

REGULATORY COMMITTEE
10th NOVEMBER 2004

DEVIZES TOWN CENTRE 20 mph ZONE

Purpose of Report

1. To consider objections received and a recommendation from the Devizes Town Centre Joint Member Working Party to the proposed introduction of the 20 mph zone and associated traffic management features and to recommend that an alternative be explored.

Background

2. A report on comments received following public advertisement of the proposals for an enlarged 20 mph zone and associated traffic management features in Devizes town centre was presented to the Devizes Joint Member Working Party on 29th September 2004. The report set out the background to the advertised proposals and the comments received from members of the public. A copy of the report is attached at **Appendix A**.

3. On considering the report Joint Members resolved that:

The County Council's Regulatory Committee be advised that, based upon the results of the public consultation and their examination of the available statistics, the Working Party are of the view that:-

- (1) *a 20mph speed zone with associated traffic calming should be installed by Order in Station Road and Hillworth Road; and*
 - (2) *the proposals for Long Street and the Market Place should be withdrawn*
4. At the time of the preparation of this report nine further letters of comment had been received from residents of Long Street expressing their concern at the Joint Members' resolution. Copies of these nine letters, together with the 18 letters of objection and four of support received at the time of the public advertisement, are available in the **Members' Room** and from the Environmental Services Department prior to the meeting. Any subsequent letters received will also be made available in the **Members' Room**.

Main Considerations for the Council

5. The Committee has to consider the comments made, the contents of the report and the resolution of the Joint Members and agree a way forward for the scheme.
6. With regard to resolution (1), it is considered inappropriate to move forward with Station Road and Hillworth Road in isolation for a signed 20 mph speed limit by Order. It is considered preferable to investigate the whole of the proposed zone to identify those areas that meet the criteria for this type and level of limit.

7. It should be noted that there is a developer contribution available to fund traffic calming works in Hillworth Road. The contribution is insufficient to cover the number of features included in the advertised proposals but a lesser scheme to support the existing 30 mph limit could be achieved. However, it is considered that delivery of a scheme of this nature should be delayed until any investigation into a 20 mph speed limit by Order has been completed. Any scheme developed for Hillworth Road using the held contribution would be subject to a separate traffic order process to allow public comment.
8. Discussed at the Joint Members meeting but not recorded in the resolution was the subject of recorded pedestrian accidents and formal crossing facilities. **Appendix 5** of the report presented to Joint Members indicated the location of recorded pedestrian accidents for the three year period up to June 2004. The locations identified appear to coincide with pedestrian desire lines at points where regular carriageway crossing movements are known to occur. It is considered that pedestrian crossing movements should be investigated further with a view to identifying locations where formal crossing facilities would be of benefit.

Environmental Impact of the Recommendation

9. The abandonment of the proposals means that there will be no change to the environment in the town centre.

Risk Assessment

10. There is no significant risk to the County Council whether or not the zone and associated features are implemented.

Financial Implications

11. There is allocation in the current approved Local Transport Plan Integrated Transport budget to cover traffic management works, as approved by the County Council's Regulatory Committee in March 2004.

Options Considered

12. The options are to:-
 - (i) implement the proposals as advertised.
 - (ii) abandon the proposals.
 - (iii) investigate the provision of a 20mph speed limit by Order and formal pedestrian crossing features.

Reasons for Recommendation

13. It is considered that the proposed recommendation offers a balanced way forward in response to the objectors concerns and the Joint Members' recommendations.

Recommendation

14. That:-

- (i) The proposals for a 20 mph zone and associated traffic management features be abandoned.
- (ii) The provision of a 20 mph speed limit by Order and formal pedestrian crossing features be investigated.
- (iii) The objectors/supporters be informed accordingly.

GEORGE BATTEN

Director of Environmental Services

Report Author

DAVID THOMAS

Integrated Transport Manager

The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report:

None

WILTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM NO.

**DEVIZES TOWN CENTRE JOINT MEMBER WORKING PARTY
29th SEPTEMBER 2004**

DEVIZES TOWN CENTRE 20mph ZONE**Purpose of Report**

1. To consider objections to the proposed introduction of a 20mph zone and associated traffic management features and to seek a recommendation to the County Council's Regulatory Committee on a way forward for the scheme.

