



Department
for Transport

Cllrs Michael Thierry and Christine Ford
Ringwood Town Council
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BH24 1AT

From the Parliamentary
Under Secretary of State
Stephen Hammond MP

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Our Ref: MC/
Your Ref:

15 AUG 2013

Dear Cllrs Thierry and Ford,

When we met in May to discuss safety issues on the A31 at Ringwood, you will recall that I asked the Highways Agency to develop a Position Statement to determine the feasibility of carrying out a 50mph speed limit trial and to review the signing on the A31.

The Agency has now completed this work and, as promised at the meeting in May, I have again met with Desmond Swayne TD MP to talk through the studies' findings and to outline my decision on the way forward.

We all agree that the central issue is road safety and that improving safety for all road users is our priority. With regard to a 50mph speed limit trial, the study findings clearly show that the vast majority of collisions occur during periods of heavy or stationary traffic, with only 3% being attributed to vehicle speed (drivers travelling too fast for the conditions). For this reason, and given that the Agency estimates that a trial would cost over £1million, I have taken the decision not to proceed with a speed reduction trial. Although I realise that this may come as a disappointment to you, the evidence suggests that this is the correct conclusion.

The signing improvement strategy, which builds on the work contained within your report, does however have merit and I thank you for producing your document. There are a number of improvements that can be made to the signing along this section of the A31 to enhance driver awareness, provide clarity of signage and give better information. This should lead to reduced driver confusion, thus reducing driver error and the associated weaving manoeuvres that often cause collisions.

Your report covered the section of road between Ringwood and Ashley Heath but the Agency has looked at an extended coverage area, between Picket Post and Ashley Heath, to provide continuity and improved safety.

Accordingly I have asked the Agency, following due process, to develop and deliver this signing improvement. The Agency anticipates that it will be able to deliver the new signs by summer 2014. Once the Agency has developed their programme for delivery they will share it with you and keep you informed of progress.

I trust that you will see this as the correct outcome, with road safety firmly in mind.

Enclosed with this letter is a copy of each of the Agency's study reports together with a letter from Hampshire Constabulary.

Thank you once again for the interest you have taken in this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S.H.', with a stylized flourish at the end.

STEPHEN HAMMOND

CC Mr Desmond Swayne MP



Area 3

A31 Ringwood (Picket Post to Ashley Heath) Signing Strategy

Position Statement

July 2013

EM
Rosalind House
Jays Close
Viable Business Park
Basingstoke, RG22 4BS

Executive Summary

This Position Statement suggests improvements to traffic signing that could be implemented along the westbound section of the A31 Trunk Road between Picket Post and Ashley Heath to address a number of safety concerns. These safety concerns have been raised by Ringwood Town Council and are summarised in their report titled “The A31 Ringwood Section Ringwood Town Council Document”.

The Ringwood Town Council report was reviewed prior to developing the proposals outlined in this report to ensure the solutions identified meet the aspirations of Ringwood Town Council. The extent of the A31 covered by this report is the section between the Picket Post and Ashley Heath junctions, however within this length of carriageway the main area of concern is the section between the Ringwood and Ashley Heath junctions.

1.1 Approach

The approach taken when developing the proposals contained in this report has been to understand the drivers behind the solutions identified in the Ringwood Town Council report and produce options that address the main safety concerns whilst complying with regulations and good practice. Construction and future maintenance considerations as well as taking care not to introduce features that could have an adverse effect on road user safety has meant that some of the Ringwood Town Council proposals have not been taken forward, whilst others have been taken forward in a different way. The main aims of the proposals seek to:

- improve driver awareness of the Picket Post, Poulner Hill and Ringwood junctions by enhancing the advanced signing of these junctions;
- improve driver awareness of the services (located west of West Street) by providing signing prior to the Ringwood on slip and after the Ringwood off slip;
- improve driver awareness of the Verwood off slip and the need to be travelling in the nearside lane by providing signing prior to the Ringwood off slip and on the Ringwood on slip;
- improve driver awareness of the West Street merge and Fish Inn access (although not by name) by providing signing after the Ringwood on slip;
- improve driver information regarding required lane designations for the approaching Ashley Heath junction; and
- place greater emphasis on drivers exiting West Street regarding merging movements by installing a Give Way priority at West Street.

