

Agenda Item No. 4(a)

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

MEETING OF CABINET MEMBER – HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND
INFRASTRUCTURE

17 January 2017

Report of the Strategic Director – Economy, Transport and Communities

PETITION - HARD MEADOW LANE, ASHOVER – REQUEST FOR
REDUCTION IN SPEED LIMIT

(1) **Purpose of Report** To consider a petition requesting a reduction of the speed limit on Hard Meadow Lane, Ashover and seek agreement to the refusal of the request.

(2) **Information and Analysis** At the meeting on 4 October 2016, the Cabinet Member acknowledged receipt of a 14-signature petition requesting a reduction of the speed limit on Hard Meadow Lane, Ashover.

The petition reads as follows:

“We the residents of Hardmeadow Lane are seeking early action on your part to impose a revised lower speed limit on this lane.

As you are aware the current general speed limit of 60mph applies. We regard this as quite excessive and unsafe but even this limit is very often being exceeded putting other lane users at considerable risk. Apart from a short stretch of about 150m at its southern extremity there is no pavement and to make matters worse there are areas where there is no verge either and hedges encroach right into the lane. The lane is on local bus routes; it is well-used by local pedestrians walking into the village and is popular with walkers and cyclists visiting the area and is used daily by horse riders. It is in continuous use by local farmers with large tractors and trailers and other agricultural machinery. Morning and afternoon school-runs are particularly bad times. Due to bends and narrow sections there are several places where opposing vehicles have difficulty in passing each other.

We are aware of the difficulties you have in making changes to speed limits but notwithstanding such considerations safety concerns must surely be paramount and we therefore urge action before a serious incident occurs.”

Officer Comment

Hard Meadow Lane is an unclassified rural road, running for approximately 0.75 mile on a north-south trajectory between its junction with Milken Lane in the north and B6036 Hockley Lane in the south; generally accommodating only localised traffic. Roadside development remains sparse and intermittent throughout with approximately five fronting residential properties and a small number of field accesses; there is also a junction around its midway point with the unclassified Eastwood Lane.

Two bends are encountered at its northernmost point and again towards its southern end, which are appropriately signed with 'deviation of route' chevron boards. The road is further subject to a number of gentler bends which, whilst easily negotiated, will serve to keep speeds at an appropriate level.

The general lack of a footway is acknowledged but this is not unusual for rural roads of this nature. Furthermore, whilst the lane may be subject to increased traffic movements at peak times, observations have found that levels are not particularly high compared to similar routes and do not present undue road safety concerns. Given its rural nature, motorists should expect to encounter agricultural vehicles and vulnerable road users in the carriageway (i.e. pedestrians and cyclists) from time to time and should drive with this in mind as advised in the Highway Code.

Despite the petitioners concerns in regard to narrow sections and the potential conflict between opposing traffic flows, the carriageway is subject to a central white line system throughout (meaning it retains a minimum width of 5.5m) which will encourage lane discipline and reduce the risk of conflict. It is acknowledged that larger vehicles will have to negotiate passing traffic at lower speeds and with due care, and this also helps to regulate vehicle speeds.

Department for Transport (DFT) criteria, as contained in *Circular 01/2013 Setting Local Speed Limits*, provides a national policy on the appropriate setting of speed limits. The criteria dictates that on single carriageway rural roads, where development is sparse, the National Speed Limit is appropriate. A lower 50mph speed limit can be considered on roads which have a mixed function and a high number of bends, junctions or accesses. It is considered that the low number of bends, junctions and accesses encountered on Hard Meadow Lane precludes it from being considered for a 50mph speed limit and the current National Speed Limit remains appropriate.

Derbyshire Constabulary's Traffic Management Officer has been informed of the concerns raised by the petitioners and advises that they would not support the reduction of the speed limit to 50mph, citing that the current speed limit remains a realistic speed limit given the rural nature of the road.

A 7-day automatic speed survey, carried out on Hard Meadow Lane between 20-26 October 2015 revealed that the 85th percentile speed in both directions was 29mph (this is the speed at which 85% of drivers are travelling up to, but not above); with a mean speed of 24.8mph. Only 1 vehicle was recorded travelling in excess of 40mph. This data does not support the petitioners' claims of the speed limit being regularly exceeded and would suggest that the majority of drivers are driving appropriately for the road conditions here.

A review of the Police database, which records all collisions resulting in personal injury, reveals that there have been none on Hard Meadow Lane in the last three years (this being the standard test period for assessment).

The available data therefore does not indicate a road safety issue, speed related or otherwise, that would suggest that a reduced speed limit or any other intervention measure is required.

Local Member Comment

The Local Member, Councillor Barry Lewis, has been made aware of the content of the petition.

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

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered: legal, prevention of crime and disorder, equality and diversity, human resources, environmental, health, property, social value and transport considerations.

(4) **Key Decision** No.

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

(6) **Background Papers** Held on file within the Economy, Transport and Communities Department. Officer contact details – Paul Jameson, extension 38610.

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

7.1 The request for a reduced speed limit on Hard Meadow Lane, Ashover be refused.

7.2 The Local Member and lead petitioner be advised accordingly.

Mike Ashworth
Strategic Director - Economy, Transport and Communities