

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET MEMBER FOR

DATE: 9 MARCH 2016

LEAD OFFICER: ANDREW MILNE, AREA HIGHWAYS MANAGER (NW)

SUBJECT: REVIEW OF A322 SPEED LIMIT DECISION TAKEN BY SURREY HEATH LOCAL COMMITTEE



SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

During the 10 December 2015 Local Committee (Surrey Heath) meeting, the Committee agreed to support a speed limit reduction on the A322 from 40mph to 30mph, between Red Road (B311) and the Surrey Heath Borough boundary with Woking. This decision was contrary to the existing County speed limit policy, and the views of both Surrey Highways and Surrey Police. The Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Flooding, is asked to review this Committee decision following consideration of the information presented in this report and accompanying documents.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that the decision taken by Surrey Heath Local Committee to reduce the speed to 30mph not be endorsed and that the speed limit remains at 40mph.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

The decision taken by the Surrey Heath Local Committee is contrary to existing County Council policy and the professional views of both Surrey Highways officers and Surrey Police.

Based on comparative examples, introducing the proposed reduction in speed limit from 40mph to 30mph is likely to result in an increase in vehicle speeds and an increased risk to pedestrians and other highway user groups.

Without physical traffic calming measures, which are largely not appropriate for this class of road, this would also lead to high levels of non-compliance, and ongoing enforcement issues for Surrey Police.

DETAILS:

First Heading/Business Case

1. Surrey Heath Local Area Committee received a petition from residents of West End in March 2015. The petition requested the introduction of a pedestrian phase in the traffic lights at the junction between Guildford Road (A322) and Brentmoor Road as well as reducing the speed limit along Guildford Road from 40mph to 30mph.

2. A formal response to this petition was received by the Local Area Committee at the following public meeting (July 2015) explaining that a traffic survey would be necessary to formally determine the suitability of the proposed speed limit. During the same meeting, a petition from residents of Bisley was received requesting a reduction of the speed limit through the Bisley section of Guildford Road (A322) from 40mph to 30mph. Due to the combination of these two reports, it was agreed that a traffic survey would be undertaken on Guildford Road between the junction with Red Road and the Borough boundary with Woking.
3. A traffic survey was undertaken in six locations along the identified section of road in early November 2015. The results of the survey were included in the petition responses received by the Local Area Committee in December 2015.
4. The data obtained from location 4 was discounted, as the speed recording equipment was placed incorrectly and was approximately 150m from the roundabout between Guildford Road and Church Lane. The results were abnormally low compared to the other results obtained. It was determined that location 4 did not give a true representation of traffic speeds along that section of road.
5. The speed limit was then assessed using the current Setting Local Speed Limits policy.
6. Although results showed that average speeds along built up sections of the road could be appropriate for a lower speed limit, if the speed limit was lowered for these sections only it would result in numerous changes in speeds along the length of road and could result in confusion for highway users. In addition, these lengths would be over a shorter distance than the minimum 600m recommended in the current policy.
7. Based on the Policy, if the speed limit was reduced to 30mph between the junction with Red Road and the borough boundary with Woking, three of the five average speeds recorded would have been above the maximum average speed for the speed limit to be lowered without physical measures to enforce the speed limit. In addition, average 85% of speeds along the full length stay constantly around 40mph.
8. Reducing the speed limit from 40mph to 30mph would require the removal of repeater signs along the full length, together with terminal signs at junctions with adjoining 30mph roads. Drawing on comparative examples where a 40mph speed limit was reduced to 30mph, reduction in such signage has resulted in an increase in vehicle speeds and necessitated further intervention measures to encourage compliance with the speed limit, together with ongoing Police enforcement. It is also considered likely that removal of terminal signs on 30mph roads adjacent to Guildford Road could potentially result in speeding issues along those roads as well.
9. Vertical physical traffic calming measures are not suitable for the A322, and even if suitable would be likely to be in excess of £100,000 due to the length and class of road involved.

