

COMMITTEE Enterprise Planning and Infrastructure

DATE 23 February 2010

DIRECTOR Gordon McIntosh

TITLE OF REPORT Request for a 30mph speed limit, section of old Lang Stracht

REPORT NUMBER: EPI/10/063

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report is to advise the Committee of the current situation relating to residents ongoing concerns regarding the speed of traffic on the Old Lang Stracht, and their subsequent request for a 30mph speed limit to be introduced on this section of road.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that the Committee:

- a) Note that officers do not consider the introduction of a 30mph speed limit to be an effective or viable solution to the perceived problems on this rural section of carriageway.
- b) Agree that based on current vehicle speeds and national guidance the proposal from officers that the introduction of a 40mph speed limit be promoted as a traffic regulation order.
- c) Agree that the current bus gate be changed to a bus lane to allow for its enforcement by the Council in future.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Currently there is a rolling programme for the Non-housing Road Safety and Traffic Calming capital budget and, due to the length of time taken for the legal process required for the Traffic Regulation Order, funding for these schemes would come from the 2010/2011 "Non-housing Road Safety and Traffic Calming" Capital budget subject to the limit of funding approved. As some of the budget will effectively already be committed the detailed timing of implementation would be reported at a future date to reflect the availability of monies.

4. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

This report is in accordance with the administration's Vibrant, Dynamic and Forward Looking, under the heading of Transport and highlighted in Paragraph 7.

It also meets with the local Community Plan objectives to continually improve road safety and maximise accessibility for pedestrians and all modes of transport.

The proposals are in line with the Councils Transportation Strategy to improve safety for all road users by continuing to reduce the number of casualties in traffic collisions.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None at this stage of the process

6. REPORT

6.1 Over a number of years Aberdeen City Council has received various complaints from residents of the Lang Stracht who have raised concerns over the inappropriate use of the old section of the Lang Stracht (see appendix 1). The concerns relate to vehicles disobeying the “prohibition of driving” restriction (except for access and buses), vehicles driving at excessive speeds, the obstruction of free flowing two-way traffic resulting in erosion of verges, potential problems for residents exiting from their properties and the subsequent vulnerability of pedestrians and cyclists on this route.

6.2 This section of the old Lang Stracht, previously the main link between Kingswells and Aberdeen City, was bypassed by the connecting road from the Lang Stracht to Skene Road which was built in 1999. The road is 1.35km long, it varies between 5 – 6m in width, and the road is relatively straight. Forward visibility is clear with a single crest curve reducing visibility at one point. The route is rural in nature and in terms of its character it is similar to many other rural routes in the City and Aberdeenshire and until the link road was built it carried substantially greater levels of traffic (the current combined daily traffic flow is now only of the order of 200 vehicles per day in comparison to the several thousand that previously used it). A significant percentage of the current traffic is public service vehicles, the only class of vehicle exempt from the prohibition of driving at the bus gate on the Lang Stracht. There are 18 houses with access along its length; access to these properties, through the prohibition of driving, is only permitted from the Fairley Road junction. Many of these properties have limited visibility due to boundary treatments (walls, fences etc) which in some cases can be improved to improve safety.

6.3 Access is restricted by a bus gate at its east end. The bus gate was initially enforced by a fixed position red light camera, however, this camera has been damaged and has been out of use for a considerable period of time, and as such enforcement is dependent on resourcing by Grampian Police. If bus lane enforcement is decriminalised it will be possible to convert the bus gate to a bus lane, allowing Council enforcement.

6.4 The residents on the route allege that the road is ‘not fit for purpose’ due to the reduced carriageway width restricting free flowing two-way traffic, the poor condition of the road surface and the road is a de facto cul-de sac due to the bus gate at its eastern end limiting traffic movements. They believe it is effectively no longer part of the road network. They have provided details of ongoing incidents involving vehicles travelling at excessive speed for the road

conditions, occasions when vehicles from both directions are unable to pass safely and situations where residents have encountered safety problems due to not being able to see vehicles approaching at speed which in their view significantly compromise their safety and that of their families. They also believe it has become more of a recreational route for walkers and cyclists and the traffic conditions compromise the safety of those users.

- 6.5 Following the numerous concerns expressed by the residents and the prolonged nature of the correspondence a meeting was called by the Lord Provost on 20 November 2009, attended by the Lord Provost, residents, police and roads officers. At the meeting officers agreed that they would report the matter to Committee for elected members to make a decision.
- 6.6 Residents have stated a desire for a 30mph speed limit along the length of the road with a 20mph speed limit and traffic calming adjacent to the properties. Whilst, this may initially be considered a straightforward solution, it must be considered whether this is an appropriate response to when considering all of the factors in this case.

