the petition and asked for their views on the matter, but as yet are still to make comments. Again, if these are received, they will be reported at the meeting.

Corporate Priorities

19. Retaining the existing traffic calming measures will ensure that the speed of traffic outside Huntington Primary School continues to be reduced. This is considered to be an essential safety measure, particularly on the approach to the speed table crossing point, which helps to encourage local people to walk and cycle more. Therefore retaining the scheme should contribute to two of the Council's Corporate Priorities, which aim to "Increase the use of public and other environmentally friendly modes of transport", and "Improve the health and lifestyles of the people who live in York, in particular among groups whose levels of health are the poorest."

Implications

Financial/Programme

20. No funding provision would be required, assuming that the Officer's recommendation is approved (in accordance with Option One above). Funding provision, perhaps up to £15,000 would need to be made within the 2008/09 Capital Programme, if Members consider that Option Two (modifying the scheme) should be supported.

Human Resources (HR)

21. There are no human resources implications.

Equalities

22. There are no equalities implications.

Legal

23. There are no legal implications.

Crime and Disorder

24. There are no crime and disorder implications.

Information Technology (IT)

25. There are no information technology implications.

Property

26. There are no property implications.

Risk Management

Risk Category	Impact	Likelihood	Score
Physical	Very High	Remote	5
Financial	Low	Possible	6
Organisation/Reputation	Low	Highly Probable	10

27. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy, the main risks that have been identified in this report are physical harm linked to road traffic accidents (Physical), higher than expected construction costs (Financial), or damage to the Council's image and reputation because the proposals may remain unpopular with many people (Governance). Measured in terms of impact and likelihood, the risk scores have all been assessed at less than 16. This means that at this point the risks need only to be monitored, as they do not provide a real threat to the achievement of the objectives of this report.

Recommendations

28. That the Advisory Panel advise the Executive Member to:

- a) Approve Option One (a 'do-nothing' approach) and inform the residents of the decision taken.

Reason: To retain a form of effective traffic calming outside the primary school in order to maintain low vehicle speeds and control traffic speeds on the approach to the speed table crossing point, thereby creating a safer environment for school children and village residents.

Contact Details

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Report Approved



Date 21 Nov 2007

Specialist Implications Officer(s)

Patrick Looker, Finance Manager, City Strategy.

Wards Affected: Huntington and New Earswick

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

"Huntington 20mph School Safety Zone" – report to Planning and Transport (North-East Area) Sub-Committee meeting on 3 December 2001

"Huntington 20mph School Safety Zone" – report to Planning and Transport (North-East Area) Sub-Committee meeting on 14 October 2004

Annexes:

Annexes A, B, C & D