

## TRAFFIC CALMING MEASURES INFORMATION REPORT

<b>Committee name</b>	Property, Highways and Transport Select Committee
<b>Officer reporting</b>	David Knowles, Place Directorate
<b>Papers with report</b>	None
<b>Ward</b>	All

### HEADLINES

This report is intended to offer advice to Members of the Property, Highways & Transport Select Committee on traffic calming, in accordance with their request for an information report looking at the different methods of traffic calming undertaken by the Council and which scenarios would dictate the type of traffic calming required.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

**That the Property, Highways and Transport Select Committee note the contents of the report.**

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The history of the management of Highways by local bodies goes back to the Highways Act of 1555, and so predates the formation of most of the administrative bodies that form local government today. The original premise was:

The Act provided that each year, in the Easter week, every parish was to elect "two honest persons" of the parish to serve as the Surveyor of Highways, who would be responsible for the upkeep of those highways within the parish boundaries which ran to market towns.

The Surveyors would announce, on the first Sunday after Easter and four days before 24 June, on which the maintenance work was to be carried out, and for these four days the whole parish was to work on the highways.

Every person, for every ploughland they held in the parish, and every other person keeping a draught team or plough there, was to provide a cart or wain equipped for the work, and two able-bodied men, on a penalty of 10s per draught; the Surveyors could, at their discretion, require a further two men instead of the cart. Every other householder, as well as every other cottager and labourer free to labour, was to send themselves or a substitute able-bodied labourer to work for the four days, on a penalty of 12d per day apiece. All labourers were to provide their own equipment, and bound to work for eight hours each day upon the roads.

Over the ensuing half a millennium, statute and those responsible have changed, but the

underlying principle that the local authority has the duty of maintaining and managing the highways in their area has not varied.

## LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

There is a raft of legislation which covers management of the highway, both in terms of how the roads and footways are looked after (e.g. The Highways Act 1980) and also how people and traffic moves over them (e.g. The Road Traffic Act 1991 and the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984).

Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 places a “*Duty to maintain highways maintainable at public expense. The authority who are for the time being the highway authority for a highway maintainable at the public expense are under a duty... to maintain the highway*”.

Other legislation specifically defines such aspects of the highway as Pedestrian Crossings, the types of Traffic Signs and Road Markings which are legally allowed to be introduced, methods of management of roadworks (Traffic Signs Manual, Chapter Eight), rules for ‘loading and waiting’ (parking) and there are also regulations and guidance relating to certain types of traffic calming.

Last but not least, the Highway Code (recently revised) provides advice to all users of the highway; the Highway Code itself is not law but it can be cited by the Police in any prosecution as an established ‘Code of Practice’.

## WHO DOES WHAT?

It is important to appreciate the various powers that are held by the different bodies involved in looking after both our highways and the ways that people and traffic move over them. Maintenance of the roads and footways other than those owned by other bodies<sup>1</sup> is undertaken by the Council’s Highways Maintenance Team and they oversee regimes of inspection and maintenance, which include set criteria including so-called ‘trip levels’ as well as managing work by third parties (e.g. Utility companies like Gas, Water and Electricity). There are annual programmes of maintenance and specialised operations such as winter gritting. Some services are wholly in-house whilst others utilise the services of term contractors.

Parking on and off the highway is overseen by the Council’s Parking Enforcement team and their specialist term contractor. The legal basis upon which this enforcement can be undertaken is underpinned by what are called ‘Traffic Regulation Orders’ and there are prescribed processes

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<sup>1</sup> **TfL roads** in London are known as the ‘TLRN’ or ‘TfL Road Network’ (also sometimes TfL Route Network) and in Hillingdon include sections of the A4, A40, A312 and a short section of the A30. Some roads are also part of the ‘SRN’ or ‘Strategic Route Network’ and in Hillingdon these include the A4020 Uxbridge Road and part of the A404 Rickmansworth Road. The SRN roads are owned and maintained by the Council but TfL has a right to comment on any proposals on these roads. Red routes (indicated by red carriageway markings and associated traffic signs) are exclusive within Greater London to the TLRN; it is not uncommon for the Council to receive a request for a ‘red route’ on its roads.

