
Decision Session
Executive Member for City Strategy

1 December 2009

Report of the Director of City Strategy

Strensall Road, Towthorpe – Extension of 40mph speed limit

Summary

- 1 This report advises the Executive Member of proposals to extend the existing 40mph speed limit on Strensall Road at Towthorpe further south. The scheme is intended to improve road safety around the Towthorpe Road and Towthorpe Moor Lane junctions.

Recommendation

- 2 That the Executive Member defer alterations to the speed limit along Strensall Road, to enable a comprehensive review of speed issues in the area to be undertaken.

Reason : To respond to consultation feedback and objections to the extension of the 40mph speed limit.

Background

- 3 The 2009/10 Transport Capital Programme includes funding to carry out a 'village accessibility review' (VAR) in response to representations by members of the public and Members, concerning road safety and access issues at several locations linked to villages around the City.
- 4 Officers carried out investigations and feasibility studies at eight key junctions identified in the review, in order to establish a list of improvement schemes prioritised for delivery.
- 5 A report discussing the findings of the review was presented to the Executive Member at the Decision Session in July, highlighting the main issues, and recommending potential mitigation measures which could be taken forward for implementation.
- 6 That report included an evaluation of the Towthorpe Road and Towthorpe Moor Lane junctions with Strensall Road at Towthorpe. Concerns have been expressed in relation to high traffic flows and speeds combining to hamper traffic turning right, either into or out of the side roads. Since 2006 there have been five road accidents involving casualties in the vicinity of the junction,

mainly as a result of vehicles turning into or out of Towthorpe Moor Lane colliding with traffic travelling along Strensall Road.

- 7 To address these issues officers put forward the following outline proposals :-
- Locally widen Strensall Road to provide a right turn lane into Towthorpe Moor Lane, which should make the turn manoeuvre safer and reduce delays for through traffic.
 - Provide a pedestrian refuge island crossing point on Strensall Road, to ease access to and from bus stops, and introduce a traffic calming feature.
 - Extend the 40mph speed limit on Strensall Road south of the junctions with Towthorpe Road and Towthorpe Moor Lane.
- 8 The above options were considered together with two other VAR schemes, and only the 40mph limit extension option was prioritised for implementation during 2009/10, subject to more detailed design work and consultation. The outcome of this further work is presented in the following paragraphs.

Scheme design for consultation

- 9 The outline scheme developed for consultation is explained and illustrated in the information leaflet shown at **Annex A**.
- 10 The main feature is the introduction of an extension to the 40mph speed limit along Strensall Road, with enhanced signing and road markings.

Consultation

- 11 The information leaflet was delivered to 23 properties in the vicinity of the proposed scheme. It was also sent to relevant Councillors, the local Parish Councils, the emergency services, plus other external organisations and groups, offering them the opportunity to comment or express their views on the proposals.
- 12 In conjunction with the above consultation period, a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) was advertised for the proposed 40mph speed limit extension, which required any formal objections to be submitted by Friday 30 October 2009.

Ward Member views

- 13 **Councillor Kirk** had not responded at the time this report was written.
- 14 **Councillor Wiseman** is concerned that the road between the proposed extension of the 40mph speed limit and Earswick will remain at the national speed limit of 60mph, dropping suddenly to the 30mph limit. She feels strongly that the whole length of Strensall Road should be included in the new limit of 40mph, as safety on this stretch is compromised by the speed of traffic. She considers that this would not present a significant additional enforcement burden for the police.

Councillor Wiseman has also submitted an objection to the Traffic Regulation Order on this basis.

Officer response

The length of road between the proposed southern extent of the 40mph limit and the existing 30mph limit at Earswick does not meet the criteria required by the relevant national guidance which is used when setting local speed limits. In addition, the Police have stated they would be against a 40mph limit extended through to Earswick, partly because it is unlikely that this reduced speed limit would be observed, and it wouldn't be a priority for them to enforce. However, the Police may be minded to support a 40mph speed limit where this would be introduced in conjunction with other measures to reduce traffic speeds.

It is also a concern that having a 40mph speed limit from Earswick through to Strensall could diminish the localised effect of reduced vehicle speeds which the current scheme is trying to achieve in the vicinity of the junctions.

Parish Council views

- 15 **Earswick Parish Council** fully support the current proposals.

However, they would like to request that the 40mph speed restriction is extended for the whole length of Strensall Road down to Earswick, where the 30mph restriction begins. They consider that excluding a short 0.4 mile stretch of road between The Hollies and Earswick could be very confusing for motorists. In their view it would be of benefit to the environment to have a continuous speed restriction and make it much safer for the many cyclists who use Strensall Road.

