
**DODMIRE SCHOOL SAFER ROUTES TO SCHOOL SCHEME
CONSIDERATION OF OBJECTIONS**

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 an objection that has been received to the publication of a notice under the terms of Section 90a of the Highways Act 1980 to construct speed cushions in a number of roads in the area to the west of Dodmire School. The cushions form an integral part of the Dodmire School Safer Route to School scheme, which forms part of the Local Transport Plan capital programme.

Summary

2. The speed and volume of traffic is often raised by residents as an issue that affects their communities and the travel choices they make. In particular, the speed of traffic on residential roads is a cause for concern not only in terms of highway safety but also because of the impact that it has on resident's quality of life.
3. Governors and staff of Dodmire School have identified that traffic issues around the school entrance and traffic conditions on the approach to the school are of concern to those parents and children that walk and cycle to school, particularly at the start and end of the school day. The school travel plan identified traffic as being a particular cause for concern. The school is working with the Council to try to reduce the problems caused by parental parking as part of their school travel plan
4. In light of those concerns and in keeping with Darlington's Transport Strategy a scheme to reduce vehicle speeds and provide a safer environment for residents and people attending the school has been developed and consulted upon. This incorporates the provision of traffic calming in the form of speed cushions. This type of feature requires a legal notice to be published to give residents and other interested parties the opportunity to comment on the proposals and formally object if they are opposed to the traffic calming features.

5. During the consultation on the proposal an objection was received from a resident living in Lewes Road, stating that she did not agree that there was a need for such measures, that there will be disturbance during and post construction leading to a reduction in the availability of parking and that she was not happy about having a hump outside her house as she believes that they cause stress to a car. She is of the opinion that the money would be better spent maintaining major roads in Darlington. Further detail on the resident's specific issues and the officer's response is provided in the main report.

Recommendation

6. It is recommended that :-
 - (a) The resident's objection to the construction of speed cushions be set aside.
 - (b) The proposals be implemented as advertised.

Reasons

7. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-
 - (a) The resident's objection is not considered to be substantive for the reasons expressed in the main report.
 - (b) The scheme consultation process indicates that a majority of local residents support the proposed scheme.

Cliff Brown
Director of Community Services

Background Papers

- (i) Dodmire School Safer Route to School engagement report.
- (ii) Resident's letter of objection.
- (iii) Copy of the advertised notice.

Andy Casey : Extension 2746

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	Sustainable transport schemes have health and well being outcomes.
Sustainability	The LTP provides a framework for sustainable travel, which schemes are in line with.
Diversity	Disability groups consulted on schemes.
Wards Affected	Banktop, Lascelles.
Groups Affected	All groups.
Budget and Policy Framework	In line with Cabinet approved second Local Transport Plan 2006-2011.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	Yes – This scheme forms part of the Local Transport Plan capital delivery programme and supports the Cycle Demonstration Town project. Advertisement of traffic notices and orders and consideration of any objections that arise can delay delivery of this important capital programme.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	Measures to provide a safer living, walking and cycling environment have One Darlington benefits. Measures to encourage greater walking and cycling have Perfectly Placed benefits.
Efficiency	The second Local Transport Plan 2006-2011 was assessed for value for money by the Department for Transport. The detailed design of the scheme has been carried out to ensure that it meets the Local Transport Plan objectives with minimum cost.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

8. Darlington's Local Transport Plan seeks to tackle traffic congestion, improve accessibility and maintain its good record on travel safety through a programme of physical improvements to the highway. This is supported by a programme of education, information and publicity to inform residents of the travel choices available in Darlington.
9. Governors and staff of Dodmire School have identified that traffic issues around the school entrance and traffic conditions on the approach to the school are of concern to those parents and children that walk and cycle to school, particularly at the start and end of the school day. The school travel plan identified through traffic as being a particular cause for concern. The school is working with the Council to try to reduce the problems caused by parental parking as part of their school travel plan.
10. We investigated these concerns and produced a consultation proposal containing the following elements, to address the issues raised:-
 - (a) installation of road humps in order to form a 20mph zone;
 - (b) the closure of Louisa Street between Lewes Road and Falmer Road to discourage through traffic;
 - (c) installation of a "Toucan" signal controlled pedestrian and cyclist crossing on Neasham Road between Aysgarth Road and Smithfield Road junctions. This required the end of Aysgarth Road becoming "one way" meaning that residents would need to use adjacent roads to gain access onto Neasham Road.
 - (d) Reinforcement of school keep clear regulations on Rydal Road.
11. An extensive consultation exercise was carried out, the results of which are detailed below.

