



Petitions Panel

9 December 2016

1. Background to the Petition Scheme

- 1.1 The County Council's Petitions Scheme was adopted on 29 April 2010 and came into effect on 15 June 2010. The Scheme was subsequently updated by the County Council on 21 July 2016.
- 1.2 If a petition is supported by 50 or more signatories then it will be dealt with by a small customer focussed panel. If a petition is supported by 1,000 or more signatories it will be scheduled for a debate at the next meeting of the full County Council.

2. Petition – Winterborne Houghton Parish Council, Application for a Village Speed Limit

- 2.1 The County Council received a petition organised by Mr T H Cole on behalf of Winterborne Houghton Parish Council on 30 October 2016. This reads as follows:

This petition is about the excessive speed of motor vehicles driving through Winterborne Houghton putting residents and visitors at risk and asks Dorset County Council to implement a 20mph speed limit within the village boundary.

I support the petition to implement a speed limit within Winterborne Houghton thereby reducing the risk to pedestrians, horse riders and cyclists from motorists driving at excessive speed and I confirm that I live, work or study in Dorset.

Please note – since submitting the petition for signatures Winterborne Parish Council has revised their request. An 'extension' of the 30mph currently in place at Winterborne Stickland is the preferred option of the Parish Council as this is reported as being supported by the majority of those supporting the petition. The extension of the 30mph at Winterborne Stickland was suggested as an option by PCC Martyn Underhill.

- 2.2 As this petition contains more than 50 signatures, the Panel are invited to note and discuss this.
- 2.3 This petition contains a total of 125 signatures.
- 2.4 This discussion should conclude with a decision as to how to respond to the petition. This may include one or more of the following:
 - taking the action requested in the petition
 - considering the petition at a council meeting
 - holding an inquiry into the matter
 - undertaking research into the matter
 - holding a public meeting
 - holding a consultation
 - referring the petition for consideration by the council's Audit and Governance Committee
 - calling a referendum
 - writing to the petition organiser setting out the Panel's views about the request in the petition.

- 2.5 Alternatively, the Panel may determine a combination of the options above, or decide on another course of action as appropriate.

3. Context

- 3.1 The road through Winterborne Houghton, Water Lane, is a 'D' class route. The road is predominantly narrow and there are 58 properties whose access fronts the road.
- 3.2 The petition document provides a detailed description of the road and the prevailing conditions. The full petition document can be found at Appendix A.
- 3.3 The speed limit covering Winterborne Houghton is the national speed limit; 60mph. Actual traffic speeds, as shown in two surveys commissioned by Winterborne Houghton Parish Council show that traffic speeds are significantly lower than the speed limit. A copy of the traffic survey data provided by Winterborne Houghton Parish Council can be found at Appendix B.
- 3.4 As the traffic survey data is owned by the Parish Council no additional analysis has been undertaken on the two surveys commissioned by the Parish Council. Observations have been made on the survey data included within the petition report.
- 3.5 Volume of traffic is shown in the report as being for all directions. Consideration should be given to each direction of traffic. Owing to the nature and use of the road through Winterborne Houghton it is likely that a significant proportion of the traffic using the route will be residents.

For survey site A, the petition report states that an average of 424 vehicles entered and left the village between Monday and Friday and an average of 327 at the weekend. For survey site B the petition reports an average of 167 vehicles per weekday and 157 vehicles per day at the weekend. The location of the survey sites can be found on the first page of Appendix B.

Both of the traffic surveys show that the traffic flow through Winterborne Houghton is very low. The hours with the highest traffic flows have an average of lower than one vehicle per minute at site A and an average of just over one vehicle every three minutes at peak times for site B.

It is important to mention that one vehicle could make several trips into and out of Winterborne Houghton on any given day.

The traffic flow figures included in the petition report should be read as number of trips, rather than number of vehicles.

- 3.6 The speed survey data included in the petition report mainly uses the total number of vehicle movements surveyed rather than the weekday or seven day average. It is standard professional practice to use an average figure as this takes into account multiple reporting of the same vehicle.

It is likely that a significant proportion of all vehicles using Water Lane will do so most days and would typically travel at similar speeds on most journeys on Water Lane.

Also, it is standard professional practice to consider an hourly breakdown of speed surveys in order to be able to draw conclusions on when the highest speeds are recorded. It is

common for higher speeds to occur on the late/early hours. If this were the case for the surveys at Winterborne Houghton it would be highly likely that those vehicles travelling in excess of 30mph would be residents or regular users and would likely travel at similar speeds if a 30mph limit were to be installed.