**National Highways** (formerly Highways England) has roads in Hillingdon including sections of the M4 and M25. Heathrow Airport is a Statutory Highway Authority in its own right. The subject of **private roads** and their status is a whole topic in itself; sufficient debate has ensued on the subject that there exists a special briefing note presented to the House of Commons. In brief, the public may typically retain an established right of access over a private road even if the owners of it are obliged to maintain it. The Council also has powers to move in and repair a private street that is in a very poor condition and seek to recover the costs; seldom does it get that far

for the introduction and amendment of these, which are managed by the Transport & Projects Team.

There is a common misconception that the Council has powers of enforcement over speeding and similarly that the Council can install so-called 'Safety Cameras' of the kind seen in many places.

The Police have the necessary powers of prosecution with regard to speeding; this is because there are penalties that can involve points on a driver's licence and in some cases prosecution in a Court. There has been national debate about extending these powers to other parties, and even some experiments by some local authorities, but at this point the Council must defer to the Police in these matters.

Similarly, what are often popularly known as 'speed cameras' and 'red light cameras' are not installed or operated by London boroughs but within the GLA area are owned, installed, managed, and enforced through a consortium of the Metropolitan Police, Transport for London, 'London Councils' and His Majesty's Courts. The criteria for the installation of these safety cameras has for a long time been based on a pre-existing history of serious injuries or fatalities as a result of a road traffic collision. It is understood that as part of his 'Vision Zero' policy, the Mayor of London proposes to review these criteria; the fact remains, however, that the Council neither installs these cameras nor receives any revenue from them.

## TYPICAL CONCERNS ABOUT ROAD SAFETY

Set out below are a few typical issues which Members may be familiar with from their own correspondence with residents:

- perceived vehicle speeds,
- blind spots,
- visibility issues,
- antisocial driving<sup>2</sup>,
- drivers ignoring one-way working, no entry points or banned turns<sup>3</sup>,
- oversize vehicles using residential streets<sup>4</sup>,
- the lack of safe provision for pedestrians to cross a road.

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<sup>2</sup> **Antisocial driving** is primarily a matter for the Police, but the Council can and does collaborate with them, for example sharing traffic survey data. A survey may show a repetitive pattern of a lone speeder or small number of speeding drivers – in which case the police can choose to target enforcement appropriately. Antisocial driving on *private estate roads* is a matter for the police and the owner of the estate in question. Where the problem extends to behavioural issues the Council's Antisocial Behaviour Team may be able to help.

<sup>3</sup> **One-way Streets, banned turns and no-entries** are governed by Traffic Management Orders ('TMO' - also known as Traffic Regulation Orders). Changes in national legislation in 2004 (Traffic Management Act 2004 Part 6 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/18/part/6> ) granted powers for local authorities to enforce such restrictions (so-called 'moving traffic offences') including by camera. In a few cases the Council has introduced part-time banned turns (some camera-enforced) and these all required special approval from the Secretary of State for Transport, although more of his powers are now delegated to the local authority.

<sup>4</sup> Where considered desirable, the Council may introduce environmental **weight restrictions** (i.e. not solely for the protection of a weak bridge) and these are typically 7.5T limits; these can be enforced by camera and the Council has done so in a number of the Borough's roads. More general lorry movements can be managed by other measures such as overnight parking bans and the London Lorry Control Scheme (LLCS) to which Hillingdon does not presently subscribe.

- a specific request; for example asking for a traffic calming scheme<sup>5</sup>,
- lowering of the speed limit<sup>6</sup>,
- speed camera<sup>7</sup> ('safety camera' – see earlier)
- a speed indicator device<sup>8</sup>
- on-street parking problems if considered a hazard,
- a crossing such as a Zebra Crossing<sup>9</sup> or Traffic-signal crossing<sup>10</sup>.
- It may be that a footway is considered too narrow or non-existent<sup>11</sup>
- Concerns over safety for school children near schools<sup>12</sup>

## TYPES OF TRAFFIC CALMING

There are a number of options open to a local authority, each of which have their potential benefits and disbenefits. They can be summarised broadly as:

- Vertical traffic calming
- Horizontal traffic calming (chicanes)
- Modal filters (e.g. road closures, 'point no entries', one-way working)
- Low Traffic Neighbourhoods
- Cycle lanes and tracks
- 20mph Zones with traffic calming
- Formal pedestrian crossings
- Traffic signals

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<sup>5</sup> **Traffic Calming:** The Council, in common with most highway authorities, no longer introduces the old-fashioned round-topped humps sometime called 'sleeping policemen'. There are however various other types of physical traffic calming, some of which require consultation and public notices.