CONSULTATION:

10. Surrey Police were consulted on the proposal after the traffic survey results were received. They did not support the proposal and raised the specific points outlined below:
- a. The high 85% indicates that drivers will drive at 40mph in free flow conditions.
 - b. Reducing the speed limit without physical measures would not lower vehicle speeds.
 - c. With an excess of 20,000 vehicles a day, the predicted reduction of 1mph to average speeds would result in some 3,000 vehicles a day travelling between 8 and 10mph over the speed limit.
 - d. The proposed reduction would require the removal of the repeater signs along the full stretch of road. As a result, there would be no positive reminder signing the speed limit along the stretch of road. Similar areas where the speed limit was reduced (example A283 Witley) resulted in an initial increase in overall speeds. It required additional enforcement and signage to return speeds to the same level that were measured before the speed limit reduction was introduced.
 - e. The considerable reduction in police officers engaging in speed enforcement, combined with Surrey's own policy, mean that speed limits should be self enforcing.
11. Surrey Police have also indicated that they would officially object to the proposal if it is taken forward without traffic calming features to permanently enforce the lower speed limit.

RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:

12. Reducing the speed limit along the identified section of Guildford Road is likely to result in an increase in vehicle speeds and a high level of non-compliance with the speed limit.
13. Given the intention of Surrey Police to object to the proposal, it is unlikely that the Police would undertake speed enforcement.
14. Based on comparative locations within Surrey where similar reductions have been introduced, a substantial amount of signage would need to be installed to mitigate the impact of the reduction. Physical road narrowing may also be required to reduce vehicle speeds to those appropriate for a 30mph speed limit. Given the length of the identified section, physical measures are likely to be prohibitively expensive and certainly in excess of £100,000.

Financial and Value for Money Implications

15. The basic cost of reducing the speed limit from 40mph to 30mph is likely to be circa £10,000.

16. Assuming the reduction will have a similar effect to comparative schemes, additional signage may cost in the region of £40,000 to bring average speeds back to their present level.
17. Vertical traffic calming features would not be suitable for this road. However, if they were to be introduced this would cost well in excess of £100,000.
18. Given the nature of the road, appropriate physical measures to reduce vehicle speeds along Guildford Road would also cost in excess of £100,000.
19. Assuming the capital budget for the Surrey Heath Local Committee remains unchanged, it would be possible to fund the reduction and additional signage but the introduction of further physical measures is unlikely to be affordable without the provision of additional funding or deletion/deferral of planned works.

Section 151 Officer Commentary

20. Financial implications are explained in paragraphs 15 to 19. Initial costs associated with reducing the speed limit, including additional signage, could be met from the Local Committee's existing budgets. Costs associated with additional physical measures, should they be necessary, could only be accommodated within the Committee's existing budget by deleting or deferring other works.

Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer

21. If the request to lower the speed limit is approved, changes to speed limits are introduced through the making of a Speed Limit Order under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

Equalities and Diversity

22. It is an objective of Surrey Highways to treat all users of the public highway equally and with understanding. Appropriate and proportionate consultation is carried out with residents, and bodies representing particular user groups, to ensure that the interests of all highway users are considered.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

- There is no fixed timescale for deciding this item.
- The outcome will need to be communicated to the Surrey Heath Local Committee and the Surrey Highway NW Area Team.

Contact Officer:

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Consulted:

No specific consultation has been carried out for this report. Consultation was carried out with residents, Local Members, and Surrey Police as recorded in the accompanying reports presented to the Surrey Heath Local Committee.

Annexes:

Annex 1 - Local Committee (Surrey Heath) 10 December 2015 Item 12 – Petition response – A322 at West End Speed Limit

Annex 2 - Local Committee (Surrey Heath) 10 December 2015 Item 13 – Petition response – Bisley Speed Reduction Report

Sources/background papers:

- All background papers used in the writing of the report should be listed, as required by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985.
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