

## **REPORT AGENDA ITEM 10**

### **LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL HIGHWAYS FORUM FOR HARBOROUGH**

**15<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2010**

#### **A47 – ROAD SAFETY**

### **REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT**

#### **Purpose of Report**

1. To update Members on improvement works identified in the recent A47 road traffic accident analysis report.
2. To advise Members on the outcome of the speed limit review on the 50mph stretch of the A47 through Skeffington.

#### **Background**

3. Following local concerns about safety on the A47 that is located within the district of Harborough, it was agreed that an analysis of the road traffic accidents along this route would be undertaken. The results of this analysis were presented at the Highways Forum on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2010.
4. The accident analysis carried out along the A47 corridor did not identify any serious accident problems that warranted immediate attention. However, the study did recommend a number of measures to help motorists negotiate their way safely along this busy route.
5. Running concurrently with the accident analysis on the A47, a review of the existing speed limits on each of Leicestershire's A and B roads was also being carried out. This was at the request of the Department for Transport (DfT), who asked for all local authorities to undertake a review of their speed limits in accordance with Circular 01/2006.
6. Circular 01/2006 marked a change in the way that speed limits are assessed, recommending that mean traffic speeds should be used as the basis in determining local speed limits. This was a change from the use of 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speeds, as recommended in earlier DfT guidance.

## **Accident data**

7. Accident data used in both the accident analysis and the speed limit review has been taken from STATS19, the official record of personal injury accidents reported to the police that have occurred on the public highway. The classification of the severity of an accident is determined by the severity of the injury to the most severely injured casualty.
8. Reported injury accident figures for the 50mph section of the A47 through Skeffington reveal that, on average, there has been one injury accident per year for the last 17 years. This is consistent with the accident analysis report, which identified 5 injury accidents along the same stretch of road during the last 5 years.

## **Accident Analysis remedial works**

9. Improvement works identified in the accident analysis report are currently programmed for mid-September 2010. This includes the trimming of vegetation to the south-east of the Main Street junction in Skeffington, and the replacement of the induction loops that trigger the vehicle activated signs when a vehicle is waiting to turn right into Main Street. These signs will show the "side road" diagram.

## **Speed Limit Review**

10. The suitability of speed limits on the A47 was assessed as part of the County's review of speed limits on all A and B class roads. Factors such as the flow, composition (including pedestrians) and speed of traffic and the number of reported injury accidents were taken into consideration, as was the road function, local environment and road geometry in determining the most appropriate speed limit.
11. The A47 (Harborough district) was split into 10 sections for the speed limit review. Generally speaking, each section demonstrated uniform characteristics and was subject to a single speed limit.
12. The speed limit review found that there was compliance with the speed limit in each of the 10 sections. Furthermore, the collision rate in each section was such that speed reduction measures were not necessary. Collision rates did not exceed the upper threshold for the function of the road, demonstrating that motorists are able to travel at their current speeds safely.
13. In Skeffington, mean speed readings were taken from 7 different locations within 300m of the Main Street junction. This data was collected from speed-reading equipment installed in a vehicle parked on the adjacent verge, and was collected during free-flowing traffic conditions.

14. DfT guidance recommends the use of mean traffic speeds for determining speed limits on local roads (Circular 01/2006). The mean speed of traffic at the 7 survey sites was calculated at 46 mph (46.7mph eastbound, 45.3 mph westbound).
15. The speed limit review recommended that the 50mph speed limit be retained through Skeffington. An extract from the national speed assessment framework illustrating the relationship between traffic flow, mean traffic speed and traffic flow along the A47 through Skeffington is provided in [Appendix A](#).
16. The police have considered the findings of both the accident analysis and the speed limit review along the A47 through Skeffington, and have conducted their own observations along this section of the route. Based upon the information provided and their own investigations, the police have confirmed that they would not support the introduction of a 40 mph speed limit on the A47 at Skeffington.
17. The police confirmed their views in an e-mail dated 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2010, stating that the current speed data implies that a 50mph limit is appropriate for this stretch of carriageway. The police consider that a 40 mph speed limit through Skeffington would not seem reasonable or necessary to most drivers using the road. There is no settlement on the northern side of the A47 and, in the absence of factors to support a lower limit, drivers would simply choose to ignore a 40 limit. The police confirm that any reduction in the current speed limit would undoubtedly lead to an ongoing enforcement problem for them.

## **Conclusion**

18. The road traffic accident analysis carried out on the A47 did not identify any serious accident problems that needed to be addressed through a reduction in the posted speed limit.
19. The speed limit review found that speed limits have been applied consistently along the stretch of the A47 running through the Harborough district. Speed limits were also found to be set appropriately for the function of the road and the nature of the local environment.
20. The speed assessment framework suggests that a speed limit of 50mph is suitable for Skeffington. There is good compliance with the speed limit, and the prevailing speed of traffic appears to be suitable for the local conditions without adverse effect on the collision rate.
21. Based upon the evidence from the speed limit review and the recent accident analysis study, there is no justification for a reduction of the speed limit from 50 to 40 mph in Skeffington.

## **Recommendations**

22. It is recommended that Members note the conclusion that the 50mph speed limit through Skeffington be retained.

## **Officer to Contact**

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