

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**MEETING OF CABINET MEMBER – JOBS, ECONOMY AND
TRANSPORT**

15 July 2014

Report of the Strategic Director – Economy, Transport and Environment

**PETITION – THORPE PARISH COUNCIL – REQUEST FOR
RELOCATION OF SPEED LIMIT SIGNS**

(1) **Purpose of the Report** To inform the Cabinet Member of the results of an investigation undertaken following receipt of a petition requesting the re-location of speed limit terminal signs on the approaches to the village.

(2) **Information and Analysis**

Background

A request was received in March 2013 from Thorpe Parish Council to re-locate the speed terminal signs at both ends of the village, as they considered that the signs were '*too close to the village to give enough notice to serve the purpose required*'. An investigation was undertaken and the site inspected, and it was determined that the existing terminal signs were appropriately located and in accordance with Department for Transport (DfT) guidance.

The Parish Council replied in May 2013 that they did not agree with the decision to leave the signs in their current situation and they were further advised about the DfT guidance, including information about the link between the character of the road and the setting of speed limits/siting of terminal points.

A petition was subsequently submitted with a covering letter on 29 May 2014 which highlighted previous correspondence and the desire of the Parish Council to have the signs moved, and they again requested that the previous decision be reconsidered and overturned.

Site Details

Thorpe is a small rural village, the approach roads are relatively narrow and fully rural in character. They are also tortuous both steep and winding. The main road through Thorpe is through a very sparsely populated/built-up area and it is unlikely that it would meet the current DfT criteria for a 30mph speed

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limit. The main residential area is away from the main road located on a loop, (shown on the attached plan) and is unlikely to suffer from high vehicle flows and speeds.

Officer Comments

Whilst the concern of the petitioners is understandable, there is little factual evidence to suggest that there is an actual problem at this location.

There is a permanent traffic survey site on Wintercroft Lane which shows that the Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) is 1,338 (less than one vehicle per minute over the day). This flow is light, and is consistent with a village environment, although it is accepted that at weekends, particularly during the summer, the volume can be considerably higher. The average speed at this location is 29.7mph (this is within the derestricted area).

A recent analysis of the personal injury collision history for Thorpe indicates that there have been no injury collisions recorded.

The guidelines from the DfT indicate that the character of the road and existing speeds are very important in the setting of speed limits. As previously mentioned, the approach roads to Thorpe are fully rural in character, and even within the existing 30mph limit area, the character still remains predominantly rural.

The DfT states 'a principal aim in determining appropriate speed limits should, therefore, be to provide a consistent message between speed limit and what the road looks like, and for changes in speed limit to be reflective of changes in the road layout and characteristics.'

Where the speed limit commences at the village boundary, the village nameplate sign (prescribed in diagram 2402.1 of TSRGD 2002) and speed limit roundel may be mounted together. The combined sign should be located at the point where the speed limit starts, and it may be helpful if drivers can see housing at the same time as the signs, reinforcing the visual message for reduced speed'.

The existing signs are considered to be appropriately located. From the Spend Lane direction the terminal signs are sited prior to the first house within the village, thus visually giving a message to drivers of the need for reduced speed. Any further out and the signs would be surrounded by fields on both sides and there would be in drivers minds no reason to reduce speed. The signs are visible for some considerable distance and thus the claim of the petitioners that they are 'too close to the village to give enough notice' cannot be accepted.

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From the other direction, the signs are located prior to the roof of the first building being visible; again, any further out and the signs would be in a fully rural area, surrounded by fields, giving no visual clue to drivers of the need for reduced speed.

The DfT (for purposes of defining a village suitable for a 30mph speed limit) defines a village as having 20 fronting properties; this is not the case in Thorpe and it could therefore be argued that a 30mph speed limit in this village is inappropriately low. However, there are no current plans to increase the speed limit at this location.

It is the view of officers that the signs are sited in accordance with the guidance from DfT and this would appear to be confirmed by the fact that there is a lack of factual evidence to suggest an actual rather than perceived problem, the lack of a collision history and low measured speeds, even within the derestricted area. It is therefore recommended that the speed terminal signs remain in their current locations.

Although the average speeds through the area are not high, it is accepted that, in common with roads everywhere, there may be a minority of drivers travelling through the village who drive with little concern for the safety of other road users. This minority is very difficult to deal with, as the only thing likely to alter such behaviour is the threat of being stopped by the Police and prosecuted for an offence. This is unlikely to happen in such a rural area and, unfortunately, the relocation of speed signs is unlikely to make little difference to the behaviour of such drivers.

Local Members Comment

Councillor Spencer supports the petitioners in their endeavour to have the signs relocated, particularly in view of the location of the hotel and the refurbishment of a pub nearby. However, he appreciates that the sign locations have to be sited in accordance with DfT guidelines.

(3) **Financial Considerations** There are no financial considerations associated with this report.

(4) **Legal Considerations** The local traffic authority has power under section 84 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 to set local speed limits having regard to the guidance issued by the Department for Transport. This guidance is set out in Setting Local Speed Limits: Circular no. DfT circular 01/2013.

The procedure to be adopted when making orders under section 84 is set out in the Local Authorities' Traffic Order (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996 (the 1996 Regulations). The local authority must carry out a consultation and notice of the proposals must be given in accordance with

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Regulation 7 of the 1996 Regulations allowing at least 21 clear days for the receipt of written objections. Any objections received must be considered by the local authority.

Having considered all objections, the Council may determine to introduce the new speed limits. The Order will need to be formally made and advertised and the requisite signs erected. An Order shall not be made until after the last date for objections. No Order can be made more than two years after the date of publication of the notice of the proposals. No part of a Traffic Regulation Order can come into force before the date on which it is intended to publish a notice of making.

(5) **Key Decision** No.

(6) **Call-In** Is it required that call-in be waived in respect of the decisions proposed in the report? No.

(7) **Background Papers** Correspondence held on file within the Economy, Transport and Environment Department. Officer contact details - Dawn Bryan, extension 38695.

(8) **OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATIONS** That:

8.1 The request for the relocation of the 30mph speed terminal signs on the approaches to Thorpe village be refused.

8.2 The local Member and petitioners be informed accordingly.

Mike Ashworth
Strategic Director – Economy, Transport and Environment