

A31, RINGWOOD - REQUEST FOR A 50 MPH SPEED LIMIT

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At Council on 27 October 2008 the following motion was referred to the Planning and Transportation Review Panel:

Speed Limit on A31

“That in consideration of the high number of recorded motor accidents from minor to fatal, reported on the A31 section at Ringwood, and as a result of public concern and demand, this Council requests the Highways Agency to implement a 50 mph speed limit on the A31 from Picket Post to link up with the 50 mph speed limit already in operation on the A31 at St Leonards

- # 1.2 The Planning and Transportation Review Panel considered the above motion at its meeting held on the 19 November, the report attached as Appendix A refers.

2. RESULTS OF THE PANEL’S CONSIDERATION OF THE MOTION

- 2.1 Cllr Thierry’s motion was considered by the Panel. The Panel concluded that most effective way of reducing the number of road casualties was through a package of measures. The Panel felt that the speed limit should be reduced to 50 mph but that other measures would also contribute towards improving road safety. Also that queue detection linked to warning signs had significant road safety benefits and could be provided within a relatively short period.

- 2.2 The Panel’s recommendation was as follows:

The Panel recommends to Cabinet that the Highways Agency is informed that NFDC:

- (i) Thanks the Highways Agency for providing accident information and details of their emerging proposals for the A31.
- (ii) Requests urgent action is taken to reduce the number and severity of personal injury accidents along the A31 from Picket Post to the Hampshire/Dorset county boundary.
- (iii) Urges the Highways Agency to introduce a package of measures that will improve road safety along the A31 in the Ringwood area and improve conditions for residents near the A31 including:
 - queue detection linked to warning signs to alert drivers to traffic queues ahead within the next 12 months
 - the trial use of road markings (possibly chevrons on the road surface) to help drivers to better judge their speed
 - the introduction of a 50 mph speed limit with appropriate enforcement
 - the development of detailed proposals to close the West Street link to the A31 so as to enable further consultations with the Council and others to be undertaken.

- the development of proposals to improve the westbound carriageway of the A31 before 2012 by the addition of a westbound traffic lane on the A31 west of the “on slip” from the A338/B3347 roundabout so as to enable further consultations with the Council and others to be undertaken.

(iv) Asks the Highways Agency to inform the Council of its timescale for implementing the above measures and the estimated costs.

3. ENVIRONMENTAL, FINANCIAL CRIME & DISORDER, EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The environmental and crime & disorder implications for the possible closure of the West Street link to the A31 and the proposed additional westbound traffic lane on the A31 west of the “on slip” from the A338/B3347 roundabout will be considered when detailed proposals are available from the Highways Agency.

3.2 There are no significant environmental and crime & disorder implications from the other proposals. The limited visual impact of additional signs will be offset by significant road safety benefits. Widespread compliance with any new 50 mph speed limit is likely to require special enforcement measures such as average speed enforcement cameras (SPECS).

3.3 There are no equality or diversity implications from any of the proposals.

3.4 There are no financial implications for this Council from any of the proposals.

4. PORTFOLIO HOLDER’S COMMENTS

4.1 The Planning and Transportation Portfolio Holder agrees with recommendations set out in this report.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 It is recommended that the Council:

- (a) Thanks the Highways Agency for providing accident information and details of their emerging proposals for the A31.
- (b) Requests urgent action is taken to reduce the number and severity of personal injury accidents along the A31 from Picket Post to the Hampshire/Dorset county boundary.
- (c) Urges the Highways Agency to introduce a package of measures that will improve road safety along the A31 in the Ringwood area and improve conditions for residents near the A31 including:
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 - the introduction of a 50 mph speed limit with appropriate enforcement

- the development of detailed proposals to close the West Street link to the A31 so as to enable further consultations with the Council and others to be undertaken.
 - the development of proposals to improve the westbound carriageway of the A31 before 2012 by the addition of a westbound traffic lane on the A31 west of the “on slip” from the A338/B3347 roundabout so as to enable further consultations with the Council and others to be undertaken.
- (d) Asks the Highways Agency to inform the Council of its timescale for implementing the above measures and the estimated costs.

For further information please contact:

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Background Papers

Published papers

PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION REVIEW PANEL – 19 NOVEMBER 2008

A31, RINGWOOD**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 At Council on 27 October 2008 the following motion was referred to the Planning and Transportation Review Panel:

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2. Road Safety

- 2.1 The Highways Agency (HA) have provided details of recent recorded injury accidents. There have been 63 recorded injury accidents (involving 168 vehicles) during the recent 3 year period resulting in 98 casualties as detailed in Appendix 1. The two recent fatal accidents were pedestrian fatalities. The Police and Highways Agency Officers have examined the recorded injury accidents on the A31. The table below (taken from Appendix 1) indicates the manoeuvres of the vehicles involved were either stopping, held up or going ahead.

