

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

LOCAL COMMITTEE (ELMBRIDGE)



SURREY

DATE: 4TH DECEMBER 2017

LEAD OFFICER: NICK HEALEY, AREA HIGHWAY MANAGER (NE)

SUBJECT: A245 STOKE ROAD – SPEED LIMIT

DIVISION: COBHAM

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

This report summarises the outcome of the speed assessment for Stoke Road, for the lowering of the speed limit from 40mph to 30mph, which was reported to Committee in September 2014.

In 2014, the speed limit was lowered from 40mph to 30mph. Extensive utility works on Stoke Road have delayed assessment of the effects of the change in speed limit. In 2017 surveys have shown that traffic speeds have increased, potentially increasing the likelihood of traffic collisions occurring, and potentially worsening the consequences of traffic collisions that do occur.

Following the assessment, in accordance with Surrey's speed limit policy, it is recommended, either that the speed limit be reinstated to 40mph, or that Committee commissions the development and implementation of suitable engineering measures to manage traffic speeds.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Local Committee (Elmbridge) is asked to:

- (i) Authorise the advertising of a Traffic Regulation Order to reinstate the 40mph speed limit that was in force up to 2014; **AND**
- (ii) Authorise the Area Team Manager, in consultation with the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Divisional Member to advertise the necessary legal notices, consider any objections, and if appropriate to confirm the changes, and that these changes be commissioned no later than the next Financial Year 2018-19, with funding allocated from the original CIL contribution and the parking surplus;
OR
- (iii) Set aside funding from the original CIL contribution and the parking surplus to investigate measures to reduce traffic speeds and report possible options back to Committee for review; **AND**
- (iv) Should viable measures be identified, identify appropriate funding and implement such measures and monitor the effects on vehicle speeds in line with Surrey's policy 'Setting Local Speed Limits'.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

Recommendations have been made based on Surrey's policy 'Setting Local Speed Limits', in consultation with Surrey Police's Road Safety and Traffic Management Team.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

- 1.1 In September 2014, following petitions by local residents, Elmbridge Local Committee agreed to implement a new 30mph speed limit on Stoke Road. The process followed the council's speed limit policy, which at the time had only recently been adopted in June 2014. The June 2014 policy is consistent with the approach to speed enforcement by Surrey Police and also Department for Transport guidance. Committee had previously considered reducing the speed limit under the previous policy.
- 1.2 Surrey Police support the Council's current policy and did not object to the proposal to reduce the speed limit. The setting of a suitable speed limit aims to ensure that the majority of drivers will naturally drive at the appropriate speed. This enables the police to target drivers that are deliberately driving at inappropriate speeds.
- 1.3 The change in speed limit was advertised and then implemented. The assessment process includes the monitoring and analysis of the speeds following the lowering of the speed limit. Until earlier this year it had not been possible to obtain representative data, due to the extensive roadworks. However, surveys on Stoke Road were undertaken in 2017.
- 1.4 In consultation with Surrey Police the impact of the lower speed limit was reviewed, in line with the speed limit policy. This involved speed surveys at consistent locations along the route, to enable comparisons of speeds before and after the change in speed limit.

2. ANALYSIS:

- 2.1 Speed data has been collected, using automatic traffic counters, as follows:
 - 'Before' speed data in March 2014
 - 'After' speed data in March/April 2017
 - Additional 'after' speed data in September 2017
- 2.2 Additional locations were surveyed in 2017, compared to 2014, in order to provide further information along Stoke Road.
- 2.3 Two electronic vehicle-activated signs (VASs) were installed in June 2017 in response to residents' requests. One sign faces eastbound traffic, located close to the junction with Brook Farm Road; the other faces westbound traffic, located close to the junction with Oak Road.
- 2.4 The before and after speed data is shown in Table 1 below, and also on the drawing shown in Annex A.