Further details on the Ringwood Town Council report are contained in Section 3 of this report.

1.2 Options

Four options have been developed. All options seek to bring signing along this section of the A31 in line current standards and good practice. The differences between the four options are determined by a combination of two variables these being:

- the length of carriageway over which signing improvements are proposed; and
- the destination strategy adopted, this will either be the existing strategy, or a strategy currently in development which is based on the Primary Route Destinations list published by the UK Government. Although the 'new' strategy has been agreed in principal with local highway authorities further liaison will need to be carried out before sign face designs are finalised.

The options are summarised in the table below.

	Signs in accordance with the 'new' Destination Strategy	Signs that follow the Existing Destination Strategy
Signs between Ringwood and Ashley Heath	Option A	Option B
All signs between Picket Post and Ashley Heath	Option C	Option D

Option A is the recommended option as this would address the main concerns raised by Ringwood Town Council. However, whilst design teams and contractors are mobilised the opportunity exists to bring the signing for the Picket Post and Poulner Hill junctions up to standard should funding be available, in which case Option C should be progressed.

Further details on Option Descriptions are contained in Section 4 of this report.

1.3 Costs

The anticipated cost range for the four options is summarised in the table below.

	Lower End	Upper End
Option A	£280,000	£390,000
Option B	£285,000	£390,000
Option C	£420,000	£600,000
Option D	£470,000	£620,000

Further details on Option Costs are contained in Section 5 of this report.



1.4 Programme

The timeframe from the point where funding is provided through to commencement of construction is anticipated to be between 12 and 18 months depending on the option being progressed and the associated activities required to follow due process and mitigate project risks.

Further details on Programme are contained in Section 5 of this report.



Area 3

A31 Ringwood Speed Limit – Position Statement

Ref: TBC

June 2013

EM Design Centre
1123 Mollison Avenue
Brimsdown
Enfield
EN3 7NJ

Executive Summary

There is growing concern amongst the public for improvements to safety along the A31. Based on the collision record and in response to general concerns by members of the public, the Minister for Transport has directed the Highways Agency to undertake a signing study and consider a trial speed limit of 50mph along the A31 at Ringwood, between Picket Post and Ashley Heath.

The purpose of this report is to provide a strategy and position statement in relation to the 50mph trial speed limit, in accordance with current guidance and standards, to enable the Highways Agency to make recommendations to the Minister of Transport.

It is evident from the most recent 3 year (2010 to 2012) personal injury collision analysis that speed is not a high contributory factor in the number of personal injury collisions being recorded on the A31 between Ashley Heath Roundabout and Picket Post Interchanges. Only 3% of collisions recorded during the most recent 3 years have a STATS 19 contributory factor of either exceeding the speed limit or travelling too fast for the conditions. Those collisions with a causation factor where drivers were traveling too fast for the conditions may not necessarily have been exceeding the speed limit.

There are a growing number of collisions which have occurred in heavy/ stationary or slowing traffic, accounting for 37% during the same 3 year period. 58% of collisions were recorded as being 'rear end shunt' type collisions, with 46% occurring during the morning or evening peak period

Based on the recorded high proportion of shunt type collisions, high proportion of collisions occurring during the peak periods and the high proportion which are specifically highlighted as having occurred in heavy/stationary or slowing traffic, it is our opinion that the collisions are occurring at speeds considerably lower than 50mph, during periods when the A31 is congested.