VEHICLE MANOEUVRES	Number	%
REVERSING	1	1
PARKED	3	2
WAITING TO GO AHEAD BUT HELD UP	23	14
STOPPING	51	30
TURNING LEFT	1	1
TURNING RIGHT	1	1
WAITING TO TURN RIGHT	1	1
CHANGING LANE TO LEFT	4	2
CHANGING LANE TO RIGHT	4	2
OVERTAKING MOVING VEHICLE ON ITS NEARSIDE	2	1
GOING AHEAD LEFT HAND BEND	1	1
GOING AHEAD RIGHT HAND BEND	2	1
GOING AHEAD OTHER	74	44
TOTAL	168	

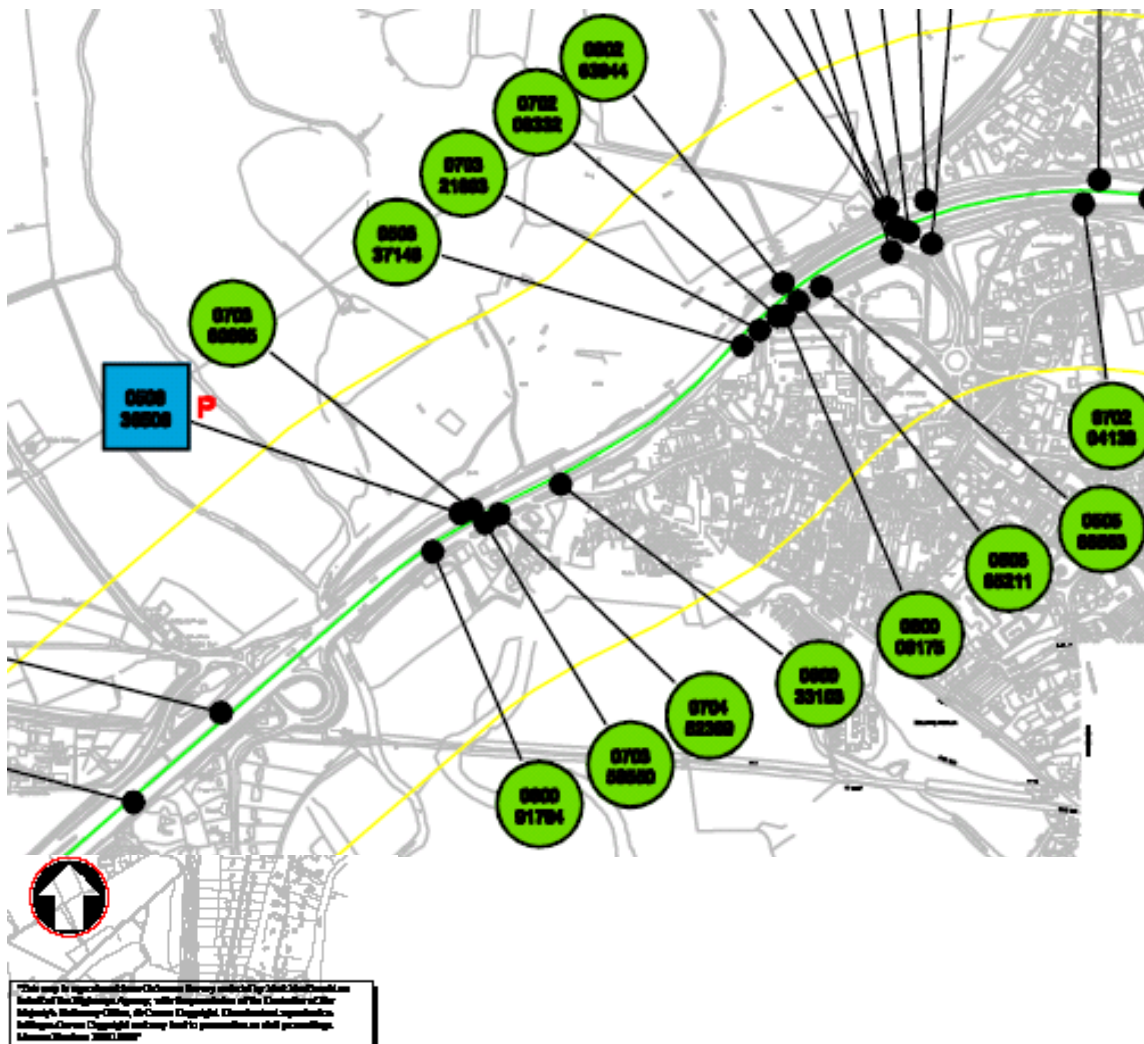
2.3 Very few recorded injury accidents were at junctions with a private drive (2%) or at a “T”, staggered or other junction (4%).