<sup>6</sup> Speed limits are also governed by TMO on Borough roads, these are the responsibility of the relevant Borough, but the police retain sole powers of enforcement. 'The Metropolitan Police enforce all speed limits in London. They do this using on-street officers, mobile speed cameras and fixed speed cameras. In 2018, 154,785 people were caught and penalised for speeding related offences, including 38,878 on 20mph limit roads. The Metropolitan Police will continue enforcing all speed limits across London, including where new speed limits are in place'.

<sup>7</sup> As noted in the main text, so-called 'Safety Cameras' are not installed, owned, managed or maintained by any of the London Boroughs; they are instead managed by a consortium of TfL, the Metropolitan Police, Her Majesty's Courts and London Councils (the body representing the interests of all 33 London local authorities). There is a common and entirely understandable assumption by many of the general public that these cameras can be put in by the Council and furthermore that the Council can earn a revenue from them; that is not correct. The endorseable offence of speeding is one managed by the Police and as is well known can lead to a prosecution, fine and points on a driver's licence.

<sup>8</sup> A 'speed indicator device' (SID) or 'vehicle activated sign' (VAS) uses a radar system to detect the speed of an approaching vehicle and flashes a warning message if the driver is exceeding the speed limit. There are variants with warning messages and 'smiley faces' available. A key practical consideration for some sites may be the proximity of a suitable power supply.

<sup>9</sup> A Zebra Crossing is defined in national legislation. When being considered, the Council has to publish what is called a 'Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, Section 23' Notice <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1984/27/section/23>.

<sup>10</sup> In Greater London there are around 6,000 sets of traffic signals. All of them, across all Borough and TfL jurisdictions, are owned, installed and maintained by TfL. As with safety cameras, there is again a common assumption by the public that this equipment is the responsibility of the local Council (which is often the case outside Greater London)

<sup>11</sup> The Council's Principal Accessibility Officer is often invited to investigate claims of poor access. Clearly many potential solutions have other consequences. In the past (mostly ca 2000), the Council granted a number of informal 'non enforcement', so-called 'footway exemption' arrangements with residents in certain roads which allowed limited footway parking with two-wheels-up. There is a register of these. If petitioners want to see these arrangements changed, they could be and a letter would need to be sent to all affected households. The Council seldom has a budget to create entirely new footways on roads that do not have them.

<sup>12</sup> The Council's School Travel and Road Safety Team (STaRS) works very closely with every school in the Borough that is prepared to collaborate. The team provide excellent support in terms of road safety education – pedestrian and cycle training – as well as assisting in the development of School Travel Plans and bids for funding for road safety improvements. There are also a small number of School Crossing Patrols in post

- Banned movements (e.g. no entry, banned turns)
- Signed-only speed limits
- Road markings such as cycle lanes, edge markings, centre lines
- Enhanced and Electronic signs

Looking at these in turn:

### **VERTICAL TRAFFIC CALMING**

The origins of this type of traffic calming is the round-topped 'speed hump' (which used to be known colloquially as 'sleeping policemen'). These are seldom used on the public highway by most local authorities, although such severe 'humps' are often seen on private roads such as hospital or supermarket car parks.

More amenable is the 'flat-topped' speed-table, which is generally less severe and in many cases can have the added benefit of providing a safer pedestrian or cycle crossing point. On bus routes, TfL has a recommended design standard for raised tables designed to avoid problems for buses.

A further option is the 'speed cushion' which comprises a series of transverse raised sections of the road surface with gaps designed to help smooth passage by emergency response vehicles, cyclists and motorcyclists.

It is generally accepted that vertical traffic calming is the most effective form of speed reduction, but there can be an undesirable side effect. Some less considerate drivers of lorries, with their more substantial suspension, may ignore raised traffic calming features. There is a particular issue with some skip lorries where the chains are often unsecured, and such lorries driven at speed over vertical traffic calming can increase the noise nuisance for nearby residents.

Traffic calming of this kind does necessitate public consultation with a formal Cabinet Member decision making process.

### **HORIZONTAL TRAFFIC CALMING**

Typically this kind of traffic calming involves chicanes, occasionally in the form of short lengths of road narrowing. These are most frequently seen on country roads on the entry and exit from small towns or villages, sometimes with a 'welcome to –' sign on the approach, or 'thank you for driving carefully' on exit.