Outcome of Consultation

12. A scheme consultation pack was sent out to Ward Councillors, approximately 1150 residents, Dodmire Primary School and Neasham Road Surgery. In addition, statutory consultees such as Durham Constabulary and DAD were also contacted for their views.
13. A total of 77 residents responded to the consultation, a response rate in the region of 7%.
14. There was a clear majority in favour of all elements of the scheme apart from the vehicular point closure in Louisa Street and this element has subsequently been omitted from the final proposal. The question relating to vehicle speed and, by inference, satisfaction with the speed cushions indicated that approx 85% considered there to be a problem and 65% thought that the scheme would be effective in reducing speeds.
15. The scheme was also supported by Durham Constabulary, Dodmire School and the Neasham Road surgery. Ward members and the Transport Portfolio Holder are supportive of the scheme on the proviso that the vehicular point closure be omitted.

16. Residents were advised of the intention to progress with a scheme and were also advised that a notice was to be published. The notice of the Councils intention to construct the speed cushions (dated 24 June 2009) was advertised in the local press pursuant to Section 90a of the Highways Act 1980, to afford residents the opportunity to object to the proposals. The objection period ended on 15 July 2009 and one letter of objection was received from a resident living in Lewes Road. The table below details the different issues raised in the objection letter and a response from officers.

Issue	Officer response
<p>I continue to sincerely object to road humps and a 20mph zone enforcement in Lewes Road. I do not agree that there is a need for such measures.</p> <p>I have lived here for over 20 years and my children have been brought up here both going to Dodmire School. Sensible parenting abolishes risk and potential harm.</p>	<p>The need for reducing the speed of traffic has been identified by staff and children of Dodmire School. The installation of road humps (speed cushions) is proven to effectively maintain low vehicle speeds in keeping with a speed limit of 20mph. Speed cushions can reduce both the number and severity of road traffic accidents and reduce the public perception of danger on the road. Sensible parenting has an important part to play in reducing overall risk to children. The majority of the local residents that responded to the public consultation exercise were in support of this element of the scheme.</p>
<p>The level of disturbance pre, during and post work undertaken will cause more problems than residents already experience. Parking in Lewes Road is disgraceful, it is rare I can park outside my own house. Introduction of humps will only serve to restrict parking even further.</p>	<p>Disturbance from the works will be kept to a minimum and the actual period during which works will be undertaken immediately adjacent to the objectors property in Lewes Road will be 3-4 days maximum, although this will not be a continuous operation. There will be some minor reduction in the availability of parking spaces during the construction phase to accommodate the construction process and associated traffic management. Once the works are complete vehicles will still be able to park on or adjacent to the speed cushions with no resultant loss of on-street parking availability.</p>
<p>According to the plans you sent out (which were actually difficult to read) you propose a hump near directly outside my property I am not happy with this</p>	<p>The siting of traffic calming measures is directed by stringent guidelines on the spacing of such measures. As such the guidance directs us to provide a feature approximately midway along Lewes Road which happens to be in the vicinity of the objector's house. The comment relating to the legibility of the plans will be considered and acted upon in any future scheme consultations.</p>

Issue	Officer response
<p>I also perceive continuous travel over these calming methods even at the right speed causes stress to a car.</p>	<p>Studies undertaken by Government departments have found no evidence, provided vehicles proceed in a correct manner and at appropriate speeds, of any additional damage to vehicle tyres or suspension components resulting from overriding road humps.</p>
<p>The money you have available could be better spent improving the major roads in Darlington so car owners (road tax payers) do not have to suffer uneven roads and pot holes.</p>	<p>The funding for this scheme forms part of the Integrated Transport block of the Local Transport Plan 2006-2011 and as such should not be used for highway maintenance. Highway maintenance funding is provided separately and prioritised by automated and manual condition surveys with those roads most in need of improvement given the highest priority.</p>