Unfortunately, calibrated speed data over this section of the A31 is not available and as such it is not possible to accurately determine existing vehicle speed profiles throughout the day. A speed survey would need to be undertaken in order to make an informed statement in relation to the existing vehicular speeds on the A31 at Ringwood, and whether the recorded collisions occurred during periods when traffic was moving in excess of the proposed 50mph speed limit. This survey would need to be carried out during a 'neutral' month, to exclude seasonal variations in traffic. The earliest month considered as a neutral would be towards the end of September 2013. The estimated third party cost to provide this survey would be £20,000.

Following examination of the data currently available, it is our considered opinion that 'speed' as a causation factor, is likely to be more of a perceived problem by Ringwood Town Council, as in reality the collision statistics do not support this.

Therefore it is considered that reducing the speed limit on the A31 at this location would have a minimal impact on reducing collisions numbers.

Notwithstanding the above, if the decision is taken to proceed with implementation of a trial 50mph speed limit at Ringwood, it is recommended that the 50mph speed limit is provided in both directions over a 7.1km section of the A31, between the existing 50mph speed limit west of Ashley Heath Roundabout Interchange and Picket Post Interchange to the east.

It is likely that during periods when traffic is free flowing, imposing a 50mph speed limit over this section of the A31 will increase journey times. It is not possible to determine the extent of the impact on journey times as existing speed data is unavailable.

Two of the total 59 personal injury collisions recorded on this section of the A31, between 2010 and 2012, had STATS 19 causation factors of either exceeding the speed limit or traveling too fast for the road conditions. Both of these collisions resulted in slight injury. Assuming that the proposed scheme would mitigate both of these collisions, a pessimistic saving of 0.66 collisions per annum could be expected as a result of an enforced 50mph speed limit.

Hampshire Police have stated that, whilst well intentioned, the introduction of a 50mph speed limit in isolation would not result in a reduction in road casualties. They have also stated that the scheme would require Police enforcement at a level beyond their capacity to provide in order to achieve an acceptable level of compliance. .

It is therefore recommended that in order to encourage compliance to the proposed 50mph speed limit, a system of SPECS cameras and infra-red lighting should be introduced to enforce the speed limit.

In order to determine the successfulness of the trial it will be necessary to undertake monitoring of the scheme. This will require an initial 'before scheme' speed survey to be carried out at an estimated cost of £20,000 as discussed above. It will be necessary to undertake a further 2 speed surveys during the period of the trial at a further cost of £40,000. Although if SPECS cameras are provided this data could be provided at no additional cost. Analysis of collision and speed data and overall evaluation of the 50mph speed limit trial is expected to cost in the region of £25,000.

It is expected that the timescale, from the point of funding being in place through to completion of works would be approximately 18 months depending on the scope of the project and additional works identified during detailed design.

The costs associated with the trial scheme are summarised below:

A31 Ringwood Speed Limit – Position Statement
July 2013

Task	Ball Park Cost Estimate
Detailed Design	£164,000
Supervision (including SPECS cameras)	£104,000
Works (including SPECS cameras)	£1,301,000
Traffic Management	£76,000
Monitoring Speed Surveys	£20,000
Evaluation of the Scheme	£25,000
TOTAL COST	£1,690,000.00



Hampshire Constabulary

Station : **Totton** Area : **Western**
Department : **Western** Date : **03 July 2013**

Subject : **A31 Picket Post to Ringwood 50 MPH Speed Limit Proposal**

EnterpriseMouchel are seeking Hampshire Police view on proposals to introduce a 50mph speed limit on the A31 at Ringwood. The proposal is partly in response to local community concerns regarding the level of fatal, serious and slight injury collisions occurring on this road and the view that a reduction in speed limit from national to a 50mph speed limit will achieve a reduction in those collisions. The 50mph speed limit extends through Dorset and Hampshire counties. This report refers only to the A31 within Hampshire.

