

Record of operational decision

Decision title:	Decision to not reduce the existing speed limit on B4362 and C1007 at Combe, Herefordshire.
Date of decision:	16 th February 2024
Decision maker:	Service Director for Environment and Highways
Authority for delegated decision:	Economy and Environment Scheme – Highways and Transport 75. To act on behalf of the council in respect of the legislation specified in the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. The authorisation limit is within the financial procedure rules and is sufficient for the decision and that the officer has authority under the contract procedure rules.
Ward:	Mortimer
Consultation:	A site assessment was undertaken in August 2023 and further investigations carried out following this which are detailed in the Key Considerations section of this report. There is no requirement to carry out any consultations as a TO is not being progressed. Powys County Council and the Traffic Management Advisor for West Mercia Police have been informally consulted and agree with the decision that the speed limit at this location should remain as present and that additional traffic engineering measures should be implemented in order to further calm traffic through the area.
Decision made:	Following a site audit and assessment, a TO is not considered an appropriate course of action and it is felt that the current speed limit is appropriate for the section of road under investigation. However, it is recommended that additional engineering measures including road markings and signage are enhanced, in order to provide additional traffic calming on the section of carriageway in question.
Reasons for decision:	The scheme originated as a result of representations from the Local Member and the Parish Council to review the current speed limit arrangement on the B4362 in the vicinity of Combe Corner and its junction with the C1007 including the approach from the Welsh side of the border. Consequently, a review of the situation on the site was undertaken by officers and it was decided that details should be entered onto the prioritised Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) Waiting List as a cross border scheme. As a result of its entry onto the TRO Waiting List, this scheme was identified for commencement of investigations in the 2023/24 Annual Plan. Therefore, Herefordshire Council in conjunction with Powys County Council set about investigating the potential for a new Traffic Order that would necessitate any changes within the area under investigation. An on-site assessment and site meeting with local representatives (from both sides of the Welsh Border) was undertaken in August 2023. During the assessment, officers considered the appropriateness of a reduced speed limit considering drivers accessing and egressing the B4362/C1007 junction. The surrounding environment and road geometry were also considered. Department for Transport's (DfT) 'Setting Local Speed Limits' document states that when considering reducing any given speed limit the surrounding roadside environment is of paramount importance stressing that a principle aim in determining suitable speed limits should be to provide a consistent message between the speed limit and what the road looks like/the surrounding environment. Additionally, with regards to a 40mph speed limit in a rural area the document states that it 'should be considered where there are many bends, junctions, accesses or where there are considerable numbers of vulnerable road users'.

	North-westbound	South-eastbound
ATC 1	57.5	50.9
ATC 2	38.5	38.6
ATC 3	53.5	49.4

This section of the B4362 at Combe under investigation is rural in nature, has one junction with only a handful of property accesses, two bends and properties significantly set back from the road. Evidence suggests there are unlikely to be a considerable number of vulnerable road users at this location. Therefore, it is deemed that this section of carriageway does not align with this DfT guidance. The road seemed to suit the current speed limit arrangement. This was shared with Powys County Council who agreed with the outcome of the investigation.

Another key factor in the 'Setting Local Speed Limits' document for consideration is 'current traffic speeds'. Therefore, three Automatic Traffic Count (ATC) surveys were undertaken in conjunction with Powys County Council, who agreed to install a speed survey on the Powys side of the Welsh Border, in order to ascertain vehicle speeds on approach to Combe Corner. The speed data gathered from the surveys shows that vehicles are currently travelling significantly faster than the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) guideline intervention level for a 40mph speed limit in both directions on approach to and away from the corner. However, the 85th percentile speed data suggests that vehicles are slowing down for the corner and given that the request was for a reduction of speed limit in the vicinity of the corner, due to speeding vehicles, a speed limit reduction is unlikely to reduce vehicle speeds significantly further here. Speed data comprising 85th percentile vehicle speeds (mph) are summarised in the table below and shown in Appendix B.

Following the outcome of the speed surveys, Powys County Council and The Traffic Management Advisor for West Mercia Police were informally consulted and agreed with the outcome of this assessment.





Another key consideration set in the DfT 'Setting Local Speed Limits' document is the collision history of the area. Collision records from Herefordshire Council's database show 2 collisions have occurred in the period from January 2018 to July 2023. The analysis of the collision history shows that there is a limited collision history here, with only two recorded personal injury collisions reported - one of which was a drunk driver and was classed as serious, and their locations are included in Appendix C.

