

Liberal Democrat Group response to City Strategy Decision Session re 20mphs on 3rd May.

The Liberal Democrat Group recognises that 20mph schemes have an important role in traffic management in York; however, we do not believe that a 'blanket' approach is the best way forward. Put simply, we support targeted 20mph limits where they are really needed, not a blanket implementation across the whole City.

At present the Council follows this principle and implements what it considers to be the most appropriate speed limit on a case-by-case basis. Potential accident risks are taken into account and most schools and shopping areas now have 20 mph limits. In addition, traffic calming measures have been introduced in areas like Foxwood and Gale Lane where accident levels were high. The policy has contributed to a gradual reduction in the numbers killed or seriously injured on roads in York, with a fall from 119 KSI (killed or seriously injured) in 2001 to 62 in 2010. Plainly, this targeted approach appears to be working.

The evidence used to support a blanket 20mph approach from elsewhere in the country is mixed. On the issue of accident numbers, an analysis of the UK's first city-wide scheme in Portsmouth shows that the number of people killed or seriously injured on affected roads actually went up, not down, after the limit was lowered in 2007. While the number of people involved in less serious accidents did fall, this was during a period of national decline in road injuries and the DfT (Department for Transport) commissioned report concluded "casualty benefits greater than the national trend have not been demonstrated". The report also stated that there appears to have been no demonstrable impact on school pupil casualty numbers or trends following the introduction of the 20mph blanket speed limit scheme.

It should be remembered that overall 5 per cent of all accidents are caused by speeding and statistically there are very few killed or seriously injured in residential areas (in York or nationwide) and those that do occur, usually do so on a relatively random basis and cannot be attributed to specific speeding issues. The configuration of many of our roads means that average speeds don't exceed 20 mph anyway. So the introduction of a formal limit – apart from the cost – would make little practical difference on speeds. Indeed, the Portsmouth scheme saw an average reduction in mean speeds on all roads affected of just 1.3 mph.

The Portsmouth report demonstrated that a blanket 20mph zone does not necessarily cause a modal shift away from car use or significantly increase cycling and walking. The report states that "levels of car travel stayed similar" and "the introduction of the 20mph Speed Limit scheme

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made little difference to the majority of respondents in the amount they travelled by their chosen mode". Furthermore, existing pedestrian and cyclist respondents in Portsmouth stated the lowest levels of satisfaction with the scheme and its impact on their travel experience. Overall in Portsmouth, over half of those surveyed (54%) considered the scheme to have made no difference to speeds in their areas, with many highlighting the lack of proper enforcement of the zone.

On this issue of enforcement, Police have consistently said that they simply don't have the resources to routinely enforce such a limit. Instead they correctly intend to concentrate their resources on accident black spots. It was revealed earlier this year that Police in Oxfordshire have not issued a single ticket for breaking the 20mph limit in Oxford since the County Council spent almost £250,000 imposing the scheme in September 2009. This has led many in the City to claim that the scheme is useless if the Police don't prioritise enforcement. Given that there is an overwhelming need to concentrate limited enforcement resources on known accident black spots and the roll-out of speed limits at locations which are a potential source of accidents (e.g. outside schools); surely it is wrong to ask the Police to divert resources away from these areas and request them to enforce unnecessary speed limits.

A blanket 20mph approach would also be costly to implement with some estimates putting the figure at around £1 million. Cambridge, a significantly smaller city than York, has recently earmarked an initial £460,000 fund for their scheme. In these days of reduced resources it is becoming ever more necessary to spend money where it has the most result, rather than on a blanket approach. The cost of the blanket approach will include signage, which can be intrusive and have a detrimental impact on the look of our streets. Labour have publicly stated that they wish to reduce street clutter and street furniture; however a blanket 20mph will inevitably lead to more. Indeed, a number of reports, including in Portsmouth, have indicated that sign clutter at junctions has been a recurring problem and complaint where blanket zones have been introduced.

On emissions and fuel consumption, a DfT report states that while "there appears to be limited agreement over the effects of traffic calming on vehicle emissions.... area-wide studies (in a number of countries) show a reasonably consistent increase in fuel consumption and HC emissions due to traffic calming". Furthermore, a 2009 study in the *Journal of Transportation Research* concluded that "(traffic calming) measures can result in significantly higher fuel consumption and

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emission rates when drivers accelerate aggressively. (We) also found that newly installed speed lumps could be responsible for extra fuel consumption." DFT statistics show a significant increase in fuel consumption for motorists at 20mph compared to 30mph and the AA estimate that cutting the speed limit from 30 mph to 20 mph on the wrong roads can increase CO2 emissions by more than 10%. On average, petrol car fuel consumption in 20mph zones can worsen by 5.8 miles per gallon (1.3 miles/litre) meaning residents will see their fuel costs rise under a blanket 20mph system. Again, we would stress that in some areas it is crucial for drivers to abide by 20mph speed limits whatever the negative consequences, but in other areas it is simply unnecessary and means drivers spend more on fuel, emissions increase and there is a corresponding fall in air quality for no corresponding increase in road safety.

In conclusion, in the long-term the Liberal Democrat Group are opposed to a blanket approach to 20mph speed limits that sees any 'local streets' included by default. In the short-term, we would like a detailed breakdown of all affected roads and all costs.

References:

http://www.theaa.com/public_affairs/news/20mph-roads-emissions.html

<http://www.highways.gov.uk/knowledge/1801.aspx>

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/publications/speed-limits-portsmouth/>

<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1361920909000169>

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