

Subject: NEW 30MPH SPEED LIMIT - B5063 WEM ROAD, SHAWBURY: TRAFFIC SURVEY MONITORING

Dear Sir

Thank you for your recent email regarding the above highway scheme.

I have noted the concerns you have raised and accordingly a site monitoring exercise has now been undertaken. This has incorporated traffic surveys in order ascertain the extent of any issues relating to the effectiveness and appropriateness of the new speed limit.

I have now collated the scheme information which is summarised below, this also includes the background and rationale behind the design which I hope you find informative and helpful.

This information has been submitted to your Local Member Simon Jones and Shawbury P.C. however I understand a petition has been raised by local residents to allow this matter to be formally discussed at Shropshire Council's February Scrutiny Panel. Any decision relating to the scheme will therefore be made by Elected Members following representations made and information submitted to the Scrutiny Panel.

Scheme Summary Report:

Three surveys were undertaken; the first two automated surveys were undertaken for a full week (Friday 9/10/15 to Thursday 15/10/15 inclusive) at 2 representative sites within the series of speed cushions. The northern site was approximately 100 metres south of the Harcourt Close junction and the southern site approximately 70 metres north of the main RAF entrance. The results are summarised as follows:

Northern site:

Northbound - Mean speeds – 22.6mph, 85th percentile speeds (the accepted traffic engineering measurement, represents the speed exceeded by 15% of vehicles) – 29.8mph.

Southbound – Mean speeds – 22.3mph, 85th percentile speeds – 28.0mph.

Southern site:

Northbound - Mean speeds – 26.4mph, 85th percentile speeds – 31.3mph.

Southbound – Mean speeds – 23.5mph, 85th percentile speeds – 28.0mph.

For your information approximately 60% of all vehicles travelled at 20mph or over and approximately 14% of vehicles were buses, coaches, light, medium or heavy goods vehicles.

In order to give an even more representative assessment of vehicle speeds, an average speed survey was then undertaken over the whole length of the new 30mph speed limit. This was carried out on 24/11/15 and the results are as follows:

Northbound - Mean speeds – 23mph, 85th percentile speeds – 29mph.

Southbound – Mean speeds – 24mph, 85th percentile speeds – 30mph.

The above analysis indicates that the new 30mph safety scheme delivers what the Parish Council, Local Member, RAF Shawbury, local schools and other stakeholders requested, namely a self-regulating 30mph speed limit with good compliance from motorists.

In order that an objective decision can be made as regards the current situation it is important to clarify the background to the development of the scheme:

SC officers were canvassed robustly for the scheme, the P.C. and Local Member citing the strong feelings of local residents (but in particular the RAF and the old school) in favour of a reduction in the speed limit from 40mph to 30mph. As the scheme was developed a comprehensive consultation was therefore undertaken which also gave a strong consensus in favour of it – no objections were received.

The Mouchel Design Engineer at the time was a Shawbury resident who attended Parish Council meetings and so SC officers had information and feedback disseminated directly from those meetings which was acted upon. Throughout this process, SC Officers and the police did highlight their concerns over the scheme and it was made clear that the police would not give approval unless the scheme was supported by traffic calming measures in order that the new speed limit was self-regulating and delivered good compliance from motorists. Based on an acceptance of this condition SC officers were directed to proceed with the scheme.

The detailed design of the scheme, incorporating the agreed speed cushion traffic calming measures, was therefore progressed along with the required statutory consultation. All statutory consultees, including the PC and Local Member, received copies of the plans and notices (which detailed all the scheme content including speed cushions), they were also placed in local shops, the library and on site for a period of approximately one month. Again no objections were received and the completed scheme was therefore delivered in line with demands.

The rationale behind the use of speed cushions was discussed during the design process. In this instance, the well proven speed reduction effectiveness of speed cushions compared to other physical measures was a determining factor and accordingly they received the approval of the police. Other physical measures were considered and discussed (plateaus, chicanes, priority buildouts, rumble strips) however all were discounted for various reasons:

In the case of chicanes and priority buildouts, these are often unpopular with motorists who cite the problem of one traffic stream speeding up and rushing through the narrowing before the opposing traffic stream. This can perversely lead to increased speeds and also vehicular conflict.

In the case of plateaus and rumble strips these are often unpopular with motorists because they are full carriageway width and there is no opportunity to reduce the impact or vibration to the car by careful positioning (straddling). It is important to note that speed cushions allow emergency vehicles to negotiate them with care without too much disruption or discomfort which is particularly important in the case of ambulances of course. Accordingly, as has happened in the development of other schemes, it is unlikely that rumble strips or plateaus would have received the support of the emergency services.

The cushions used at the site are within the national design standards for a 30mph speed limit. These design standards allow a maximum height of 75mm and SC Officers authorised the use of 65mm height in this case. These cushions have been used extensively in other 30mph areas across Shropshire and indeed nationally.

It is important to understand of course, that any form of traffic calming will be a compromise between severity and the extent of speed reduction required. Substantial measures were required in this case in order to reduce speeds to a level commensurate with a 30mph limit. As the length of road in question is semi-rural in character with only sporadic development and few accesses, the

natural speed for motorists when they are driving to the prevailing conditions is approximately 40mph. If a decision were to be made to remove or reduce the current measures then speeds will increase to around 40mph, as they were before the scheme was put in place. Experience shows us that motorists will not reduce their speed without the character of the road being changed and a signed only 30 would have poor compliance. Such an approach also leads to speed limits being brought into disrepute and would soon attract criticism from those locals and stakeholders who called for a genuine speed reduction. It would also lead to the police withdrawing their support for the scheme and no enforcement would be undertaken.

The cost of removing the speed cushions and replacing with other measures would be in the region of £10-20k depending on what measures were chosen and the funding of this would be at the expense of another capital project. If this decision was made then the speed cushions could be reused at another site at some point, thus reducing costs to some degree.

Please note the content of this email has also been sent to other correspondents separately for data protection purposes.

Regards

Richard Ayton
Project Manager Capital Schemes