

WARDS: Quarry Bank and Dudley Wood

NO.	AGENDA	ITEM
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DUDLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

CENTRAL DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE – 4 NOVEMBER 2004

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

LOCAL SAFETY SCHEMES 2004/5 – SALTWELLS ESTATE, NETHERTON

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To seek Committee's support for the implementation of measures forming part of a proposed Local Safety Scheme on the Saltwells Estate, Netherton

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At its meeting on the 7 July 2004, this Area Committee were advised that proposals for a Local Safety Scheme on the Saltwells Estate, Netherton, had been approved by the Council for inclusion in its Highways Minor Works Capital Programme for 2004/2005.
- 2.2 In accordance with the Council's normal consultation procedures for schemes incorporating the introduction of physical measures, the proposed use of 75mm high speed cushions along Golden Hillock Road and Stoney Lane (shown on Drawing No.TM2153A attached as Appendix A to this report) have been circulated for comments and observations by those local residents who would be most directly affected as well as the emergency services, bus operators and Local Ward Members.
- 2.3 Appendix B attached to this report summarises the comments received from the consultation exercise but, particular attention is drawn to the strong objections that have been raised by the West Midlands Ambulance Service, which also provided brief details, in confidence, of a significant number of call-outs that it answered in relation to potentially life threatening situations and also from the bus operators who run 5 buses/hour along Stoney Lane.

2.4 The use of speed cushions, which are designed to be more user friendly to the wider axle vehicles used by the emergency services and bus operators would generally provide a less severe level of interruption and discomfort for patients and/or passengers of these particular services but, in this instance, the frequency of use coupled with the relative importance that Stoney Lane has in terms of access for the whole of the Saltwells Estate is an issue that is worthy of more detailed consideration.

2.5 Against this background, it may, therefore, be appropriate to consider a phased programme of implementation, with the measures being introduced at this stage being limited only to Golden Hillock Road with those along Stoney Lane being held in abeyance pending a review of the effectiveness of the modified scheme.

2.6 Other complementary features forming part of the original scheme proposals namely coloured surface entry treatments on the access roads into the Saltwells Estate and the proposed 20 mph speed limit along Golden Hillock Road would still form part of the modified local safety scheme.

2.7 Any variations or modifications resulting in a material or significant departure from the original scheme concept would be subject to the agreement of the Lead Member for Transportation in consultation with the Director of the Urban Environment.

2.8 Sustainable Transport

The contents of this report support the Council's Transport Policy by considering measures that contribute to improved highway and pedestrian safety whilst also recognising the wider implications of retaining suitable access facilities for the emergency services and bus operators.

2.9 Consultation

Whilst the introduction of speed cushions and a 20 mph speed limit along Golden Hillock Road will also be subject to formal advertisement through press and street notices, the contents of this report reflect the outcome of the public consultation exercise already undertaken with local residents, the emergency services, bus operators and Local Ward Members.

3.0 PROPOSAL

3.1 That this Area Committee endorses proposals for a modified local safety scheme being implemented for the Saltwells Estate, Netherton.

4.0 FINANCE

- 4.1 Funding for the implementation of the proposals outlined in this report is already contained within the approved 2004/2005 Highways Minor Works Capital budget.

5.0 LAW

- 5.1 Traffic Regulation Orders are made under powers contained in Section 1 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.
- 5.2 Traffic signs are provided under powers contained in Section 64 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, subject to regulations made by the Secretary of State for Transport.
- 5.3 The Council is empowered to improve highways under Section 62 of the Highways Act 1980.
- 5.4 Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 empowers the Council to do anything calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of any of its functions.
- 5.5 The Traffic Calming Act 1992 amends the Highways Act 1980 to allow works to be carried out to promote safety and to preserve or improve the environment.
- 5.6 The Highways Act 1980, as amended by the Road Traffic Act 1991 requires the installation of road humps to be advertised on-street and in the local newspaper for objections.

6.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- 6.1 The proposals contained within this report comply with the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy.

7.0 RECOMMENDATION

That the proposals set out in Section 3.0 of this report be agreed.

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J. B. MILLAR – DIRECTOR OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

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Background documents used in the preparation of this report:-

- 1) Report to the Central Dudley Area Committee on the 7 July 2004 relating to Highways Minor Capital Works Programme for 2004/2005.
- 2) Questionnaires and correspondence received in response to public consultation exercise undertaken between the 2 and 26 July 2004

DUDLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
LOCAL SAFETY SCHEMES 2004/5
STONEY LANE AND GOLDEN HILLOCK ROAD, NETHERTON
SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

In advance of the statutory requirements for the Local Highway Authority to advertise its intentions to introduce traffic calming measures in Stoney Lane and Golden Hillock Road, Netherton, comments on the proposed Local Safety Scheme were requested from the Emergency Services, Centro, Travel West Midlands and from those frontages and local residents, who would be most directly affected by the proposals.

The Police Authority and West Midlands Fire Service have raised no objections to the proposals. West Midlands Ambulance Service is, however, opposed to the proposed speed cushions claiming that the proposed measures not only cause damage to their vehicles, but more specifically because they cause delays in terms of their response times to incidents in areas containing this type of measure. Centro and Travel West Midlands are also opposed to the proposals as they feel there would be an increase in “on-bus” accidents.