They are seldom used nowadays in residential areas because:

- There are doubts that they genuinely reduce speeds other than right next to where they are sited;
- They can actually lead to an increased risk of head-on collisions;
- They nearly always result in a reduction of parking capacity;
- They are often expensive and ugly

## **MODAL FILTERS**

These tend to be measures such as road closures or width restrictions (sometimes with an exemption for one class of vehicle – e.g. bicycles or buses). They are intended to reduce rat-running, but inevitably they have other consequences:

- They almost inevitably increase journeys to and from their homes for some residents;
- They can cause issues on emergency services response routes and for other services such as refuse services, as well as home-deliveries where the vehicles concerned are large
- **Low Traffic Neighbourhoods** tend to comprise a series of entry restrictions. They can be camera-enforced with permitted exemptions for residents, but are often controversial, complex and expensive to operate

## **CYCLE LANES AND TRACKS**

Modern design practice eschews the previous tendency to simply mark advisory cycle lanes, which are not mandatory and so may be parked over or driven in. It is an offence to drive in a 'mandatory cycle lane' (with a solid rather than a broken white line) but these are seldom easy to enforce. One benefit of a cycle network is that it does not necessarily have to be constrained to the conventional highway network.

## **TRAFFIC CALMED 20MPH ZONES**

The best way to actually reduce traffic speeds usually involve some form of physical intervention, and the Metropolitan Police do not generally support (at a local level at least) areas with speed limits indicated by signs alone. Enforcement, as already noted, remains a matter for the Police and so their support and resources are essential. The case for 20mph Zones is arguably strongest in the vicinity of schools.

## **FORMAL PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS**

Experiments began in 1947 with striped crossings, and flashing beacons became compulsory in 1954, their name coming from the name of a Transport Minister, Leslie Hore-Belisha. Zebra Crossings were further enhanced with new regulations under a Statutory Instrument in 1971. Zebra Crossings can be introduced by local authorities but there is a legal 'notice' required. There are assessment criteria used based on the numbers of pedestrians and the speeds of traffic. A variation is the raised Zebra Crossing, which involves a crossing over a raised speed table.

As an alternative, **traffic signal controlled pedestrian crossings** are sometimes considered; these are the responsibility (in Greater London) of TfL, which manages the London-wide network of around 6,000 traffic signals. The Council can and often will make the case for such a crossing, but it is reliant upon agreement by TfL who now levy an up-front charge for formal consideration of a new signal controlled installation requested by a borough.

In many cases, the pedestrian numbers are low and in such cases, alternatives may be the use of refuge islands and dropped kerbs; these are known as 'informal crossings'.

## **BANNED MOVEMENTS**

The Council is nowadays able to introduce bans on certain movements, provided they are governed by a suitable Traffic Regulation Order. Typically camera-enforced, these restrictions can in many cases (other than 'no-entries') be made part-time. An increasingly common feature has been the camera-enforced weight restriction (7.5T vehicles; buses, public service and emergency vehicles are exempt). Banned side turnings have been used in some places with part-time hours of operation, the idea being to only restrict movements during peak hours. Bus lanes are operated by TfL in Greater London and they often use camera for enforcement.

## **SIGNED-ONLY SPEED LIMITS**

There has been a growth in the popularity of signed-only 20mph Zones, but there tends to be a range of views on how effective they are. The Police tend to the view that without enforcement, they may be ineffectual as the kind of driver who speeds ignores limits in any case; the counter argument is that lowering speed limits provides the basis of a culture change and if average traffic speeds genuinely fall, then risks to pedestrians may fall accordingly. A handful of local authorities are hoping to explore camera-enforcement but as already noted, speeding enforcement remains fundamentally a matter for the Police. It is likely that the science and practice may evolve over time, for example through the growth of autonomous vehicles and in-vehicle speed management devices.

## **ROAD MARKINGS**

It is sometimes possible to improve road safety simply by the judicious application of white lines, sometimes combined with coloured road surfacing and also with the application of Anti-Skid road surfacing.

Frequently the simple recourse of waiting restrictions – typically single or double yellow lines – may be beneficial in removing a problem of obstructive parking – such as at a junction, or on a blind bend in a road. However it must be borne in mind that even the simplest yellow line requires a formal consultation which involves public notice(s) and advertisements in the local paper and the London Gazette. The Council is obliged to consider any objections received during the 21-day notice period.