Ref.	Location	Date	Mean speed (mph)	
			Eastbound	Westbound
1	West of Pipers Close (lighting column No. 15)	2014	32.6	33.0
		March 2017	34.5	34.5
		Sept 2017	33.4	33.7
2	Between Oxshott Way and Fairmile Lane (lighting column No. 27)	2014	31.6	31.5
		March 2017	31.1	32.1
		Sept 2017	30.4	31.9
3	East of Chelsea training ground; 40mph section (equestrian warning sign)	2014	29.1	31.1
		March 2017	35.0	34.7
		Sept 2017	39.3	33.7
4	Tilt Common (on lighting column)	2014	Not measured	Not measured
		March 2017	32.5	32.4
		Sept 2017	32.5	31.5
5	Between Aspen Close and Vincent Road (on junction warning sign)	2014	Not measured	Not measured
		March 2017	29.9	30.5
		Sept 2017	30.4	31.2

Table 1 – speed survey data

- 2.5 The survey data shows that the mean speeds have increased, when comparing 2014 speeds with 2017 speeds. The exception to this is the measured eastbound speed between Oxshott Way and Fairmile Lane (location reference 2 in Table 1 and Annex A). Following the introducing the VASs eastbound speeds in Location 1 have reduced by approximately 1mph (March versus Sept 2017); westbound speeds in Location 1 have reduced by less than 1mph. In Location 2 Eastbound speeds have reduced by less than 1mph following the introduction of the VASs; westbound speeds at Location 2 have not significantly changed.
- 2.6 There is a well-documented statistical relationship that suggests that even an incremental increase in traffic speeds increases the likelihood and severity of casualties. Therefore the outcome of reducing the speed limit in Stoke Road has been a potential increase in the likelihood of traffic collisions occurring, and a potential worsening of the consequences of traffic collisions that do occur.
- 2.7 It may seem counter intuitive that a reduction in speed limit should result in an increase in traffic speeds. Experience suggests that the posted speed limit is only one of a number of factors that determines drivers' choice of speed. Speed limits are most effective when they coincide, from the drivers' point of view, with the environment the driver perceives. In the case of Stoke Road, the environment is semi-rural, with houses set back from the carriageway and generally concealed by vegetation; the traffic survey evidence suggests that this environment does not match drivers' expectations of what is an appropriate speed. Drivers generally expect to

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drive at 30mph in a busy town centre environment, but not in semi-rural locations.

- 2.8 Surrey County Council has recent experience in two similar semi-rural locations – Charlton Lane in Shepperton and Chantilly Way in West Ewell. At both these sites the speed limit was *increased* from 30mph to 40mph, and as a result mean traffic speeds *reduced*. In both these other cases, the traffic survey evidence suggests that the previous 30mph limits did not match the environment perceived by the driver, but that the new 40mph limits did match the environment, resulting in an improved level of compliance. Details of these projects have been published in reports to the Spelthorne Joint Committee and Epsom & Ewell Local Committee respectively.
- 2.9 The evidence suggests that within the extent of the new 30mph speed limit in Stoke Road, there is now a mismatch between the new 30mph speed limit, and drivers' perception of the environment. Generally speaking the level of compliance with a speed limit worsens where such a mismatch exists – this is seen in the results above.
- 2.10 There has been a marked increase in traffic speeds in the 40mph section to the east of the Chelsea training ground, especially for eastbound traffic leaving the new 30mph section. This suggests that the mismatch between the new 30mph speed limit and the environment may have resulted in a general disregard for speed limits in this area.
- 2.11 There is no evidence to suggest any change in the frequency or severity of collisions to date. Committee is reminded that there was no pattern of speed-related collisions prior to the change in speed limit. Committee should note that with the utility works following the change of speed limit in 2014 there has not been very much "normal" time to be able to observe a change in collision patterns.
- 2.12 Surrey Police have been involved with this project since its inception, and were invited to comment on the results of the speed surveys. Surrey Police's comments are presented in Annex B. In summary Surrey Police cannot support the continued implementation of a 30mph speed limit at the subject location.
- 2.13 In the context of the Council's police for setting local speed limits, the reduction in speed limit has not been successful. Therefore Committee now has two options:
- Reinststate the 40mph speed limit, or,
 - Develop and implement a scheme of engineering measures to encourage drivers to slow down.
- 2.14 In either scenario, traffic speeds would need to be surveyed following the change to ensure that traffic speeds are in keeping with the 40mph or 30mph speed limit.
- 2.15 The change of speed limit in Stoke Road from 40mph to 30mph was one of the first changes to be made under the Council's current policy for setting speed limits, which was adopted in June 2014. The current policy allowed for the speed limit to be reduced by simply changing the signs; under the