Officer response

Please refer to response above to similar comment made by Councillor Wiseman.

- 16 **Strensall with Towthorpe Parish Council** fully support the current junction proposals.

However, they also support the view of Earswick Parish Council that the 40mph speed limit should be extended further south, up to the existing 30mph limit in Earswick.

In addition, Strensall with Towthorpe Parish Council consider that the proposed 40mph speed limit should be extended through the hamlet of Towthorpe, where a road accident occurred recently.

Officer response

Please refer to the response above concerning extending the 40mph limit to Earswick

With regard to Towthorpe hamlet, traffic speeds on Towthorpe Road are an ongoing issue, and have been the subject of previous assessment by officers and the Police. At that time it was not considered appropriate to introduce a

reduced speed limit, but attention was given to warning motorists of the sharp bends along this road.

However, given that the currently proposed 40mph limit would extend part way into Towthorpe Road, but the section through the hamlet would remain derestricted at 60mph, this situation could be reviewed to establish the most appropriate speeds limit for the circumstances. In addition, the prospect of further development in Towthorpe would change the characteristics of the area, and hence might affect what is the most appropriate speed limit.

Other Member views

- 17 **Councillor D'Agorne** supports the proposals
- 18 **Councillor Gilles** has stated that he endorses the comments by Ward Councillor Wiseman, who feels strongly that the 40mph speed limit should include the whole derestricted length of Strensall Road.
- 19 **Councillor Potter** is happy to support the scheme

Resident comments

- 20 Four residents responded in support of the scheme, but all considered that the 40mph limit should be extended further south along Strensall Road, up to the existing 30mph limit at Earswick, because otherwise the road between the existing '30' and the proposed '40' would remain as derestricted at 60mph.

Officer response

Please refer to the response above concerning extending the 40mph limit to Earswick

External organisation comments

- 21 The **Police** are not supportive of the current scheme and have submitted a formal objection to the TRO based upon the following reasons :-
- The consultation leaflet states that '*Police records show that since 2006 there have been six accidents involving injury at Towthorpe Moor Lane junction*'. This is not correct, there have been only five slight injury accidents within this time period, none of which have speed identified as a contributory factor. There is a sixth slight injury accident, 100 metres further south of the junction involving a turning manoeuvre into a private entrance.

Officer response

*The leaflet text should have said “..There have been six accidents involving injury, **mainly** at Towthorpe Moor Lane junction.” and therefore is not strictly correct. However, given that five accidents have occurred at the junction, it is not thought that this minor error affects the justification for looking to implement safety improvements at this location.*

- There is no speed data available past the point of the junction. Therefore to suggest that a 40 mph speed limit would reduce vehicle speed is an assumption, vehicle speed could be at or below the proposed limit in any case.

Officer response

Vehicle speed survey data is available for the section of Strensall Road just to the north of the junctions in question.

Despite the absence of vehicle speed readings at the junctions it is not unreasonable to expect that reducing the speed limit from derestricted at 60mph to 40mph would influence driver behaviour, and has the potential to make it safer and easier to turn into or out of side roads.

- If speed data was available to show this restriction is required to slow vehicles down near to the junction, the road at this point in any case, does not fit the DfT guidelines for a 40 mph speed restriction and further engineering measures should be in place to achieve this reduction.

Officer response

What the road looks like to road users and its geometry are key factors when setting speed limits. Drivers are likely to expect and respect lower limits, and be influenced when deciding on what is an appropriate speed, where they can see there are potential hazards, such as at staggered junctions.

Guidance advises that speed limits should not be used to solve problems of isolated hazards, for example a single road junction, but at a staggered junction on a single carriageway rural road it is considered appropriate for drivers to adopt a speed that is different from the national speed limit.

Also, in situations where the criteria for a 'village' are not met, because there is a lesser degree of development, or where engineering measures are not practicable or cost effective, a reduction from the national 60mph limit is considered appropriate, and traffic authorities can consider lower limits of 40 or 50mph.

- Visibility issues around the junction have not been addressed, this is a primary cause of the collisions and the proposed imposition of the speed limit does not adequately address these issues.

Officer response

Visibility is acknowledged to possibly be a contributory factor in some of the recorded injury accidents, and the physical improvement measures developed earlier would address this.

Unfortunately, only the proposed speed limit extension was approved for implementation this year. However, it is hoped that as and when the necessary additional funding becomes available other measures which improve visibility might be introduced in due course.

- The extension of the speed limit along Strensall Road, away from the village, could in turn lead to an increase in vehicle speed in the present speed restricted area. As the gateway feature will have moved, drivers will be more likely to disregard the limit past the barracks. This would increase the risks to vulnerable people such as school children in the area who cross the road in the vicinity of the Army quarters.

