
Meeting of Executive Members for City Strategy and Advisory Panel

11 December 2006

Report of the Director of City Strategy

SKELTON SPEED MANAGEMENT SCHEME

Summary

- 1 This report advises Members of options for amending the speed limit on the A19 in the vicinity of Skelton Village, following additional feasibility work requested by the Planning and Transport (East Area) Sub-Committee back in February 2006. The relative merits and cost implications of each option are discussed, and a decision is sought on the preferred way forward.

Background

- 2 In response to concerns from local residents, the Parish Council and Ward Councillors about vehicle speeds on the A19, and requests for a reduced speed limit, a feasibility study was included in the 05/06 Capital Programme.
- 3 Subsequently traffic and speed surveys were carried out as well as a detailed analysis of accident data.
- 4 The speed data indicates that the existing national speed limit of 60mph is being observed by most drivers on this section of the A19. When considering setting the level of a speed limit the 85th percentile measurement is used. This is the speed at or below which 85 out of 100 vehicles are travelling in free-flowing conditions. The average 85th percentile speed on the A19 was 57mph (this excluded the periods when slow moving or queuing would affect the survey figures).
- 5 The analysis of the accident data over a five year period showed there to be clusters of accidents around the access to the Ramada Jarvis hotel (one serious and 4 slight), the St Giles Road/Stripe Lane junctions (two serious and one slight), and the Fairfields Drive junction (three slight).
- 6 These key findings led to the development of a range of options (detailed below), which were considered, by the Planning and Transport (East Area) Sub Committee on 9 February 2006.

Scheme Options Presented to the Planning and Transport (East Area) Sub-Committee on 9 February 2006

- 7 Based on the speed limit and accident considerations the following proposals and options were developed for consideration.

A Local Safety Scheme (LSS) (see Annex One) to address the specific accident problems

- 8 The proposals focussed on improving the advance warning of the junctions by the use of additional signing and clearance of vegetation to improve sight lines. The costs were estimated to be in the region of £20,000 to £25,000.

60mph speed limit

- 9 Retain the existing 60mph speed limit. This level is appropriate to the nature of the route and current traffic speeds and road layout. However it would not address the concerns of Skelton residents on speed of traffic on the A19.

50mph speed limit (see Annex Two)

- 10 Lower the speed limit to 50mph from a point just north of Church Lane to a point just north of the Outer Ring Road. The scheme would include appropriate gateway signing, red surfacing and 50mph roundels as road markings. Repeater signing throughout the length of the 50mph area would be required. The repeater sign locations could also be treated with red surfacing and 50mph roundels as road markings to reinforce the speed limit to passing traffic. This scheme should be largely be self-enforcing and, whilst not likely to reduce average speeds by much, is likely to reduce numbers going significantly above the 50mph speed limit. It could be accommodated within the existing layout without physical alterations, and implementation costs would be in the order of £20,000 to £25,000.

- 11 **40mph speed limit - Scheme A (see Annex Three)**

Lower the speed limit to 40mph from a point just north of Church Lane to a point just south of the Ramada Jarvis access. Realign and narrow the carriageway of the A19 through the Skelton area, introducing a curved alignment to reduce sight lines and scaling down the junction layouts to conform to current 40mph design standards. Introducing local widening at the Stripe Lane and the Ramada Jarvis accesses to accommodate full right turning lanes. Costs would be in the region of the order of £500,000. This is a very costly scheme involving substantial highway alterations, but should significantly change driver behaviour and achieve a self-enforcing 40mph speed environment.

40mph speed limit - Scheme B (see Annex Four)

- 12 In view of the high costs of scheme A, cheaper ways of achieving a largely self-enforcing 40mph environment were explored. This led to the scheme B proposals. Under this proposal, the existing road alignment would be retained, but the carriageway would be narrowed where possible. In particular, this would involve the removal of the acceleration and deceleration lanes in the vicinity of the Fairfields Drive junction, and the scaling down of the junction itself. The scheme would include appropriate gateway signing, red surfacing and 40mph roundels as road markings. Repeater signing throughout the length of the 40mph area would be required. The repeater sign locations could also be treated with red surfacing and 40mph roundels as road markings to reinforce the speed limit to passing traffic. Costs would be in the region of £150,000. This scheme is still costly and would not be as self-enforcing as scheme A.

Consultation on the Original Scheme Proposals

- 13 As the scheme options were only in a preliminary stage of development at that time, consultation was limited to key interested parties. The feedback is summarised below.

External Bodies

Skelton Parish Council

- 14 The above proposals were presented and discussed with Skelton Parish Council on 13 December 2005. Their views were as follows: -
- They would ideally like to see a 40mph restriction on the A19, but without extensive alteration to the physical characteristics of the road, which they think, are unnecessary for this to work effectively.
 - They would strongly oppose any scheme that included the removal of the current acceleration and deceleration lanes at the Fairfields Drive junction. They consider that this would be a retrograde step. In particular, they consider that the removal of the acceleration lane would greatly increase the difficulty villagers experience when accessing the A19 from Fairfields Drive.
 - Of the options presented, they prefer the 50mph speed limit as a compromise solution. They consider a reduction of the speed limit to 50mph, along with the proposed high profile signing and junction safety improvements, would be a positive step forward.