## **ENHANCED SIGNS & ELECTRONIC SIGNS**

It is sometimes possible to make existing signs more conspicuous; the simplest manner is to either make the sign itself bigger (provided it still complies with the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2017) or to add a yellow backing board. Occasionally signs may be obscured by vegetation, or sited poorly for some historic reason; these can usually be addressed through judicious maintenance.

The Council has introduced a number of so-called 'Zebrite' LED haloes which are mounted either around or sometimes even within the traditional Belisha Beacons; Hillingdon was one of the first in the London area to use these and they are nowadays frequently seen elsewhere. They are intended to make the site of the Zebra Crossing more conspicuous. Another innovation is the internally illuminated black-and-white-striped Zebra Belisha pole.

Lastly, the Council has invested in a number of electronic 'Vehicle Activated Signs' (VAS) which flash warning messages to drivers – sometimes telling them to slow down to the posted speed limit, but also in some cases providing warning of a bend.

## **CHOOSING THE BEST COURSE OF ACTION**

As with most things, evidence is generally the key; public perceptions of road safety vary enormously from individual to individual; what may seem normal to one person may seem frightening to another. Noisy exhausts, narrow roads, large lorries passing near the kerb line can all seem intimidating.

In nearly every case, an important 'first port of call' for a concerned party is to approach their local Safer Neighbourhood Team, who if they are able and willing may conduct some speed surveys with hand-held equipment, undertake some vehicle stops, and may elicit the support of their Police Traffic and Road Safety colleagues. The Council cannot commit Police Resources but our officers do work closely with the emergency services and for example there are regular 'Traffic Liaison Meetings' aimed at addressing road safety and other traffic issues.

A good way for residents to start the ball rolling is for them to discuss amongst themselves the kind of issues they can agree upon and to identify the kind of changes they feel that they can all support. This can form the basis of a petition to the Council which, provided there are enough signatures, qualifies the lead petitioner to meet with the Cabinet Member for Property, Highways and Transport in order to state their case. This process can be supported by the local Ward Members and indeed for obvious reasons such petitions tend to be more successful where the petitioners have spoken to their Ward Members to discuss their ideas and to receive any guidance on what the members think might work for the community.

If such a petition comes in, it is helpful on several levels because firstly it supports the argument that a number of neighbours agree there is a problem (rather than just one or two households) and ensures that the proposal is driven by the community rather than by us. We will often follow up later with a consultation but the existence of a petition is often (but not always) an indication of the likelihood of a successful outcome. Secondly it facilitates a discussion with the Council about what and where the real problems are, and what kind of solution would be most acceptable (clearly the various forms of traffic calming measures can be popular or unpopular).

A well-supported petition can be the start of a process which could include traffic volume and speed surveys, design and costing studies, and where appropriate lead to bids for the funds required. Depending on the nature of what is proposed, further consultations with residents may be necessary.

Clearly many such petitions have over the years led to traffic calming schemes and even 20 mph Zones but it must be appreciated that there are often many such requests that the Council receives. The challenge for Members in such cases is to balance the relative needs in each case and ensure that anything which comes out of the process is both justified and well-supported, not to mention compliant with all the standards.

In cases where there appears to be some evidence, such as from a petition, then a next step may typically be to commission independent traffic surveys. These generally use pneumatic tubes across the carriageway, linked to an electronic computer which are fixed in position for a week to ten days, which record details of traffic type, time, frequency and speed over the survey period.

From these surveys, it is possible to assess, in a totally independent and unbiased way, the real nature of traffic movements over the road. The task is then to assess the findings of the survey to see if there is sufficient justification for the costs involved in making changes. The Council has access to various budgets and grants, but understandably it has to prioritise expenditure and these surveys are an important element.

The final elements involve briefing the relevant Cabinet Member(s), undertaking design work, consulting residents and ward councillors as necessary, confirming the budget and seeking the appropriate capital authority to spend money on the chosen solution.

## **RESIDENT BENEFIT**

The measures set out in this note have the potential, where used wisely, to benefit road safety for residents and other road users.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

This report was requested as a review of the types of measures which might be practical to consider; as such it does not seek to set out costs which can vary considerably on a case by case basis.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

NIL.