



North

Yorkshire County Council

Business and Environmental Services

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Dear Ms Jenkinson

A65 SPEED LIMIT

Thank you for your letter regarding your long standing request for a speed limit on the A65 through Thornton-in-Lonsdale.

Unfortunately, North Yorkshire County Council are unaware of any previous correspondence relating to this matter. As the A65 has only been our responsibility since 2009, I am assuming you have previously been in discussion with the Highways Agency.

Notwithstanding this, I would like to explain why we believe the current national speed limit should remain unchanged on this section of the A 65 and why there is currently little justification to consider a lower limit.

The national speed limit is predominantly used on the rural network in North, Yorkshire and for most vehicles this means that the speed limit is 60 mph.

What the road looks like to road users should be a key factor when setting a speed limit. The road's geometry and general characteristics, adjacent land use and the potential safety impacts. Any change in a speed limit should reflect changes in the characteristics. Drivers will respect and comply with lower limits when they can see there are potential hazards, for example in residential areas or villages.

There is little point in establishing a lower limit, however desirable, if it will not reduce traffic speeds. Unrealistic limits lead to general non-compliance and can prove very expensive and difficult for the Police to enforce. I fear that this would be the case on the A65 as there is no visual reason why motorists should not be able to travel at 60 mph.

Fortunately, we have a permanent traffic counter on the A65 and this is located on the straight section of carriageway west of the A687. Based on data collected this year, there is little evidence of a problem with the current speed limit and there is excellent compliance. The current average 85th percentile speed for eastbound traffic is 60.6 mph and the mean speed is 52.3 mph. For the westbound carriageway, the average 85th percentile speed is 57.4 mph and the mean speed is 49.8 mph. The annual average daily traffic is 7316.

Accident data for the last three complete years (01/01/2008 to 31/12/2010) shows there were six personal injury accidents on the section of the A 65 running through Thornton-in-Lonsdale. Four of the accidents resulted in serious injury and two resulted in slight injury to road users. Current accident data for 2011, up to 31st August, shows two slight injury accidents have occurred so far this year. However, the 2011 data is provisional only so may be subject to addition, deletion or amendment.

All of the above accidents occurred during daylight and only one took place during wet/damp road conditions.

Four of the accidents involved turning manoeuvres at three separate junctions. The remaining four accidents occurred on the main carriageway and further analysis found no particular pattern, with each accident featuring unrelated causes, including fatigue, loss of control, following too close and a poor overtaking manoeuvre.

There were only two accidents with a speed related causation factor attributed to them. One involved a motorcycle with 'travelling too fast for conditions' listed as a 'Very likely' factor, the other involved a rear end shunt on the approach to a junction and 'exceeding speed limit' was given as a 'possible' factor.

Generally, for this road classification, and a 60 mph speed limit, the accident rate should be below a threshold of 35 injury accidents per 100 million vehicle kilometres. If we were considering a 50 mph speed limit, the accident rate should be above a threshold of 35 injury accidents per 100 million vehicle kilometres. On this stretch of the A65 the accident rate is currently 20.4 injury accidents per 100 million vehicle kilometres.

Based on the above personal injury accident history information, again there is little justification to amend the current speed limit.

Thank you once again for your letter and please do not hesitate to contact me again if I can help you further.

DARREN GRIFFITHS

Team Leader - Traffic Engineering

Yours sincerely