
**A68 LOCAL SAFETY SCHEME
PROPOSED CROSSOVER CLOSURE AT BURTREE LANE & THE FARM ACCESS
CROSSOVERS ON THE A68 BETWEEN SWAN HOUSE ROUNDABOUT AND
ROTARY WAY ROUNDABOUT**

Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor David Lyonette, Transport Portfolio

Responsible Director – Cliff Brown, Director of Community Services

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. For Members to consider objections received to the proposed Traffic Regulation Order to permanently close the crossover gaps on the A68 between Swan House Roundabout and Rotary Way Roundabout, including the gap at Burtree Lane.

Summary

2. A local safety scheme has been developed to address a road safety issue relating to turning traffic on the section of the A68 to the north of the A1. The scheme involves the closure of a number of gaps in the central reserve to reduce the risk of accidents occurring. This is in keeping with the Council's duty to investigate road traffic accidents and, where appropriate, take measures to reduce or eradicate their occurrence, as set out in Section 39(3) of the Road Traffic Act 1988.
3. The Director of Community Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member with the Portfolio for Transport agreed by delegated powers that officers proceed with the advertising of a Traffic Regulation Order to close all of the crossovers on the A68.
4. The Traffic Regulation Order was advertised in The Northern Echo on 10 October 2008 and any objections were to be returned to the Borough Solicitor by 3 November 2008. 19 objections have been received plus a petition of 46 names and addresses
5. The Chief Constable has given his support to the proposal.

Recommendations

6. It is recommended that Members approve:
 - (a) The introduction of a prohibition of driving order to close the gaps in the central reserve on the A68 between Swan House Roundabout and Rotary Way Roundabout.

- (b) The revocation of the existing No Right Turn and No U-turn Traffic Regulation Orders as necessary.

Reasons

- 7. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:
 - (a) The proposed crossover closures are considered necessary on road safety grounds. By physically closing the Burtree Lane crossover, the right turning accident problem from the A68 into Burtree Lane will cease. By physically closing all the farm crossovers from Swan House Roundabout to Rotary Way Roundabout, large farm vehicles will no longer straddle the outside lanes of both carriageways whilst turning into the farms and fields thereby removing potential conflict and enhancing road safety for other drivers.
 - (b) The proposed crossover closures are the preferred option of Durham Constabulary to reduce the prevailing level of personal injury accidents.
 - (c) The proposed crossover closure at Burtree Lane will address the regular contravention of the right turn ban onto the northbound carriageway of the A68.
 - (d) To demonstrate that the Council has considered its statutory duty to investigate the cause of road traffic accidents and take appropriate action to prevent their recurrence, pursuant to Section 39(3) of the Road Traffic Act 1988.
 - (e) See Part III Appendix for additional information.

Cliff Brown
Director of Community Services

Background Papers

- (i) Engagement Report
- (ii) Delegated Powers for Traffic Regulation Orders
- (iii) Letters of objection

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cc

S17 Crime and Disorder	Schemes are designed to take crime and disorder and anti-social behaviour issues into account where appropriate.
Health and Well Being	Local safety schemes are designed to reduce the number of road traffic accidents involving personal injury.
Sustainability	The scheme is funded through the Local Transport Plan, which provides a strategy for the provision of sustainable transport.
Diversity	The scheme is not considered to disproportionately affect any of the relevant groups.
Wards Affected	All wards
Groups Affected	All groups
Budget and Policy Framework	In line with Cabinet approved second Local Transport Plan 2006-2011
Key Decision	This is a key decision because it significantly affects all residents in the Borough.
Urgent Decision	This does not require an urgent decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	Measures to improve travel safety provide One Darlington benefits. Measure to improve the transport network have Perfectly Placed benefits. The casualty reduction strategy supports the Safer Darlington theme.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