A 20mph zone with traffic calming measures can only be introduced on streets where *“there is a system of street or carriageway lighting furnished by lamps lit by electricity placed not more than 183 metres apart in England and Wales or not more than 185 metres apart in Scotland”*. As such, to introduce the requested 20mph speed limit, a series of street lighting columns would be required for this rural road 1.35km long, with 18 properties and where no accidents have been reported between 2005 – October 2009.

- 6.6 Up to date speed survey (carried out in November 2009) show the current 85%ile speed of 40mph in the eastbound direction and 39mph in the westbound direction.

- 6.7 The Department for Transport has issued guidelines ‘Setting Local Speed Limits’, Circular 1/2006, the following extract details concerns which the Council has agreed in the past should be considered when setting speed limits:

“Speed limits are only one element of speed management. Local speed limits should not be set in isolation, but as part of a package, along with other measures to manage speeds. Such measures include engineering and landscaping standards that respect the needs of all road users and raise the driver’s awareness of their environment, as well as education, driver information, training and publicity. Within their overall network management responsibilities, these measures should enable Traffic Authorities to deliver speed limits and driven speeds that are safe and appropriate for the road and its surroundings, and help drivers to be more readily aware of the road environment and assess their own appropriate speeds at all times.

Indeed, if a speed limit is set in isolation, or is unrealistically low, it is likely to be ineffective and to lead to possible disrespect for the speed limit. As well as requiring significant and avoidable enforcement costs, this may also result in

substantial numbers of drivers continuing to travel at unacceptable speeds, thus increasing the risk of accidents and injuries.”

6.8 Appendix 2 shows a flow chart provided by ‘Setting Local Speed Limits’ as a summary of the speed limit assessment framework. As the Old Lang Stracht does not meet the guidelines for traffic calming (it is rural in nature and is again without street lighting), a 30mph speed limit could only be effective with regular enforcement and Grampian Police have indicated that they are unlikely to have resources available for this.

6.9 Considering all of the facts relating to the road, a speed limit of 40mph could be arrived at from the speed assessment framework and the Department for Transport Guidance. To ignore the technical guidance will potentially lead to a number of other rural locations with clusters of residents properties seeking amendments to speed limits to level below that recommended.

6.10 In order to gain an understanding of the stakeholder’s views the report has been circulated to a wide range of individuals and organisation seeking their comments. These include the local Members, residents, bus companies (first and Stagecoach who have scheduled services using the routes) and Grampian Police.

6.11 From correspondence received to date it is understood that Kingswells Community Council would support the residents request for a 30mph limit.