Officer response

Options were developed earlier in the year to address road safety concerns on Strensall Road past the barracks and near bus stops opposite Strensall Park. These proposed local widening of the road, to accommodate a pedestrian refuge crossing point at the bus stops, which would have also introduced a traffic calming measure.

However, when these proposals were considered in conjunction with other junction improvement schemes, by the Council's Executive Member for City Strategy at the Decision Session in July, only the speed limit extension on Strensall Road was approved for implementation this year

- It is understood that the original scheme proposed involved engineering measures, but the implementation of these has been postponed. Our viewpoint is that engineering is crucial to the scheme and are fearful that without any of these provisions there will be no benefit gained and the scheme could well fail.

Officer response

A number of options to improve road safety at the Towthorpe Road and Towthorpe Moor Lane junctions were developed earlier in the year. These included locally widening Strensall Road to provide a right turn lane and refuge islands at pedestrian crossing points, with the speed limit along the sections affected reduced from 60mph to 40mph in order to make it easier for drivers to turn at the junctions or for pedestrians to cross the road.

When these proposals were considered in conjunction with other junction improvement schemes, by the Council's Executive Member for City Strategy at the Decision Session in July, only the speed limit extension was approved for implementation this year. However, it is hoped that as and when the necessary additional funding becomes available the other measures can be introduced in due course.

- 22 The **Cycling Touring Club** support the scheme.
- 23 **York Cycle Campaign** support the changes being proposed.
- 24 **First Bus** are in favour of the scheme.

Road safety audit

- 25 A road safety audit Risk Assessment has noted that the scheme proposes relatively minor changes to a section of main road with side road junctions. Therefore, a Stage 1 (feasibility) audit is not required. However, a Stage 2

(detailed design) and a Stage 3 (scheme completion) road safety audit will be carried out, and any issues arising taken into account in the development of the proposals.

Options for the way forward

26 The options for the Executive Member to consider are :-

Option 1 - authorise implementation of the proposals shown at **Annex A**

Option 2 - approve for implementation an amended scheme plus any other changes to the proposals that the Executive Member considers necessary.

Option 3 – defer the current scheme and carry out a wider study of traffic speed and road safety issues in the area.

Option 4 - abandon the scheme

Analysis of Options

27 **Option 1** – would go part way towards addressing the road safety concerns and access issues highlighted by the earlier review.

28 **Option 2** – would provide similar benefits to Option 1, but could also take into account some of the factors arising from the consultation.

29 **Option 3** – would respond to concerns raised through the consultation and, hopefully, lead to more comprehensive road safety and speed management proposals.

30 **Option 4** – would not address the current issues, would not achieve Corporate Priorities related to scheme prioritisation, and could be viewed as failing to contribute to relevant aims within the Local Transport Plan.

31 Consultation has produced some positive support, together with useful feedback. There are clearly concerns relating to traffic speeds over a wider area than is covered by the current scheme, and the police have some reservations about the introduction of a 40mph speed limit without accompanying physical measures.

Officers therefore consider that it would be more effective to defer introduction of the proposed extension to the 40mph speed limit and carry out a comprehensive investigation of all the road safety issues on the roads linking with the particular junctions in question. This should enable development of the most appropriate package of measures to address the main concerns to be put forward for consideration as part of a future years programme. Hence, **Option 3** is recommended as the preferred way forward.

Further consultation on revised proposals

- 32 Information about the revised proposal to carry out a wider review was forwarded to relevant Councillors and the local Parish Councils, offering them a further opportunity to comment. Their responses are summarised below :-.

Ward Member views

- 33 **Councillor Wiseman** is pleased that we are recommending an investigation into road safety issues, but she would still prefer the proposed 40mph speed limit to go ahead anyway. She feels that it would be helpful to assess whether a reduced speed limit proves effective during the investigation, and this might reduce the cost of further measures in the future.
- 34 **Councillor Kirk** had not responded by the time this report was written.

Parish Council views

- 35 **Earswick Parish Council** had not responded at the time this report was prepared.
- 36 **Strensall with Towthorpe Parish Council** had not responded at the time this report was prepared.

Other Member views

- 37 **Councillor D'Agorne** supports the scheme being implemented now to address the accident problem, with subsequent monitoring of the scheme's impact, in conjunction with a road safety review, to determine whether a more comprehensive package of measures is required in the longer term.
- 38 **Councillor Gilles** had not responded at the time this report was prepared
- 39 **Councillor Potter** is concerned about a delay in taking action at a known accident location, and has enquired about the delivery timescales for the current proposals and the possible implementation of further measures.

