

REPORT: Executive Board

DATE: 16 June 2016

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Community & Resources

PORTFOLIO Transportation

SUBJECT: Objection to Proposed 30mph Speed Limit, Lunts Heath Road, Widnes

WARDS: Farnworth

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To report on an objection that has been received, following public consultation, on a proposed Traffic Regulation Order to introduce a 30mph speed limit on part of Lunts Heath Road, Widnes. Details of the proposed Order is supplied in Appendix 'B', accompanied by a plan at Appendix 'C'.
- 1.2 The report was considered by the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board (E&UR PPB) on 23rd March 2016, which supported the recommendation to make the Order and agreed that the matter be referred to the Executive Board for resolution.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION that:

- 1) **The Board approves the proposal to make a Traffic Regulation Order to implement a 30mph speed limit on those roads defined in Appendix 'B'; and**
- 2) **The objector be informed of the decision.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Continuing housing development adjacent to Lunts Heath Road has led to requests from residents and a ward member that the speed limit be reduced to 30mph over the full length of the route, as retention of a 40mph speed limit on the section in question was inappropriate. Land to the south is now completely occupied by housing estates with multiple access points, and on-going building on the north side has resulted in there now being only a 300m length of frontage that is not occupied by residential developments. Accordingly, in December 2015, this Council advertised its intention of introducing a 30mph speed limit as requested.
- 3.2 Traffic counts are available for this route from the years 2002 and 2013 as follows:

Location	Date	Ave. daily 2 way flow
Wilmere Lane to Finsbury Park	July 2002	7831
Adjacent to Grosvenor Rd. (Church View)	July 2013	9442

The average daily flow has thus increased by 20% between the years 2002 to 2013 on Lunts Heath Road, whilst nationally over the same time period the number of licensed

vehicles has increased by 14.5%.

- 3.3 The national speed limit on lit roads such as Lunts Heath Road is 30 mph, however current DfT advice on setting speed limits states that “general compliance needs to be achieved without an excessive reliance on enforcement.” The mean speed of traffic recorded during the 2013 survey was 32mph, indicating that there would be a high degree of compliance with a reduced speed limit of 30mph.
- 3.4 Between the three years 2012 to 2014 inclusive, there were no road traffic collisions involving injury reported to Cheshire Police over the section of Lunts Heath Road for which a 30mph limit is now being recommended.
- 3.5 In keeping with its now essentially residential nature, the proposed speed limit would tie in with other areas to the east (Derby Road) and the western section of Lunts Heath Road which already has a 30mph speed limit. Drawing no. 9110 in Appendix ‘C’ shows the length to be covered by the restriction.
- 3.6 During the advertised consultation period, one objection was received, from a Lunts Heath Road resident, which is reproduced in Appendix ‘A’ with personal details removed. The objection relates to interpretation of the DfT’s Transport Circular 01/2013 (Setting Local Speed Limits) and whilst quoting extensively from this document, the focus of the objection is that application of a 30mph speed limit to Lunts Heath Road is not realistic or justified and that this Council has not complied with the DfT guidance.
- 3.7 The latter is not the case as Lunts Heath Road is a lit, single carriageway road which has become residential in nature through adjacent development and on which the existing mean traffic speed has been independently recorded at 32mph. Therefore, the introduction of a 30mph limit is entirely in line with current DfT guidance.
- 3.8 The formal consultations on the proposed speed limit change involved site notices, a notice in the local newspaper and the delivery of individual letters to affected households. The proposal has the support of Ward Councillors.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The cost of the proposed speed limit revision if implemented would be approximately £2000 which would be charged to the Traffic Management Revenue Budget.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL’S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children & Young People in Halton

There are no direct implications on the Council’s ‘Children and Young People in Halton’ priority.

6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

There are no direct implications on the Council’s ‘Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton’ priority.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

There are no direct implications on the Council’s ‘A Healthy Halton’ priority.

6.4 A Safer Halton

The proposed speed limit reduction could serve to restrict vehicle speeds and thus the severity of any road traffic collision that may occur on Lunts Heath Road.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

There are no direct implications on the Council's 'Halton's Urban Renewal' priority.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 There is a variable and uncertain road safety risk associated with not introducing the proposed speed limit reduction, in that higher speeds could contribute to the severity of any accident that occurred on the route. The section of Lunts Heath Road in question has a very low incidence of traffic collisions.

7.2 The proposal was brought forward at the request of residents and their ward Councillor.

8.0 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY ISSUES.

8.1 There are no direct equality and diversity issues associated with this report.

9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 Report to Environment & Urban renewal Policy & Performance Board, 23rd March 2016 (Item 46) – Objection to Proposed 30mph Speed Limit, Lunts Heath Road, Widnes

Objector's name & address details withheld.

21 December 2015

Dear Mr Parr,

THE HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL (LUNTS HEATH ROAD, WIDNES) (30 M.P.H. SPEED LIMIT) ORDER 2015

I wish to register my objection to the above named Order. My reason for objecting is that I have extensive experience of using Lunt's Heath Road at all times of day and in all conditions and consider the proposed speed limit reduction to be unrealistic and unjustified for the road in question. I consider that the proposed limit contravenes the advice given by central Government on the setting of speed limits.

I note the Council's statement of reasons for proposing the Order to be as follows:

"A reduction in the speed limit from 40 mph to 30 mph due to the changing nature of the route which is now largely residential."