EnterpriseMouchel request consideration is given to one of the following options:-

1. A31 westbound between Poulner Hill (Hampshire) and Woolsbridge (Dorset)
2. A31 east & westbound between Poulner Hill and Woolsbridge.
3. A31 westbound between Picket Post (Hampshire) and Woolsbridge.
4. A31 east & westbound between Picket Post and Woolsbridge.

I have researched the Hampshire Constabulary injury collision database between 1/01/2003 and 31/12/2012 for the A31 between Picket Post and Dorset County boundary. There are currently six recorded incidents which were investigated as **fatal road traffic collisions**. They are:-

1. 22.25 hours 15/05/2003 at A31 eastbound in vicinity of River Avon.
This collision involved an inexperienced motorcyclist entering A31 from Ashley Heath interchange, lost control of his machine and collided with central barrier. The motor cyclist sustained fatal injuries.
2. 10.38 hours 08/08/2003 at A31 westbound Ringwood flyover.
This collision involved an elderly passenger standing at the top of stairs of a bus which swerved causing the passenger to fall to bottom of stairs and sustain fatal injuries.
3. 22.28 hours 05/12/2006 at A31 eastbound Picket Post.
A pedestrian intentionally ran into path of eastbound vehicle sustaining fatal injuries.
4. 23.45 hours 12/06/2008 at A31 eastbound Poulner.
Vehicle travelling eastbound collides with a stationary broken down vehicle and recovery truck. The recovery truck driver who was standing adjacent to the stationary vehicles sustained fatal injuries.
5. 17.57 hours 15/02/2012 at A31 eastbound Ringwood flyover.
The driver of a vehicle sustained fatal injuries after suffering a suspected medical episode, collides with central barrier and his car is then struck by following vehicle.
6. 02.30 hours 16/10/2012 at A31 westbound Picket Hill.
A car was driven deliberately into lay-bay adjacent to A31 and collides with a stationary articulated goods vehicle. Car driver who was suffering from mental health issues sustained fatal injuries.

Police investigations into the six fatal collisions did not identify speed as a contributory factor in those collisions.



Hampshire Constabulary injury collision database records twenty five **serious injury collisions** for the period 01/01/2003 to 31/12/2012.

The primary contributory factor recorded for sixteen of those collisions falls within the general category of **'driver/rider error or reaction'**.

Primary contributory factor for two of the collisions is **'animal in carriageway'**.

Primary contributory factor for four of the collisions relates to **pedestrian actions** e.g. wearing dark clothing whilst in carriageway during hours of darkness. One of those pedestrian related collisions involved a minibus carrying young males, returning from a social event in Bournemouth. A fight broke out amongst them whilst in transit causing the driver to stop in carriageway. The fight spilled out onto the eastbound A31 and two of the males were struck by passing vehicles causing potentially life threatening injuries.

The primary contributory factors for the remaining three collisions are **'slippery road due to weather'**, **'learner or inexperienced rider'** and **'Travelling too fast for conditions'**.

Closer scrutiny of the serious injury collisions record a significant proportion occur when traffic flows are heavy and overall speeds are lower. Many of those collisions occur as a result of drivers/riders failing to react to events occurring in front of them. Consequently drivers/riders are unable to stop or slow safely within the distance which is clear ahead of them resulting in rear end type impacts or central barrier collisions.

Hampshire Constabulary injury collision database records one hundred and sixty two **slight injury collisions** for the period 01/01/2003 to 31/12/2012.

The primary contributory factors for eighty-five of those collisions fall within the category of **'driver/rider error or reaction'**.

Thirty collisions are categorised as **'injudicious action'**.

Twenty-nine collisions are categorised as **'road environment'**.

Eight are categorised as **'behaviour or inexperience'**, five as **'impairment or distraction'**, three as **'vehicle defects'**, one **'pedestrian crossing road masked by stationary vehicle'** and one due to **'dazzling sun'**.