North Yorkshire Police

- 15 The views of the Police were as follows: -
- They support the 60mph speed limit option, because the retention of the existing 60mph limit is considered to be appropriate to the nature of the route and current traffic speeds.

- They do not support the 50mph speed limit, because of general reservations on the introduction of 50mph speed limits. The Police contend that there are enforcement difficulties in introducing a speed limit so close to the national speed limit of 60mph, and are therefore against their introduction at any location in the North Yorkshire Police area.
- They fully support the 40 mph speed limit Scheme A, because the proposed major modifications to the road alignment and junction layouts should ensure that a 40mph speed limit would be largely self-enforcing.
- They could support the 40mph speed limit scheme B, but have doubts over it being sufficiently effective to achieve a self-enforcing environment. Therefore their support would be conditional on the understanding that: -
 - Speeds would be closely monitored after the introduction of the speed limit, and further measures, such as speed-activated warning signs to alert drivers if they are exceeding the speed limit, would be introduced.
 - If, after the introduction of these additional measures, there was still a large-scale abuse of the 40mph limit, the 40mph speed limit would be rescinded, or the large-scale realignment of the A19 shown in Scheme A would need to be implemented.

Current Situation

- 16 At the Planning and Transport (East Area) Sub-Committee on 9 February, 2006 the LSS proposals were approved in principle, and Members requested that the necessary funding for these to proceed be sought in the 06/07 Capital Programme.
- 17 A sum of £25,000 was subsequently allocated in the 06/07 Capital Programme for the LSS. A scheme has been drawn up and local consultation has been carried out. However there is a problem in finalising these proposals until the speed management issue is resolved, because this could affect the size and position of the signs used within the LSS.
- 18 On the speed management issue Members had concerns with the proposed 50mph limit, which was recommended by officers as the best compromise solution. After a lengthy discussion, the following was agreed:
-

That Officers develop an alternative scheme based on a 40mph speed limit (Scheme B), with additional refuge islands, but with the existing acceleration and deceleration lanes being retained where possible, and that Officers consult with interested parties on the amended scheme and report back on the feasibility of this option.

- 19 A sum of £5,000 was subsequently allocated in the 06/07 Capital Programme to cover this further feasibility work.

Further Feasibility Study

- 20 As requested, Officers have again looked at the feasibility of reducing the speed limit to 40mph. However, for a 40mph speed limit to be successful engineering measures are considered essential to change the physical characteristics of this section of the A19. The challenge is to balance this with the Parish Council's strong objection to the removal of the existing acceleration lane at the Fairfield's Drive junction. Officers have looked at the provision of additional refuge islands but are of the opinion that the position of the various side roads and private accesses severely restricts where extra ones could be installed. Also a small number of extra refuges would not significantly change the existing character of the road. Having looked closely at the situation the following option has been developed (scheme C).

40mph speed limit - Scheme C (see Annex Five)

- 21 This is an amendment to scheme B where a shortened acceleration lane is kept at the Fairfield's Drive junction, rather than its total removal. Further consultation has taken place with the Police on this revised proposal. They are concerned that by keeping even a reduced acceleration lane the road will remain very wide over a significant distance which will still give drivers the impression that this is a high speed road, which it currently is. In the opinion of the Police the full removal of the acceleration lane is fundamental to the scheme being effective.
- 22 The Police also consider that the retention of a reduced length of acceleration lane in a 40mph limit raises significant safety issues. If a vehicle travels along the acceleration lane and tries to join the A19 it would only have a relatively short distance to merge into the traffic flow. Given that the A19 is only a single carriageway, there is no scope for approaching traffic to move over to allow the driver in from the acceleration lane. Hence there could be real conflict, with unexpected braking by drivers in the acceleration lane or on the main road. This would create a high risk of rear end shunt accidents. They consider the acceleration lane should be removed and replaced by a standard give way junction
- 23 It is also a concern that vehicles will bunch more closely together with the imposition of a 40mph limit. This will create smaller gaps in the main road traffic flow and would make it more difficult to join the A19 from Skelton village.
- 24 The local **Ward Members** have been made aware of Officers' views following this further feasibility work, and their comments invited (*responses awaited*).

Options

- 25 Advisory Panel members have the following options to consider: -
- Retention of the existing 60mph speed limit.
 - The introduction of a 50mph speed limit.
 - The application of a 40mph speed limit with engineering measures to help make it self-enforcing (i.e. one of the three different 40mph schemes described above).

Analysis

60mph speed limit

- 26 The retention of the existing limit would not address the concerns raised.

50mph speed limit

- 27 Introducing a 50mph speed limit would go some way towards addressing the speed issues in the vicinity of the village. It is affordable in that it can be accommodated without expensive highway alterations. It is supported by the Parish Council if a 40mph scheme cannot be achieved, but it is opposed by the Police.