Officer response

If it was decided to proceed with the speed limit extension, this would only involve relatively minor work on site, therefore, it is anticipated that the required signs and road markings could be implemented by early February.

Alternatively, if the speed limit extension is deferred, and a review undertaken this financial year, we would expect new proposals to be developed for consideration as part of the 2010-11 transport capital programme. If suitable funding became available in 2010-11, measures could then probably be implemented during the late summer of 2010.

Corporate Priorities

- 40 Extending the 40mph speed limit south to cover the two junctions in question would contribute to the following corporate objectives and priorities :-
- **Thriving City** – Implementing the measures outlined in **Annex A** should make it safer and easier for people in the Towthorpe and Strensall area to access opportunities and facilities in York and elsewhere.
 - **Safer City** – Implementing the measures outlined in **Annex A** should reduce road accidents and casualties by making turning into and out of the side road junctions with Strensall Road safer. The proposed reduction in speed should also make crossing the busy roads safer, particularly for those using bus stops in the area. .
- 41 The proposed scheme should also contribute to the aims of the Local Transport Plan 2006-2011 (LTP2), namely :-
- Reduce the levels of actual and perceived safety problems,

Implications

- 42 This report has the following implications
- **Financial** - £11k is included in the 2009/10 Transport Capital Programme for implementation of a scheme at the Strensall Road junctions. The current estimate for the proposed 40mph limit extension would be within that allocation.
- If the proposed 40mph speed limit extension is deferred, as recommended, the proposed wider area study could be funded within the current budget allocation. However, additional funding would need to be allocated in a future year's capital programme to cover the costs of implementing any scheme proposals arising from the study.
- **Human Resources (HR)** – There are no HR implications for the Council
 - **Equalities** – There are not considered to be any equality implications
 - **Legal** – City of York Council, as Highway Authority for the area, has powers under the following Acts and associated Regulations to implement improvements and any associated measures on the highway ;
 - The Highways Act
 - The Road Traffic Regulations and General Directions
 - The Road Traffic Act

A Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) is required for the proposed extension to the 40mph speed limit. Formal objections have been received in respect of the TRO and are referred to above.

The Police feel an extension of the speed limit along Strensall Road, away from the village, could in turn lead to an increase in vehicle speed in the

present speed restricted area. They also suspect that a 40mph speed limit through the junctions, without any accompanying physical measures, would not be observed, but have acknowledged that enforcement would not be a priority for them.

- **Crime and Disorder** – There are no crime and disorder implications expected
- **Information Technology (IT)** - There are no IT implications anticipated
- **Land and Property** – The proposed works would be within the adopted highway.
- **Other** – There are no other known implications at present

Risk Management

43 In compliance with the Council’s Risk Management Strategy, the main risks associated with this report are considered to be as follows :-

Strategic – If it is decided not to implement the proposals there is a risk that this could lead to an inability to meet the Council’s priorities, and some of the aims of the Local Transport Plan.

Physical – If it is decided to implement the proposals there are not thought to be any significant physical risks to achieving implementation on time.

Financial – This report relates to cost estimates based upon site surveys, investigations and preliminary design. There is a slight risk that the scheme costs may increase due to unforeseen circumstances, but this is not considered to be a significant financial risk.

Organisation / Reputation – There is a risk of criticism if a scheme which is prioritised for implementation during the current fiscal year and has been publicised is not delivered. However, there is also a risk of criticism if a scheme is implemented which has generated many concerns and objections through the consultation process.

Measured in terms of impact and likelihood, the risk score for each of the above risks has been assessed at less than 16, as indicated in the following table;

Risk Category	Impact	Likelihood	Score
Strategic	Low	Possible	6
Physical	Low	Possible	6
Financial	Low	Possible	6
Organisation / Reputation	Medium	Possible	9

The above scores indicate that at this point the risks need only be monitored, as they do not provide a real threat to the achievement of the objectives of this report.

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Report Approved



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Specialist Implications Officer(s)

There are no specialist officer implications

Wards Affected:

Strensall

All

For further information please contact the author of the report.

Background Papers:

“ *Village Accessibility Review* “ – Report of the Director of City Strategy
Decision Session : Executive Member for City Strategy - 7 July 2009

Annexes:

Annex A : Information leaflet (*intended for printing @ A3 then folded to A4 size*)
explaining and illustrating the scope and extent of the proposed scheme

A1 - Information leaflet : Front page explanatory text

A2 - Information leaflet : Inside illustration

A3 - Information leaflet : Back page explanatory text