In total 137 letters, plans and questionnaires were distributed with a total of 73 (53%) being returned. Of those questionnaires returned 72 (99%) agreed that the measures proposed were needed and 69 (95%) supported the scheme as proposed. 4 residents (6%) felt they would be adversely affected by the scheme, and 5 residents (7%) objected to particular aspects of the scheme.

Comments received from residents whether in support or otherwise fell into several general categories, which may be summarised, as follows:-

i) **The proposed measures will cause inconvenience to Ambulances**

This particular concern has also been raised directly by the West Midlands Ambulance Service who have objected to the implementation of this scheme primarily on the basis that they have received a significant number of call-outs from the Saltwells Estate to potentially life threatening situations.

The proposed introduction of speed cushions seeks to minimise the level of disruption and discomfort that may arise if speed ramps were introduced as they do not extend across the full width of the carriageway and are more user friendly to the wider axle vehicles, such as those used by the Ambulance Service.

However, mindful of the significant number of call-outs recorded by the Ambulance Service (details supplied in confidence) and the relative importance of Stoney Lane in terms of access to the Saltwells Estate as a whole, it would be appropriate to review this particular concern in light of these

comments and the main body of the report therefore considers an option for a modified scheme to address this issue.

Similar concerns about disruption were also raised by the bus operators but any measures introduced or modified to address the concerns raised in relation to the Ambulance Service would clearly also apply to buses.

ii) Speed Humps would be better than Speed Cushions

As discussed in i) above, speed cushions are a modified form of speed humps which seek to minimise the level of disruption or disturbance that may otherwise arise for service vehicles, such as Ambulance Service, which may be either responding to an emergency call-out or carrying patients that can be in a sensitive or critical condition.

The use of speed cushions rather than speed humps also addresses similar concerns about passenger comfort raised by the bus operators.

iii) There are too many humps and I object to humps outside my house which will also lead to more noise

The scheme has been designed in accordance with the relevant guidelines produced by the Department for Transport which state that speed cushions should not have spacings in excess of 100m.

This upper limit on spacing being recommended to achieve both the reduced speeds that are required and also to minimise noise, which can be created when drivers speed up and slow down when gaps between the speed cushions become too long. It would not, therefore, be recommendable to reduce the number of speed cushions.

The proposed location of the speed cushions has also taken into account the need to minimise the level of inconvenience that may arise to local residents in terms of creating difficulties of access to driveways. However, if some minor repositioning is possible and would further reduce any perceived problems, this will be given due consideration.

iv) Reduce Speed Limit to 20 mph

Although subject to a formal advertising procedure, the current proposals include for the introduction of a 20 mph speed limit to complement the introduction of the traffic calming measures.

However, for the introduction of a 20 mph speed limit to be effective without undue levels of enforcement action being required by the Police, it is appropriate that the 20 mph speed limits are only considered in those streets where physical traffic calming measures, such as the proposed speed cushions, are also being introduced.

- v) More extensive measures across the estate are needed to reduce the volume of rat-running traffic

Stoney Lane and Golden Hillock Road has undoubtedly become a popular rat-run for commuter traffic wishing to avoid queues at the traffic signals at the junction of Saltwells Road and Cradley Road.

The level of rat-running traffic along other streets on the Saltwells Estate is likely to be far less pronounced as the road layout is more self contained.

However, from an overall perspective it should be noted that the current proposals form part of a local safety scheme where the emphasis is very much related to a reduction in the recorded number of personal injury accidents and whilst these proposals may also have the added benefit of reducing or discouraging rat-running traffic, this is not the primary purpose of the safety scheme and the Council do not currently introduce additional traffic calming measures for purely environmental reasons such as rat-running.

- vi) A one-way system is needed

The introduction of one-way roads can encourage an increase in vehicle speeds as drivers feel safer accelerating in the knowledge that they will not be confronted by a vehicle approaching in the opposite direction. In view of this the introduction of one-way streets is not considered appropriate for this particular scheme.

- vii) There are too many parked vehicles

There is undoubtedly a large number of parked vehicles throughout the estate at all times of the day and this clearly reduces the available width of carriageway along those roads where the problem is more extensive.

Issues of obstruction are, however, strictly an enforcement matter for the Police Authority and any complementary measures such as 'No Waiting' Orders are not considered appropriate within a residential estate where there is already a lack of off-street parking facilities and the measures would undoubtedly fall into disrepute unless a totally disproportionate level of enforcement action was undertaken.

- viii) Proposals for the introduction of a 'Ghost' island should not form part of the scheme

the introduction of improved road markings at the oblique angle of the road alignment along Golden Hillock Road seeks to introduce a degree of lane discipline and junction priority to influence and encourage a more responsible and considerate driving behaviour along an otherwise uncontrolled section of the highway.

- ix) A number of other issues were raised that fell outside the scope of the scheme such as requests for grit bins, winter gritting, bollards and wheelie bins

These issues will be referred to the appropriate division for further consideration.

RECOMMENDATION

That having due regard to the comments received, the local safety scheme for Saltwells Estate, Netherton be modified to the extent that the proposed measures along Stoney Lane be deferred pending a review on the effectiveness of the similar measures being introduced elsewhere along Golden Hillock Road as well as the need for a continuing requirement to minimise the level of disruption that would otherwise arise for the emergency services and bus operators serving the community in this area.