40mph speed limit

- 28 Given current speeds, changing the physical characteristics of the road, particularly around the Fairfields Drive junction, is considered by Officers and the Police to be an essential element of a scheme to reduce the speed limit to 40mph. The most effective scheme, (scheme A), would involve substantial highway alterations, and would be very expensive to implement (around £500,000). This scheme is supported by the Police, but would be opposed by the Parish Council who do not wish to see the Fairfields Drive junction downgraded.
- 29 The lower cost 40 mph option, (scheme B), is likely to be quite effective and has conditional support from the Police. The main problems are cost (still £150,000) and the removal of the acceleration lane, which is opposed by the Parish Council.
- 30 The new 40mph proposal, (scheme C), retains a shortened acceleration lane and the Police are very much against this on safety grounds and effectiveness. Although the cheapest of the 40mph options, the scheme would still cost around £125,000 to implement. Such a high level of expenditure to reduce speeds on this stretch of the A19 is considered by Officers to be unjustifiable, given that the main accident problems are being tackled via other specific junction improvement measures under the Local Safety Scheme programme.

- 31 Based on the above analysis, Officers consider that the 50mph speed limit would offer the best overall solution. The proposed 50mph scheme, involving the use of high profile signing and road markings, should reduce the number of vehicles been driven at inappropriate speeds along this section of the A19. This should make a contribution to improving overall road safety, and also go some way to addressing local concerns. At an estimated cost of £20,000, it is considered to offer reasonable value for money. It would also not affect the current layout of the Fairfields Drive junction, which the Parish Council is very keen to retain. Although North Yorkshire Police have a policy of not supporting 50mph limits, such limits are widely used elsewhere and, under national guidance on the setting of speed limits, the A19 at Skelton meets the necessary criteria. Furthermore, because the scheme should be largely self-enforcing, it will not put additional enforcement demands on Police resources.

Corporate Priorities

- 32 The introduction of a 50mph speed limit 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 help overcome 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 corporate priority which seeks to **“reduce the actual and perceived impact of violent, aggressive and nuisance behaviour on people in York”**.

Implications

Financial and Programming

- 33 Within the current financial year, it is possible to develop a preferred speed management scheme to more detailed design and carry out consultation, including the advertisement of a Traffic Regulation Order. If a 40mph solution was to be progressed, implementation of the scheme could not realistically take place until late April because of the scale of engineering works to organise. However, if the 50mph scheme were to be progressed it should be possible to implement it sooner, and perhaps within the current financial year. To help save some time and make this a realistic option, 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 a scheme before the end of March 2007 would also be subject to the availability of funding in the 2006/07 Capital Programme (which is due to be reviewed under another item on this agenda). If the preferred scheme is not implemented within the current financial year, the necessary funding will need to be put forward as

a spending option for consideration as part of the process of determining the 2007/08 Transport Capital Programme.

- 34 In addition, because of the problem explained in Paragraph 17 over finalising the Local Safety Scheme design until the speed management solution is known, there is also a possibility that this scheme will not be built by the end of the current financial year. If this happens, the necessary funding will need to be put forward as a spending option for consideration as part of the process of determining the 2007/08 Transport Capital Programme.

Human Resources (HR)

- 35 None.

Equalities

- 36 None.

Legal

- 37 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

- 38 A Traffic Regulation Order to lower the speed limit would be required for either a 40 or a 50mph speed limit.

Crime and Disorder Information Technology (IT)

- 39 None.

Property

- 40 None.

Risk Management

- 41 There are considered to be no significant risks associated with the scheme going ahead or not.

Monitoring

- 42 The traffic situation along the route will be monitored after the implementation of the scheme. If a lower speed limit is introduced, speed surveys will be carried out to assess the effectiveness of the measures. The three-year injury accident history will be monitored as part of the Local Transport Plan process.

Recommendations

- 43 That the Advisory Panel advise the Executive Member to:
- (i) Approve the 50 mph speed limit scheme, as shown in Annex Two, as the preferred solution, subject to funding.
 - (ii) Authorise further consultation on the preferred 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 consider it when the 2007/08 Transport Capital Programme is determined.

Reason: To help address local concerns over traffic speeds.

Contact Details

Joint Authors:

Mike Durkin

Project Manager

Tel (01904) 553459

John Goldsbrough

Senior Engineer

Tel (01904) 553464

Specialist Implications Officers

Financial Implications

Tony Clarke

Capital Programme Manager

Tel No. 551641

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Damon Copperthwaite

Assistant Director

(Development & Transport)

Report Approved



Date 29/11/06

Wards Affected: Skelton, Rawcliffe and Clifton Without

All

For further information please contact the authors of the report.

Background Papers

Planning and Transport (East Area) Sub Committee - 9 February 2006
Agenda Item 8 - Skelton Speed Management Scheme.

Annexes

Annexes One to Five to this report are large sheet plans, and are therefore only available for viewing at the Guildhall on request. Please contact Sarah Kingston, Democracy Officer – Tel: (01904) 552030. These plans will be available at the meeting.

Copies are available for Members in the Members' Library.