6.12 Consultees comments when received:

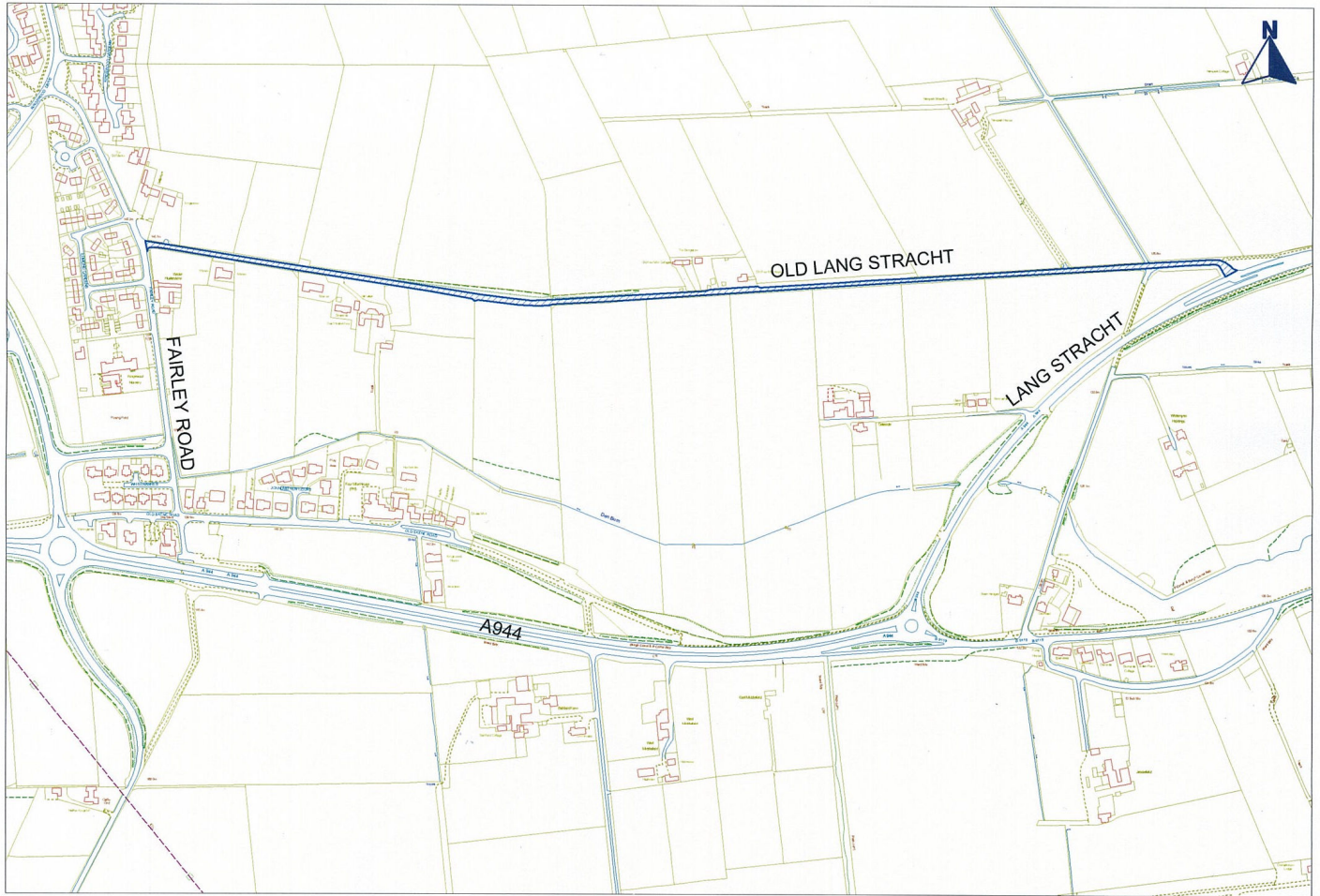
Consultee	Comments	Response
First Aberdeen Ltd	Would raise no objections to the lowering of the speed limit to 30mph	
Stagecoach	Would not object to a 30mph limit being introduced on Old Lang Stracht	
Residents	Request that the speed limit for the length from the Old Four Mile Hamlet housing and on the approach to Fairley road be 30mph. The mean figures from the tube survey are towards town, 30mph and away from town 20mph and from handheld survey towards town Buses 30.5, Cars & LGV 34.1 and away from town Buses 32.5, Cars & LGV 34.6 mph. As the mean figures support 30mph and both UK and Scottish governments confirm the mean should be used, not 85th percentile, serious consideration of 30mph, if not 20mph is required.	The guidance does require the use of the mean speeds as opposed to the 85%ile as required in previous guidance. However, as stated in the report, this section of road is a rural road, not developed, and therefore in accordance with the guidance a 30mph is not appropriate. Both the mean speed and the 85%ile are below the 40mph divide, therefore the 85%ile was quoted because residents were disputing the validity of the surveys and claimed actual speeds were significantly higher.
	Passing places are created this to avoid buses mounting road verges / residents' property entrances as passing places. The width of the road at Old Four Mile Hamlet is 5 meters Buses being 2.5 meters wide. The details of ongoing incidents provided by residents confirm that collisions have occurred resulting in damage to residents' vehicles and buses.	Along its length the existing carriageway varies between 5-6 metres in width. The creation of passing places may result in increased vehicular speeds; caused by unopposed traffic accelerating between passing places. This is contrary to the desired outcome, and officers would not recommend this solution.
	We strongly support the suggestion to convert the red light camera to a bus lane camera. This we feel will dramatically reduce, perhaps eradicate, the trouble some traffic causing the greatest concern.	

	It would be very prudent to follow up these actions with some urgency the issue of passing places for busses and service vehicles	Any proposals resulting from this report will require the promotion on a new traffic regulation order, as a minimum. The detailed timing of implementation would be reported at a future date to reflect the availability of monies.
	Outside of this reports recommendations we would like to suggest that this route is formally adopted into the core cycle paths and be recognised as a formal cycle and walking zone.	This suggestion has been forwarded to the relevant officers who will investigate and progress these proposals if appropriate

7 REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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Appendix 1



Appendix 2