8. The Council has a legal duty as Highway Authority, pursuant to Section 39(3) of the Road Traffic Act 1988, to carry out studies into accidents arising out of the use of vehicles on roads within our area and to take such measures as appear to the Authority to be appropriate to prevent such accidents.
9. Durham Constabulary keeps a record of all accidents that their officers attend. This data is shared with Local Authorities to help to identify accident trends and hotspots. The Council carries out regular analysis of casualties arising from such accidents, including the annual Road Casualty Review. The review informs assessment and helps prioritise problem sites and consider the impact of our casualty reduction programme.
10. The crossover on the A68 at Burtree Lane has been identified, both by the Council and the Police, as a location with a high concentration of accidents. During the three year study period there have been 11 personal injury accidents, three resulting in serious injury, and eight resulting slight injuries. This represents a relatively high level of severity, which is understandable given the high vehicle speeds prevalent on A68 and the nature of the accidents, involving right turning cars.
11. Analysis of the cause of these accidents suggests that there is an issue with motorists turning right from the A68 into Burtree Lane safely. A series of options were considered in liaison with the Police to produce a solution that would reduce or prevent accidents from occurring. The options considered included a traffic signal controlled junction, a roundabout, closure of the gaps in the central reserve and removal of a traffic lane on either carriageway to widen the central reserve gaps.
12. All accident related schemes must be cost effective. The proposals are estimated in the region of £120k, which would be funded from the Local Safety Scheme allocation within the Local Transport Plan. The Department for Transport (DfT) provide details of typical costs arising from accidents involving slight or serious injury or resulting in a fatality. It is expected that the scheme benefits, derived from the reduction in the number of casualties, outweigh the cost of the scheme.
13. A cost benefit assessment was undertaken as part of the feasibility study. The roundabout and traffic signal controlled options were not within the available resources. The lane closure option was considered but it was felt that it would not deliver an effective solution.
14. The construction of a roundabout would require extensive land-take and utility apparatus diversion. The estimated costs for such a scheme would be in excess of £1m. Similarly, a traffic signal solution is estimated in excess of £0.5m. Both of these options are prohibitively expensive and not within the resources.
15. The scheme that has been taken forward is for the permanent closure of the gaps in the central reserve. In addition, the proposed solution will remove the ability for drivers to ignore the existing prohibited right turn from Burtree Lane onto the A68. The feasibility study identified that this is being ignored on occasions.

16. The closure of the A68/Burtree Lane crossover will reduce accidents at this location and is the primary reason for the proposal. However, in closing this location consideration must be given to the other crossover locations and whether motorists will simply perform 'U' turns at other locations that are less safe, and thus potentially displace the accident risk. This will lead to vehicles that currently turn right into Burtree Lane being diverted approximately 2.6 miles. Vehicles are already prohibited from turning right out of Burtree Lane consequently there will be no additional mileage for vehicles emerging from Burtree Lane.
17. The proposal therefore, is to close all six farm crossovers between Burtree Lane and Swan House Roundabout. The closures will prevent motorists attempting to U-turn and stop the current practice of large agricultural vehicles straddling the outside lanes of both carriageways when crossing the central reserve. There are also two farm crossovers between the A1(M) Interchange and Rotary Way Roundabout that are also proposed to be closed for the same reasons.
18. These gaps were closed, on a temporary basis, as part of the traffic management arrangements for the recent Highways Agency works at Junction 58 of the A1. During the nine month period that they were closed there were no accidents involving personal injury reported to the Police. Whilst changes in accident patterns cannot be considered to be definitive over such a relatively short period of time, it is considered that it does demonstrate that the proposed scheme arrangement will produce a significant reduction in accidents and associated casualties. The proposed scheme will effectively make permanent this arrangement.

Outcome of Consultation

19. A consultation exercise was undertaken prior to the advertisement of the legal orders and this is summarised as **Appendix 1**. There were a number of issues and concerns highlighted at that time. These were balanced against the potential to reduce casualties at this location. A decision was taken by the Director of Community Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Transport, to progress the scheme and advertise the appropriate traffic regulation orders.
20. The advertisement period for the Traffic Regulation Order produced a number of formal objections to the scheme. **Appendix 2** summarises each objection received together with an officer response.
21. The Chief Constable supports this proposal and comments as follows:

'Extensive research has been carried out into the causation factors associated with the volume and severity of road traffic accidents occurring on the A68 between Burtree Interchange and Swan House Roundabout. This research has revealed the main causation factor to be vehicles turning right through the Burtree Gate gap and colliding with vehicles travelling on the main line of the A68 inbound towards Darlington.

Following on from this research various schemes have been considered in order to reduce/eliminate altogether the likelihood of this type of accident. The recent A1(M) works have been extremely useful in proving the simplicity and effectiveness of closing the gaps and having the alternative routes available to traffic, which of course now has the added benefit of the A1(M) which was not available during the recent works.

We therefore fully support the scheme put forward by Darlington Borough Council of closing all the crossover gaps between the Rotary Way Roundabout and Swan House Roundabout in the interests of road safety.’

22. No objections were received from the other emergency services or any of the other standard consultees.