My understanding is to identify, justify and progress a change in speed limit, Halton Council is required to conform to:

"The Department for Transport Circular 01/2013 (SETTING LOCAL SPEED LIMITS) "

which in SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION has the following statement as the first of the Key Points:

"Speed limits should be evidence-led and self-explaining and seek to reinforce people's assessment of what is a safe speed to travel. They should encourage self-compliance. Speed limits should be seen by drivers as the maximum rather than a target speed."

This is repeated and extended in Paragraph 3 - *"Effective speed management is part of creating a safe road management which is fit for purpose. It involves many components designed to work together to require, encourage and help road users to adopt appropriate and safe speeds below the speed limit, speed limits are a key source of information to road users, particularly as an indicator of the nature and risks posed by that road both to themselves and to other road users. Speed limits should, therefore, be evidence-led and self-explaining and seek to reinforce people's assessment of what is a safe speed to travel and encourage self-compliance. They should be seen by drivers as the maximum speed rather than a target speed at which to drive irrespective of conditions. It is often not appropriate or safe to drive at the maximum speed limit."*

The requirement for Halton Council to conform to this Circular is specified:

Paragraph 5 states – *"Local speed limits are determined by traffic authorities having regard to guidance issued by the Department for Transport."*

Paragraph 8 – *"This guidance is to be used for setting all local speed limits on single and dual carriageway roads in both urban and rural areas."*

The Circular identifies considerations in setting local speed limits, and these include:

Paragraph 23 – *"A study of crashes, their severity, causes and frequency, together with a survey of traffic speeds..."*

Paragraph 26 – *"Where there is poor compliance with an existing speed limit on a road or stretch of road the reasons for the non-compliance should be examined before a solution is sought. If the speed limit is set too low for no clear reason and the risk of collision is low, then it may be appropriate to increase the limit."*

The Circular identifies Underlying principles, including:

Paragraph 27 – *"The aim of speed management policies should be to achieve a safe distribution of speeds consistent with the speed limit that reflects the function of the road and the road environment. This should imply a mean speed appropriate to the prevailing road environment, and all vehicles moving at speeds below or at the posted speed limit, while having regard to the traffic conditions."*

Paragraph 28 – *"The estimated collision and injury savings should also be an important factor when considering changes to the local speed limit. Another key factor when setting a speed limit is what the road looks like to the road users."*

Paragraph 30 – *"The following will be important factors when considering what is an appropriate speed limit:*

- *history of collisions;*
- *road geometry and engineering;*
- *road function;*
- *composition of road users;*
- *existing traffic speeds;*
- *road environment."*

Paragraph 31 – *"Before introducing or changing a local speed limit, traffic authorities will wish to satisfy themselves that the expected benefits exceed the costs."*

"The speed limit appraisal toolkit will help assess the full costs and benefit of any proposed schemes"

Paragraph 35 – *"Mean speed and 85th percentile speed (the speed at or below which 85% of vehicles are travelling) are the most commonly used measures of actual traffic speed. Traffic authorities should continue to routinely collect and assess both."*

SECTION 5: THE SPEED LIMIT APPRAISAL TOOL

Paragraph 67 – *"In addition to enabling a local highway authority to decide whether or not to introduce a new speed limit scheme, the tool encourages transparency in the decision making process. It also provides a facility that encourages local highway authorities to adopt a more consistent process."*

Paragraph 73 – *"The output spreadsheets should be considered as a starting point for developing the appraisal into a case that can be readily understood and appreciated by a range of people."*

The Council has not provided any evidence in line with the above Guidance paragraphs to justify a change in the speed limit of an A-road which is an important west-east route along the northern edge of Widnes. There are few roads available which provide this connection, which the Council must have been aware of when agreeing to additional housing sites but no accommodation was made for this.

As indicated in the Guidance, the natural selection of a speed maximum by a driver depends on the condition of the road and its route. Lunt's Heath Road is wide, open and with few direct accesses on to it. Further, there is a grass verge between the road and the pavement along much of its length, distancing vehicles from pedestrians. At busy times of day, the expected speed will automatically reduce because of the impact on driving conditions. That is to say that the vast majority of drivers will amend their driving pattern to take into account any difficulties but when those difficulties are not present, normal progress can be made at a speed which is appropriate to the conditions.

If the Council has conformed to Government guidelines and has the data to support their case, I would be grateful to receive this and will, of course, give it due consideration. In the meantime, drivers have a right to expect speed limits to be applied on a consistent and rational basis across the country. Furthermore, unrealistically low speed limits will lessen drivers' respect for all limits, to the detriment of road safety generally.

I would be grateful if you will acknowledge receipt of this objection and advise me of the means by which it will be formally considered by Council Members.

Yours faithfully,

Mr David Parr, Chief Executive
Halton Borough Council
Municipal Building
Kingsway
WIDNES
WA8 7QF

Appendix 'B'

Details of Proposed Order:

30mph Speed Limit.

Location	Description	Justification
Lunts Heath Road, Widnes	From the junction with Derby Road to a point 240 metres east of the junction with Cronton Lane. (Links to existing 30mph speed limit further west)	Reduction from 40mph due to changing nature of the route which is now largely residential.

Associated revocations: None

Exemptions: Standard

Statement of Reasons: As above.

Plans: Drawing number 9110 for deposit only. (Appendix 'C' below)

Date to be advertised: ASAP

Date to be effected: ASAP

Advertising code: 5400 1625 2544