previous policy for setting speed limits, Committee had been unable to reduce the speed limit without first implementing engineering measures to reduce traffic speeds.

- 2.16 Therefore in the context of the previous speed limit policy a number of engineer options were considered with the objective of reducing traffic speeds, including road humps, traffic islands, roundabouts, and changes to the geometry. If Committee were minded to keep the 30mph limit, the next stage would be to review these options and implement engineering measures to encourage drivers to slow down. The costs for the options considered at the time would be in the range £50,000 to £250,000, depending on the combination of options implemented. The original feasibility report and associated drawings are available on request. It would cost approximately £5,000 to review the previous options, and complete the detailed design for a scheme of new engineering measures.
- 2.17 The cost of reinstating the 40mph limit is estimated to be £5,000.
- 2.18 The implementation of the 30mph limit was funded from a CIL contribution from Elmbridge Borough Council. There is approximately £3,000 left from this CIL contribution.

3. OPTIONS:

- 3.1 Committee has two options:
- Reinstatement the 40mph speed limit, or,
 - Develop and implement a scheme of engineering measures to encourage drivers to slow down.
- 3.2 In either scenario, traffic speeds would need to be surveyed following the change to ensure that traffic speeds are in keeping with the 40mph or 30mph speed limit.

4. CONSULTATIONS:

- 4.1 In the development of this project officers have worked in partnership Surrey Police, and have consulted the Divisional Member at key stages.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

- 5.1 The costs of the two options available to Committee are detailed in section 2 above.
- 5.2 If Committee chose to reinstate the 40mph speed limit, funding would need to be allocated from the parking surplus to be able to complete the reinstatement.
- 5.2 If Committee chose to develop and implement a scheme of engineering measures to encourage drivers to slow down, funding would need to be allocated from the parking surplus to identify a preferred scheme and

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complete the detailed design. Further funding would need to be identified to implement the scheme.

6. WIDER IMPLICATIONS:

Area assessed:	Direct Implications:
Crime and Disorder	Setting speed limits that are respected by the majority of drivers can contribute to the Police's ability to gather intelligence relating to serious criminal activity.
Equality and Diversity	It is an objective of Surrey Highways to take account of the needs of all users of the public highway.
Localism (including community involvement and impact)	The Local Committee prioritises its expenditure according to local priorities.
Sustainability (including Climate Change and Carbon Emissions)	No significant implications arising from this report.
Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children	No significant implications arising from this report.
Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults	No significant implications arising from this report.
Public Health	No significant implications arising from this report.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 7.1 The reduction of the speed limit in Stoke Road from 40mph to 30mph has not been successful. Traffic speeds have increased, potentially increasing the likelihood of collisions and the consequences of any collisions.
- 7.2 Committee must choose whether to reinstate the 40mph speed limit, or to develop and implement a scheme of engineering measures to encourage drivers to slow down.

8. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

- 8.1 Subject to Committee's decision, officers will make preparations to reinstate the 40mph speed limit, or to develop and implement a scheme of engineering measures to encourage drivers to slow down.

Contact Officer: Nick Healey, Area Highways Manager

Consulted: Surrey Police, the Divisional Member.

Annexes: 2

Sources/background papers:

- Previous reports to the Local Committee in September 2014, June 2011, and December 2009.
- Report to Cabinet Member in November 2012.
- Feasibility report, September 2013
- Surrey County Council's Policy "Setting Local Speed Limits", adopted in June 2014

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