Background

2. The origins of the proposed enlarged 20mph zone in Devizes town centre can be traced back to the Devizes Community Area Transport Plan which was produced following consultation in 2000. In relation to the 20mph zone the Plan states:

The proposed extension of the 20mph zone within Devizes town centre, footway build-outs and refuges will provide more space and a safer environment for vulnerable road users such as pedestrians and cyclists.

3. The proposal for an enlargement to the existing 20mph zone has been subject to extensive consultation over a number of years. The last round of consultation took place during March and April 2003 and the results of this were the subject of a report presented to the Devizes Joint Members Group on 20th October 2003. For ease of reference a copy of the report, which sets out the generally supportive results of the consultation, is attached at **Appendix 1**.
4. In drawing up the proposals for the zone, the philosophy was that of providing the minimum number of features to comply with the regulations governing 20mph zones. The features have been designed, in terms of type and material choice, to fit in as well as possible within the environment in which they are to be located.
5. The draft traffic orders for the 20mph zone and supporting measures have recently been formally advertised. Copies of the plans showing the advertised proposals can be found at **Appendices 2/1 and 2/2**.
6. As a result of the advertisement 18 letters of objection were received together with four letters of support. Full copies of the letters received are available in the **Members' Room** and from Democratic and Members Services prior to the meeting.

Main Considerations for Joint Members

6. The Joint Members are requested to consider the representations made and make a recommendation to the County Council's Regulatory Committee on a way forward for the scheme.
7. A summary of the main points in the letters of objection and support, together with officer comments is included in the table at **Appendix 3**.

Vehicle speeds

8. Following comments raised by some of the objectors, spot checks to record vehicle speeds at various locations within the proposed zone have been taken. The collected data is summarised in Table 1 below and the plan at **Appendix 4** indicates the locations where the readings were taken.

Table 1

Vehicle Speed Data

	Average Speed (mph)	85th Percentile Speed (mph)
Site One – Market Place		
To Town Centre	22	25
To Brewery Corner	23	25
Site Two – Station Road		
To Town Centre	27	35
To Moyne Close	27	35
Site Three – Long Street		
To Town Centre	22	26
To Potterne	22	26
Site Four – Long Street		
To Town Centre	19	24
To Potterne	17	21
Site Five – Hillworth Road		
To Town Centre	28	29
Away from Town Centre	26	31

9. The headline results show that with the exception of Hillworth Road and Station Road the average vehicle speeds vary from 17 to 22 mph.

Accidents

10. An examination of the recorded personal injury accidents within the streets of the proposed zone has been undertaken. The collected data is summarised in table 2 below and the accident locations are indicated on the plans at **Appendices 5/1 and 5/2**.

Table 2

Accident Data

Accident Classification	Pedestrians Only		All Types	
	3 Years to			
	30 th June 2004	30 th June 2001	30 th June 2004	30 th June 2001
Slight	6	9	10	13
Serious	3	2	3	3
Fatal	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	9	11	13	16

11. The accident information shows that the number of reported injury accidents has reduced slightly over the last three year period although accidents are still occurring.

Substantive objections

12. The most regular comments made by the objectors are that:-

- Vehicle speeds are already low
- The speed control features will cause an increase in noise and air pollution and be uncomfortable for drivers and passengers
- The features will be visually intrusive and unsympathetic to the surrounding environment.

Further comment is made by some of the supporters that whilst they support the 20mph zone they do not want the speed control features within it.

13. The regulations governing 20mph zones require that within the zone, speed control features must be provided to contain vehicle speeds so that average measured speeds of 20mph are achieved. Further, it is recommended that speed control features are provided at intervals of 60 to 70 metres to ensure that a constant speed is achieved within the zone. As identified in the recorded vehicle speed data the higher speeds appear to be in the minority and generally occur in the evenings when pedestrian movements are likely to be lower. It could therefore be argued that the zone would in fact only influence those motorists who are already travelling at speeds in excess of 20mph. It is also worth noting that there is an ongoing requirement to monitor speeds and accidents within a 20mph zone and if speeds are not at an appropriate level consideration would have to be given to introducing further speed control features or to making the existing installed features more severe.
14. It is accepted that any physical feature in the highway intended to control vehicle movement and speed has the potential to cause an increase in noise and pollution and may prove uncomfortable to negotiate. However this needs to be balanced against the potential benefits in terms of accident reduction and speed control that a 20 mph zone is intended to provide. The flat top ramps are proposed to be 50mm high with shallow approach and exit ramps using a 1 in 12 gradient. They are much less severe than those provided elsewhere in Devizes town centre.
15. The overall scheme and the form of the features within the zone have been subject to extensive consultation with elected members, interest groups, residents and businesses in the Town Centre. The final form of the features is considered to be the minimum that can be used for a 20mph zone. Material choice has been made to

ensure that the features fit in with the environment where they are located as sympathetically as possible. However, individuals will have differing views of what is/is not acceptable to them.