Examination of the slight injury collisions identifies a majority occur during periods of heavy traffic volumes, when overall speeds are lower. A significant proportion is rear end shunt/impact collisions. During those periods, traffic speeds will ebb and flow for varying reasons such as sudden or unexpected braking, vehicles entering, leaving the main carriageway or changing lanes at last minute. Those types of manoeuvres will create pockets of stationary or slow moving traffic queues which will catch an approaching driver by surprise. Examination of collision statistic data shows attending Police Officers, when dealing with these types of collisions, will allocate a primary contributory factor from within the four main categories of 'driver/rider error or action', 'injudicious action', 'road environment' or 'behaviour or inexperience'. These types of collisions will be found at other strategic routes with similar traffic flows and driver behaviour.

The A31 between Picket Post and Dorset County boundary is a dual carriageway (two lanes in each direction changing to four lanes west of Ringwood Town until Ashley Heath). There is no hard shoulder facility. The road has narrow grass verges unsuitable for vehicle use.

Any collision occurring on either carriageway will result in traffic tailbacks. Tailbacks lengthen if a vehicle is damaged and requires recovery. There is usually no opportunity to move disabled vehicles off the carriageway and the problems worsen depending on the seriousness of the collision. A31 traffic volumes are very high and any obstruction of the carriageways creates lengthy queues, particularly on westbound carriageway. The queues cause drivers to divert away from the A31 to local roads which cannot cope with the increased traffic volume and this, inevitably, leads to severe congestion in nearby communities.

Department of Transport circular 01/2013 (DfT 1/13) states:-

Speed limits should be evidence-led and self-explaining and seek to reinforce people's assessment of what is a safe speed to travel. They should encourage self-compliance. Speed limits should be seen by drivers as the maximum rather than a target speed.



Local speed limits should not be set in isolation, but as part of a package with other measures to manage vehicle speeds and improve road safety.

Speed limits are only one element of speed management. Local speed limits should not be set in isolation. They should be part of a package with other speed management measures including engineering and road geometry that respect the needs of all road users and raise the driver's awareness of their environment; education; driver information; training and publicity. Within their overall network management responsibilities, these measures should enable traffic authorities to deliver speed limits and, as importantly, actual vehicle speeds that are safe and appropriate for the road and its surroundings. The measures should also help drivers to be more readily aware of the road environment and to drive at an appropriate speed at all times.

DfT 01/13 states the Highways Agency is responsible for determining speed limits on the trunk road network. They have a statutory requirement to consult with The Chief Officer of Police when proposing speed limits.

It is Hampshire Constabulary's view that:-

- (a). The introduction of a 50mph speed limit in isolation, whilst well intentioned, will not result in a reduction in road casualties at this location.
- (b). Introducing a 50mph speed limit in isolation will not achieve a significant reduction in overall speeds. A lower speed limit will require additional measures to obtain an appropriate level of compliance with the speed limit.
- (c). Drivers would not consider a 50mph limit to be appropriate for this road resulting in a general disregard of the speed limit which may put vulnerable road users at greater risk. A lowering of the speed limit may encourage increased usage of the A31 by vulnerable road users e.g. pedal cyclists who mistakenly believe that the 50mph limit has reduced overall vehicle speeds.
- (d). An inappropriate speed limit intended to create a safer environment may have an opposite effect partly caused by overall speeds which would likely remain similar to when the road was subject to national speed limit.
- (e). The A31 carries a high volume of traffic which converges at Ringwood where multiple vehicle interactions, lane and carriageway changes occur as a result of drivers making sudden, late or unexpected decisions. These types of manoeuvres cause traffic to ebb and flow and become a contributory factor for many of the collisions occurring on the A31. A lowering of the speed limit will not, by itself, reduce this type of driver behaviour.
- (f). Current collision history does not identify speed as a primary contributory factor for the majority of recorded injury collisions for the period 01/01/2003 to 31/12/2012.
- (g). The introduction of a 50mph speed limit, in isolation, would require Police enforcement at a level beyond our capacity to provide in order to achieve an acceptable level of compliance.

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