JUNCTION DETAIL		
	Number	%
ROUNDBOUT AND MINI	8	13
T OR STAGGERED	1	2
SLIP ROAD	16	25
PRIVATE DRIVE	1	2
OTHER JUNCTION	1	2
NOT AT JUNCTION	36	57
TOTAL	63	

2.4 On the westbound carriageway (extract of HA's accident plot below – copies of the whole drawing will be available at the meeting) there are accident clusters near:

- the West Street link onto the A31
- the westbound “on slip” from the A338/B3347 roundabout

For the remainder of the A31 between Picket Post and the County boundary the recorded injury accidents are more evenly distributed except there is a cluster round the A338/B3347 roundabout below the dual carriageway.



2.5 Police and Highways Agency Officers have studied that accident information available and concluded that:

- most casualties are due to rear end collisions
- speed is not the main cause of these accidents.
- lowering the speed limit would not significantly reduce the number of recorded injury accidents.
- consideration should be given to engineering measures to reduce the number of rear end collisions.

2.7 In addition, the HA have informally outlined proposals that they would like to progress to improve road safety and reduce congestion on the A31 Westbound carriageway north of Ringwood. It includes the closure of the West Street link onto the A31 and an additional westbound traffic lane on the A31 west on the “on slip” from the A338/B3347 roundabout. It is expected that the Highways Agency will make a decision on this outline proposal improvement during the next 1-2 years. The HA have indicated that they do not plan to introduce a lower speed limit at this time as it does not address either the congestion/increased journey times issues nor the underlying cause of most recorded injury accidents .

2.8 The Police (Roads Policing Unit) note that the injury collision history (1/05/05 to 31/05/08) for A31 between Picket Post and county border shows that there have been almost twice as many collisions on westbound carriageway compared to eastbound. A common cause for these collisions is recorded as 'following too close', 'sudden braking' or 'failed to judge other person's path or speed'. The Police do not believe that a 50mph limit will either significantly alter driver behaviour or reduce the congestion which appears to be the common factor in many of the collisions.

2.9 Achieving a high level of compliance with a 50mph limit will depend heavily on enforcement. The Police believe that due to site constraints time & distance safety cameras (SPECS) is probably the only suitable speed detection/prevention method. Whilst it would achieve a high level of speed limit compliance it is expensive equipment and is unlikely to be installed at this time along this section of the A31 given the views of the Police and HA. It will not reduce congestion.

2.10 The Police believe a reduction in collisions will only be achieved via “engineering” interventions. The Police have suggested a number of possible options to the HA including where queuing is common:

- queue detection linked to warning signs to alert drivers to traffic queues.
- road markings to help drivers to better judge their speed.

2.11 Hampshire County Council has not been formally consulted on the request for a 50mph limit and reserves its position on this matter. The County Council, in its capacity as Local Highway Authority (the A31 is the responsibility of the HA), is seeking a separate meeting with the HA to discuss the A31 including any emerging proposals around Ringwood.

3. Setting Speed Limits

3.1 When setting speed limits regard needs to be given to Government advice Department for Transport Guidance refers

www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/roadsafety/speedmanagement/dftcircular106/dftcircular106.pdf

3.2 The following extract (paragraph 26) is particularly relevant:

*“A study of types of accidents, their severity, causes and frequency, together with a survey of traffic speeds, should indicate whether an existing speed limit is appropriate for the type of road and mix of use by different groups of road users, or whether it needs to be changed. Concerns may also have been expressed by the local community. **It may well be that a speed limit need not be changed if the accident rate can be improved or wider quality of life objectives achieved by other speed management measures. These alternative options should always be considered before proceeding with a new speed limit.**”*

3.3 There is evidence about the impact of speed limits on drivers' behaviour. Findings are at

www.dft.gov.uk/162259/162469/221412/221546/226956/227020/227084/vehiclespeedsingreatbritain2005 and include the following:

- Nearly half of all cars on dual carriageways exceeded the 70 mph speed limit; 13 per cent were travelling faster than 80 mph. Twenty five per cent of motorcycles travelled at more than 80 mph, compared with 21 per cent in 2004.