16. As set out above, a 20mph zone must have sufficient features within it to control vehicle speed and, as such, must be self-enforcing. Whilst the regulations do not allow a 20mph zone without any features, an alternative, where speeds are already around 20mph is a signed 20mph speed limit. This is the same as any other level of speed limit and is therefore reliant on the motorist obeying the limit. However a 20mph limit of this type requires the use of upright repeater signs which may be considered an intrusion on the town centre environment. Government guidance advises that only at those locations where the current 85thile speed is 24mph or below is it then appropriate to consider a sign only limit.

Furthermore, a limit of this type may not be suitable for the same area as the proposed 20mph zone and would require considerable further study to assess its appropriateness for a town centre location. The current legislation would also need to be reviewed as it may not be permissible to have the two types of 20mph limit in the same geographical area. Of particular importance is the Police view as unlike a zone, which must be self-enforcing, a signed 20mph limit will require enforcement by the Police.

17. Concern has been expressed that the introduction of a 20mph zone and supporting speed control features will result in a diversion of traffic onto the adjoining highway network, particularly Southbroom Road. It is accepted that there may be some diversion onto other routes within Devizes as traffic seeks an alternative to driving through the zone. However the proposed features have been designed to be the minimum required for a 20mph zone and, as speeds are already low, any transfer is likely to be small.
18. It has been suggested that rather than using physical features to control vehicle speeds, psychological traffic calming could be used. Psychological traffic calming is a method by which the environment in which the driver is travelling is changed to encourage lower speeds. Psychological traffic calming is currently being trialled on behalf of the Government by consultants TRL in conjunction with a number of local highway authorities, including Wiltshire, as pilot projects. No formal guidance or regulations are yet available for the use of this form of traffic calming. Furthermore, it is not yet clear that this type of traffic calming could or would be used for 20mph zones.
19. A comment has also been made that in other locations Authorities are removing road humps not introducing them. It is accepted that some local highway authorities are considering removing traffic calming features and that there has been a change of public opinion to the use of traffic calming, particularly in residential areas in some parts of the country. However the regulations governing 20mph zones mean that sufficient features must be provided within the zone to ensure compliance with the 20mph limit. Without the features the 20mph zone would have to be abandoned.

Conclusion

20. The substantive objections can perhaps be seen to reflect the emerging change in attitude towards traffic calming which appears to be gaining momentum nationally. The spot checks on vehicle speeds confirm that in some areas speeds are already below the threshold level for a signed 20mph limit. With reference to the original aims of the 20mph zone, namely to improve the environment for vulnerable road users such as pedestrians and cyclists, it could be argued that a zone would have little effect given that the sample vehicle speeds are already in the vicinity of 20mph. However experience elsewhere indicates that accident savings in the order of 60% can be achieved after the introduction of a zone.

Environmental Impact of the Recommendation

21. It is considered that the signing and lining will have a minimal impact on the environment. The traffic calming proposals are intended to control vehicle speeds and so contribute to an enhancement in safety and the environment. However it is accepted that in some areas the features may well be considered to be an intrusion to the overall street scene.

Risk Assessment

22. There is no significant risk to the County Council if the zone and associated features are implemented or not.

Financial Implications

23. There is allocation of £180,000 in the current approved Local Transport Plan Integrated Transport budget to cover these works, as approved by the County Council's Regulatory Committee in March 2004. It is not possible, as some objectors have suggested, to simply use this funding for maintenance works as this is subject to separate funding.

Options Considered

24. The options are to recommend that:-
- (iv) The proposals are implemented as advertised.
 - (v) The proposals be abandoned.
 - (vi) A 20mph speed limit by Order be investigated.

Recommendation

25. That:-
- (iv) Members consider the options set out above and make a recommendation to the County Council's Regulatory Committee.
 - (v) The objectors be informed accordingly.

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Report Author

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The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report:

None