The speed survey data provided by Winterborne Parish Council suggests that the 85thile speeds are within 30mph. The 85thile speed is the speed at which 85% of vehicles are travelling at or below and is used alongside the mean average speed when considering the setting of speed limits.

85thile speeds give an indication of the impact a road layout has on traffic speed. The remaining top 15% of speeds are not representative as generally these are people who do not drive to the prevailing conditions or layout.

It is important to note that evidence shows that reduced speed limits do not result in uniform conformity to the speed limit. In the case of Winterborne Houghton, should a reduced speed limit be implemented it is likely that there would not be a noticeable reduction in the highest speeds.

Department for Transport guidance on the setting of speed limits states that enforcement should not be relied upon to promote adherence to a speed limit.

Speed enforcement is typically deployed regularly on roads where the 85thile speeds are above the Association of Chief Police Officer (ACPO) guidelines for enforcement. For a 30mph limit this is 36mph and above.

- 3.7 It has been important to make the above comments in the context of this report. Traffic speeds are a very important consideration in the setting of local speed limits and Winterborne Houghton Parish should be commended for commissioning surveys to gather objective data to support their petition.

Dorset County Council adopt Department for Transport guidelines for considering reduced speed limits as policy.

The key factors that should be taken into account in any decisions on local speed limits are:

- History of collisions
- Road geometry and engineering
- Road function
- Composition of road users
- Exiting traffic speeds
- Road environment

The mean average speed and the 85thile speeds are used in assessing the appropriate speed limit. In short if existing speeds are close to 30mph then a 30mph limit would be considered, if existing speeds were notably higher than 30mph then a 30mph limit would not be considered.

- 3.8 Dorset County Council has access to road traffic collision data. This data is for collisions resulting in personal injury that were reported to the police. It is this data that is used to assess the collision history of a route.

Standard practice is to use the latest available five years of collision data. Between 1 August 2011 and 31 July 2016 there was a total of two road traffic collisions on Water Lane, both result in one slight injury.

One of these collisions was the result of a driver's vision being dazzled by low sun and hitting a parked car. The other collision was the result of drink driving. Neither of these collisions had speed related factors recorded against them.

- 3.9 In short the basic criteria for a 30mph limit in Winterborne Houghton is met. Speeds are close to 30mph and the layout is sufficiently populated by residential properties and its use is predominantly residential.
- 3.10 Whilst the criteria are satisfied it is important to attempt to understand what the impact of a 30mph speed limit would be on Water Lane.

The speed surveys provided by Winterborne Houghton Parish Council show that a minority of drivers travel above 30mph. Evidence and experience suggests that those driver who typically travel above 30mph would continue to do so if a 30mph limit were to be installed.

Enforcement cannot be relied upon to ensure adherence to a limit. The layout of Water Lane would also not likely be easily enforced as there is not likely to be a suitable location – a camera van for example should not create an obstruction on the highway and also requires a sufficient length of forward visibility.

As is the case on Water Lane, the vast majority of drivers are driving to the prevailing conditions and adjusting their speed accordingly.

A reduced speed limit of 30mph would require a series of speed limit repeater signs. Repeater signs are required to remind drivers of the speed limit. Although speed limits are not a target they are often treated as such. This can result in increases in traffic speeds across a length of road with drivers driving to the signed limit as opposed to the road layout/conditions.

An update to the Traffic Sign Regulations and General Directions (TSRGD) that came into effect on 22 April 2016 has relaxed the signing of speed limits so there is greater flexibility available now than in the past but repeater signs would still be required.

- 3.11 It is important to consider that this speed limit request is one of close to 200 other requests for a new Traffic Regulation Order across the Dorset County area. Despite Water Lane meeting the basic criteria for a 30mph speed limit it would not rank highly against other requests. It is not possible to say when the 30mph limit would be reduced if it were to be agreed to go into the Traffic Regulation Order programme.
- 3.12 Speed limits are often used as a last resort. Traffic management measures should be considered ahead of speed limits as their purpose is to raise driver awareness to the prevailing conditions and to adjust speed/behaviour accordingly.

Such measures are in place for traffic entering Winterborne Houghton from Winterborne Stickland, as shown on page three of the petition report. These measures (signs) have been in place for many years. New signs and possible new locations could be considered.

Should commercial vehicles linked to nearby businesses to Winterborne Houghton be a significant problem, as mentioned in the petition report then concerns can be raised direct with business(es) in a bid to improve associated driver behaviour.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1 The Panel is invited to note the receipt of this petition and decide how to respond to it.

Petition – Winterborne Houghton Parish Council, Application for a Village Speed Limit

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