Considering regulations, according to the Road Traffic Regulation Act (RTRA) 1984, it is the duty of a highway authority to 'manage their road network' and 'to improve road safety'. Section 122 of the RTRA 1984 states that local authorities must, so far as is practicable, exercise their functions under the RTRA so as to 'secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of traffic'.

In conclusion, it is evident from an on-site assessment, consideration of national guidance, collision history & existing 85th percentile vehicle speeds that the existing speed limit arrangement on the B4362 in the vicinity of Combe Corner and its junction with the C1007 should remain as it is. This is also the view of Powys County Council and West Mercia Police. Therefore, No Traffic Order (TO) should be progressed.

What is recommended, following a further site assessment and meeting with local representatives on 22nd December 2023, is to enhance the existing Traffic Engineering measures already on site, including signage and road markings, in order to further manage traffic in the absence of a speed limit here. The measures that are proposed include:

- To refresh the junction markings of B4362/C1007.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To install chevron signage on the bends on approach to the B4362/C1007 junction with a yellow backing board. - Provide edge of carriageway markings along B4362 in the vicinity of the bends and over the bridge. - Amend the existing warning signage either side of the bridge to warn of the double bend and narrow carriageway and make the signage consistent either side. - Provide SLOW markings on the carriageway for vehicles travelling from Powys towards Combe (at the border site and near the bend). <p>A plan showing the works for the proposed additional traffic engineering measures is shown in Appendix D.</p> <p>The above recommendation is in alignment with guidance set out by Department for Transport and would not be of detriment to the council's duties under section 122 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  Appendix A.pdf </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  Appendix B.pdf </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  Appendix C.pdf </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  Appendix D.pdf </div> </div>
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<p>Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:</p>	<p>Community impact The recommendation not to make any change to the existing speed limit will have no impact on the local community.</p> <p>Environmental Impact Herefordshire Council provides and purchases a wide range of services for the people of Herefordshire. Together with partner organisations in the private, public, and voluntary sectors we share a strong commitment to improving our environmental sustainability, achieving carbon neutrality and to protect and enhance Herefordshire's outstanding natural environment.</p> <p>The development of this project has sought to minimise any adverse environmental impact and will actively seek opportunities to improve and enhance environmental performance.</p> <p>The adoption of these recommendations will not have a negative impact on the environment.</p> <p>Equality duty The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.</p> <p>The recommendations set out in this report are considered to be low impact with regards to equality thus paying regard to the council's duty according to the Equality Act 2010 as set out below. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows: A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. <p>Any impact as a result of the scheme will be equal to all parties. See Appendix E of this report for Equality Impacts and Needs Assessment (EINA).</p> <p>Resource implications</p>
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	<p>The cost of this TO scheme to date is £5,000. This cost has been identified from this year's existing budgets in the current Annual Plan.</p> <p>Legal implications The introduction of a new Traffic Order is not recommended as part of these proposals.</p> <p>There are no further legal requirements in not making the Traffic Order, even if objections are made. It is at the discretion of the Council as the Highway Authority whether to make a Traffic Order dependent on the justification for doing so.</p> <p>Risk management The Local Transport Plan sets out to reduce the number and severity of casualties on the highway network in Herefordshire and provide a highway network that is safe and efficient. A Key Performance Indicator is contained in this Local Transport Plan and details a locally set target for a reduction in fatal or serious injuries on the highway network. The adoption of the recommendations in this report would have no impact to the objectives in the Local Transport Plan.</p>
<p>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</p>	<p>To implement a reduction in the current national speed limit to a 40mph speed limit on the B4362 & its junction with the C1007 – This is not recommended for a number of reasons outlined in detail in the Key Considerations section of this report. In brief, the surveyed vehicle speeds on B4362 travelling away from the junction with the C1007 at Combe Corner, in both directions, are well above the guideline enforcement level of 46mph for a 40mph speed limit as set out by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) guidance document. However, the 85th percentile speed data suggests that vehicles are slowing down for the corner and therefore, a speed limit reduction is unlikely to reduce vehicle speeds significantly further here. Additionally, the roadside environment does not align with the Department for Transport's Setting Local Speed Limits guidance for the introduction of new 40mph speed limits. Therefore, a 40mph speed limit is not considered feasible. Powys County Council and the Traffic Management Advisor for West Mercia Police have been informally consulted and agree with this assessment.</p>
<p>Details of any declarations of interest made:</p>	<p>None</p>

Signed..... Date:

Please ensure that signatures are redacted before publishing.