



Petitions Panel

24 January 2017

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 – Request for traffic calming measures on A357 at Newton.

- 2.1 The County Council received a petition organised by Ms C Drury on 28 November 2016. This reads as follows:

We the undersigned petition the council to undertake traffic calming measures on the A357 between North Dorset Business Park and Sturminster Newton Bridge. This is in order to reduce the speed of traffic through the built area of Newton.

The speed of traffic on the A357 through Newton is a danger to pedestrians and other road users. The volume and speed of large vehicle is having a damaging impact on historic buildings within the conservation area. Immediate action by the Highways Authority is required to calm the flow of traffic through this historic area.

- 2.2 As this petition contains more than 50 signatures, the Panel are invited to note and discuss.
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 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 A357 from North Dorset Business Park to Sturminster Newton Bridge has speed limits of 40mph and 30mph.

The 30mph limit is 'by virtue of street lighting'. The strict regulations for such 30mph speed limits mean that no repeater signs or painted '30' roundels can be used. Doing so would effectively render the 30mph speed limit unenforceable.

There are footways on both sides of the A357 through Newton. The southern side of the road has footway through the entire length continuing towards Sturminster Newton Bridge where there is a formal crossing at the signalled junction.

The northern side of the A357 through Newton has some footways but not for the entire length. Housing and parking provision has restricted the extent of footway.

There is no crossing provision across the A357 in Newton. There is a pedestrian crossing at the signals for Sturminster Newton Bridge.

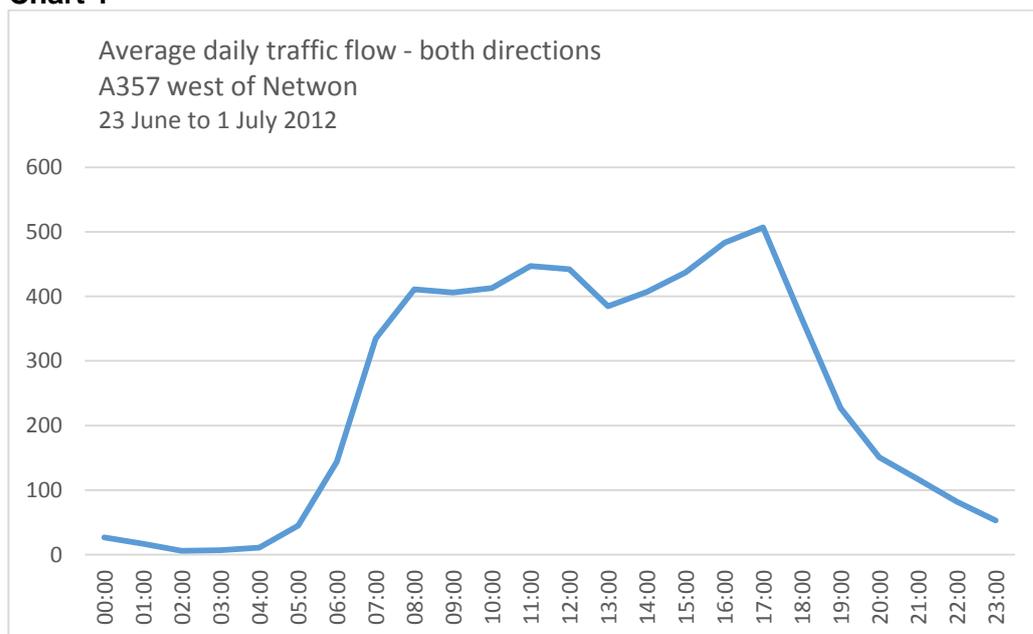
A map showing the area specific to this petition as well as either side can be found at Appendix A.

3.2 Traffic survey data. There is no traffic survey data for the 30mph section of the A357. A nine day survey was conducted in June 2012 in the 40mph section approximately 120m west of the 30mph limit terminal to the west of Newton.

The average number of vehicles using the A357 through Newton was recorded as 5924 per day; the eastbound/westbound split is near 50/50.

Chart 1 below shows the average number of vehicles per hour.

Chart 1



The average number of vehicles per minute between 07:00 and 20:00 was recorded as approximately 7 vehicles per minute; between 16:00 and 18:00 an average of just over 8 vehicles per minute.

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The traffic speeds recorded showed a reasonable adherence to the 40mph limit. The mean average speed of all vehicles was 38mph and the 85%ile speed was just below 44mph.

A speed survey could be conducted within the 30mph limit at Newton to understand the general speed of traffic to inform any decisions.

3.3 Sturminster Newton Town Council's Neighbourhood Plan includes a request for a new crossing on the A357 close to Orchard Close. It is not clear whether this would be feasible. The purpose of mentioning this, in this report, is to show that wider considerations are being made.

3.4 Sturminster Newton Town Council's Neighbourhood Plan also requests that traffic calming be considered on the same section requested by this petition.