3.4 It is reasonable to assume that a 50 mph speed limit will not be respected unless average speed enforcement equipment being installed (please also refer to Police comments). There are no plans to install time & distance safety (average speed) enforcement cameras (SPECS) equipment along this section of the A31. It should be noted that the accidents are along the whole length of the A31 so if a lower speed limit was introduced then the selection of the start and end points would need careful consideration as well as the justification for a lower limit on the eastbound carriageway which has a much lower accident rate.

3.5 The HA are responsibly for setting speed limits on the HA. Given the casualty data available, the Government guidance, HA's comments and those of the Police there is no reasonable prospect of a 50 mph being progressed at this time.

4. Congestion

4.1 Both New Forest District Council's emerging Core Strategy and the emerging Sustainable Community Strategy for the New Forest highlight congestion and road safety key issues. Congestion on the A31 is of particular local concern in the Ringwood area.

4.2 HCC's *Hampshire County Freight Strategy* (draft for consultation - available to view and download at hants.gov.uk/consultation) includes diagrams showing that the "stress" levels on the New Forest section of the A31 will have increased from 90-100% in 2004 to over 100% by 2025. This clearly shows that without intervention congestion on the A31 is set to increase significantly above existing levels.

5. Conclusions

5.1 There have been almost twice as many collisions on the westbound carriageway compared to eastbound but the traffic speeds are thought to be similar in both directions (HA have been asked for speed information to check this). A common cause for collisions on the westbound carriageway is 'following too close', 'sudden braking' or 'failed to judge other person's path or speed'.

- 5.2 The Police do not feel that introducing a 50mph speed limit will significantly reduce these types of collisions here.
- 5.3 The Police view is consistent with Government guidance and, given the available accident data, thus there is little prospect of a 50 mph limit being introduced by the HA.
- 5.4 Accidents where private drives join the A31 account for 2% of recorded injury accidents.
- 5.5 The Police and HA believe a reduction in collisions can only realistically be achieved via “engineering” interventions (referred to below).
- 5.6 A lower speed limit will not reduce the increasing levels of congestion and could possibly make congestion worse at times say when traffic “free flow” conditions are about to break down.
- 5.7 HA are considering measures such as queue detection linked to warning signs to alert drivers to traffic queues. The HA are also reviewing the effectiveness of a trial using road markings (chevrons on the road surface) to help drivers to better judge their speed. If the trial is a success the HA may focus their attention. This is all consistent with the advice from the Police.
- 5.8 The HA’s possible improvement to the A31 Westbound carriageway north of Ringwood and the closure of the West Street link to the A31 will, if implemented, both improve road safety and reduce congestion thereby meeting NFDC’s transport policy aspirations.
- 5.9 Without the HA’s proposed improvement congestion will get significantly worse and there may be negative implications for the HA’s position on NFDC’s emerging Core Strategy.

6. Recommendations:

- 6.1 That the Panel consider Cllr Thierry’s motion together with the conclusions in this report and make any recommendations to Cabinet, as appropriate.

APPENDIX 1

ACCIDENT DATA PROVIDED BY HIGHWAYS AGENCY

The following are extracts from the PDF files kindly provided by the Highways Agency (HA). Please note that part of the area covered by the HA's data is within Dorset.

Summary A31 Picket post RAB to Ashley Heath RAB between 01.07.2005 to 31.12.2007 ADR739

CASUALTY SEVERITY UPTO 2007

	2005	2006	2007	Total
Fatal	0	1	0	1
Serious	3	1	3	7
Slight	12	48	30	90
Total	15	50	33	98
%	15%	51%	34%	100%

NUMBER OF ACCIDENTS INVOLVING SKIDDING

Number	%
21	33

ROAD SURFACE

	Number	%
DRY	52	83
WET	10	16
SNOW	1	2
TOTAL	63	

VEHICLE MANOEUVRES		
	Number	%
REVERSING	1	1
PARKED	3	2
WAITING TO GO AHEAD BUT HELD UP	23	14
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OVERTAKING MOVING VEHICLE ON ITS NEARSIDE	2	1
GOING AHEAD LEFT HAND BEND	1	1
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GOING AHEAD OTHER	74	44
TOTAL	168	

Copies of the following plan will be available at the meeting



acc_plot A31 picket
post RAB to Ashley h