3.5 Traffic calming is split into two types, 'soft' and 'hard'.

3.6 Traffic signing and lining are seen as 'soft' calming measures. They are relatively inexpensive and often result in an improvement in driver behaviour.

It is important to note that 'whole life' costs should be taken into account i.e. ongoing maintenance.

3.7 'Hard' traffic calming features fit into two categories, vertical and horizontal.

Vertical traffic calming features are those which vehicles drive over; speed humps or cushions. Horizontal features are those which vehicles drive through or around; chicanes or pinch points for example.

The cost of installation is high, particularly when applied to a route.

Both vertical and horizontal forms of traffic calming do result in a general reduction in vehicle speed. However considerations need to be made on the potential negative impacts such schemes can have.

Horizontal traffic calming features are the most common form of 'new' traffic calming features.

Horizontal traffic calming features are installed on routes used as 'rat runs' where traffic speeds are notably higher than the speed limit.

They tend to be used on routes where there is notable pedestrian movements alongside and across the road and where speed has been recorded as a common theme in the occurrence of collisions, i.e. close to schools or where there is a mix of residential properties and local shops/services.

3.8 Vertical features are those which raise the level of roads at intervals i.e. speed humps and raised tables.

Vertical features are used much less often than in the past. The cost of installation and ongoing maintenance is prohibitive.

As a general rule vertical calming features are only used on predominantly residential/commercial roads that are not part of the strategic route network; this section of the A357 does not meet this requirement as it is part of the strategic route network.

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- 3.9 Horizontal traffic calming features are the most common form of ‘new’ traffic calming features.

Horizontal traffic calming features are installed on routes used as ‘rat runs’ where traffic speed are notably higher than the speed limit.

They tend to be used on routes where there is notable pedestrian movement alongside and across the road. Typically where there is a mix of residential properties and local shops/services where vehicle movements are not the priority.

The A357 is a strategic route and any form of physical traffic calming would likely create greater issues than those that reportedly exist now.

- 3.10 Vertical and horizontal calming features are not universally welcomed. Emergency services are generally opposed to their use on key routes as they impact upon response times and make transporting injured patients more problematic for the Ambulance Service. Bus companies are also opposed to such features due to the impact upon journey times and seriously consider alternative routes to avoid proposed traffic calmed areas.

Residents can also be negatively affected by vertical traffic calming features due to the additional noise they create, both due to vehicles slowing prior to and accelerating after the feature and the noise created by vehicles travelling over such features. The latter is a particular issue for larger vehicles such as trucks, buses and agricultural vehicles.

Horizontal traffic calming features can also create noise that residents find more disruptive. Although typically travelling slower, the noise generated by vehicles decelerating and accelerating through horizontal features is typically louder than without such calming features.

Horizontal calming features can also present areas of conflict between vehicles that did not previously exist. This will be explained at the petition panel meeting.

‘Hard’ traffic calming measures would likely result in an adverse impact on traffic flows. If horizontal features were to be installed traffic congestion would be likely and frequent at peak times which would present a negative impact upon residents with increased pollution and the noise of stationary traffic.

- 3.11 Due to the existing layout and strategic use of this section of the A357 any form of physical traffic calming would likely create greater issues than those that reportedly exist now.
- 3.12 Soft traffic calming measures such as signing and lining could be considered as an option.
- 3.13 Lining can be used to enhance the beginning of the 30mph limit for eastbound traffic on the A357.
- 3.14 Consideration could also be given to refreshing the edge lining throughout the 30mph section at Newton. A function of edge lining is to visually narrow the carriageway to encourage drivers to travelling at an appropriate speed.
- 3.15 Collision data available to the County Council is provided and validated by Dorset Police. It includes collisions that occurred on public highway reported to the police that resulted in personal injury to any person(s) involved.

It is accepted that this data is not the complete picture of collisions that have occurred however, it the most robust and reliable data available to the County Council.

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It is standard practice to assess the most recent five year period of collisions when considering/identify safety schemes.

Between August 2011 and September 2016 there were a total of two injury collisions (both slight) recorded in the Newton area.

One was at the jct to Sturminster Mill and one near to Newton Gate in the 40mph section of the A357.

The details of the collisions cannot be included within this report for data protection reasons. A summary will be provided at the petition panel meeting.

- 3.16 It is not known whether colleagues at Dorset Police or Dorset Road Safe (camera enforcement) have ever conducted enforcement of the existing 30mph limit on the A357 at Newton. Enquiries could be made requesting that enforcement is carried out, however, there may not be a suitable location for the enforcement equipment to be set up.
- 3.17 Dorset Road Safe manage the Community Speed Watch (CSW) programme for the Dorset area. It is not known if Newton has a CSW group. This is something that could be looked into by Newton Residents' Association.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1 The Panel is invited to note the receipt of this petition and decide how to respond to it, possible options are available in paragraph 2.5.

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