

Individual Executive Decision Notice

Report title	Transportation Network - Review of Ring Road Speed Limit	
Decision designation	GREEN	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Cabinet Member for City Environment and Climate Change	
Wards affected	St Peter's;	
Accountable Director	Ross Cook, Director of City Housing and Environment	
Originating service	Transportation Service	
Accountable employee	Author name	Nick Broomhall
	Tel	01902 555723
	Email	nick.broomhall@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to be/has been considered by	N/A	

Summary

This report seeks to agree the permanent reduction of the speed limit on Wolverhampton's Ring Road (A4150) from 40mph to a 30mph restricted road.

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

That the Cabinet Member for City Environment and Climate Change, in consultation with the Director of City Housing and Environment:

1. Approves the recommended action to overrule the objections and implement a permanent 30mph speed limit on the Ring Road as shown on Plan T3/1528-01 appended to this report.
2. Authorise the Chief Operating Officer and other authorised signatories to execute and implement the relevant traffic regulation order

This report is PUBLIC
[NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED]

Signature

Name of Cabinet Member

Date:

Signature

Name of Director

Date:

1.0 Background

- 1.1 In June 2020, The City of Wolverhampton Council took the decision to introduce a temporary speed limit of 30 mph on the Ring Road (A4150). The introduction of the Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO) was undertaken as part of a suite of changes across the city to support the Councils 'Relighting the City' agenda, helping local businesses post lockdown and promoting sustainable travel measures.
- 1.2 Since then, several new schemes have been implemented or are underway that will require the Ring Road to accommodate more increased activity for vulnerable road users. As such the 40mph speed limit has become unsuitable in achieving the best balance between mobility and safety with a 30mph speed limit becoming preferable.
- 1.3 During this period, extensive monitoring has been conducted on the impacts of the change including the most recent performance travel data, and a Briefing Note summarising this was submitted to the Cabinet Member for City Environment and Climate Change, in consultation with the Director of City Housing and Environment. The recommendation of Briefing Note was to formally consult on a Traffic Regulation Order to make the temporary speed limit change on the Ring Road permanent, as shown on Plan T3/1528-01 appended to this report.
- 1.4 In formulating this recommendation, a range of data was considered and evaluated, notably the existing traffic speed, collision rates, and the evolving function that the ring road needed to accommodate
- 1.5 Based on this, a decision was taken to consult on a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) to make the temporary 30mph speed limit on the Ring Road permanent.

2.0 Detail

- 2.1 The proposed permanent Ring Road Speed Limit is shown on Plan T3/1528-01.
- 2.2 The consultation exercise was undertaken between 25 October - 12 November 2021 and included advertising in local press, posting of on-street notices and on-line consultation through the council's web portal.
- 2.3 Following completion of the consultation, representations were received in the form of emails and letters. The key points raised have been summarised below:
 - A total of nine responses were received, five responses (56%) were in favour of the reduction, three responses (29%) were not in favour of the proposals and a further response (14%) was undecided.
 - A response was received from West Midlands Police in support of the reduction in speed limit.
 - Four further responses were in support, one of which requested a review of other 40mph roads connected to the Ring Road. This work has already been identified and will form part of future transport work programmes. Another respondent wholly supported the proposal on grounds of reduced emissions, increased safety, better environment for non-motorised users of the Ring Road and its junctions.

- One response raised a number of comments and felt that due to the "short consultation" it is "just a sop as the decision has already been made".
- Three responses (29%) have objected to the proposals.
- One objector simply requested the speed limit to be returned to 40mph.
- A second objector cited that the change would seriously alter the RTC statistics and that original 30mph change during lock down to encourage pedestrians and cyclists has "patently failed".
- The third objector felt that the speed limit change was "another money making machine" for City of Wolverhampton Council.

2.4 In response to the objections:

- The temporary 30mph speed limit was introduced on the ring road on the 18 June 2020 through a TTRO. The order lasts for 18 months and therefore a decision on the future speed limit needs to be implemented prior to 18 December 2021.
- Analysis of the speed data for 2021 indicates that the mean speed has reduced on all sections of the ring road since the introduction of the temporary limit. Furthermore the 85th percentile speed has also seen reductions.
- Analysis of data also indicates that collisions were increasing year on year, from 40 Personal Injury Collisions (PICs) during 2015-17, to 51 PICs during 2016-18 and 55 PICs during 2017-19. Unfortunately, the reduced speed limit has not yet been implemented long enough to confirm a significant change in collision levels. However, early indications suggest the number and severity of collisions has reduced during the temporary speed reduction with the number of PICs for the, 2018-2020 falling to 48 over two years.
- Looking purely at the numbers of PICs can be misleading due to fluctuations in traffic levels, as was the case during the covid pandemic. To address this, collision rates along the ring road have also been evaluated over the same period and compared to the national average for 2017 (the base year). This data shows that average collision rate for the ring road in 2015-2017 was 434 accidents/billion vehicle kilometres (accidents/bvkm) compared to a national average of 464 accidents/bvkm. This increased to 533 accidents/bvkm in 2016-18, and 687 accidents/bvkm in 2017-19, both significantly exceeding the national average. The rate reduced in 2018-20 to 597 accidents/bvkm, still well above the national average.
- If the reductions achieved since the introduction of the temporary speed limit continue, the collision rate should continue to fall below the national average.
- Analysing the rate of Killed and Seriously Injured casualties (KSI) is also a very important consideration, as these collisions have a major impact on the lives of local families, whilst also contributing towards the collision reduction targets set out in the Regional Road Safety Strategy (RRSS).

- Considering the KSI/km for the ring road, the rates have continued to rise year on year since 2015-17. As previously outlined, the reduced temporary speed limit has not yet been implemented long enough to see a significant change in collision levels. However, early indications suggest the number and severity of collisions is reduced which will ultimately see the KSI rates also reduce.
- The reduction in speed limit on the Ring Road will support several improvements recently implemented or planned on the Ring Road.
- A new crossing facility has been introduced on Ring Road St Peters providing an alternative to the subway by introducing a new at grade cycle link between the city centre and north side of the city including the Molineux and student accommodation.
- Work has also started on implementing a new cycle link along the central reservation from Chapel Ash Island to Stafford Road. This work will see a new direct crossing facility introduced at Ring Road / Waterloo Road junction that specifically detects cyclists using the new route approaching to cross.
- Linking to this, work is also scheduled to commence on the construction of a new dedicated cycle route along A4124 Wednesfield Road, due to be completed later this year.
- Although these changes would have been possible with the existing speed limit in place; it is likely that the reduced speed limit is seen as a positive step in improving road safety and speed compliance on the ring road, whilst supporting the existing level of sustainable travel modes and encouraging greater participation in sustainable modes of travel in the future.
- Changing the perception and dominance of the Ring Road is a critical step in the long-term improvement of road safety and promoting increased levels of sustainable travel across the city.
- Important benefits of reducing speed limits include quality of life and community benefits, and encouragement of healthier and more sustainable transport modes such as walking and cycling (Kirkby, 2002). There may also be environmental benefits as, generally, driving more slowly at a steady pace will save fuel and reduce pollution. Walking and cycling can make a very positive contribution to improving health and tackling obesity, improving accessibility, tackling congestion, and reducing carbon emissions and improving the local environment.
- “Watchman” Variable Message signs are being installed at various locations on the Ring Road to encourage motorists to adhere to the speed limit. City of Wolverhampton Council are not responsible for enforcement of speed limits; that responsibility falls to West Midlands Police who will enforce the speed limit, as appropriate, to ensure compliance.

2.5 It is therefore recommended that the above objections are overruled and the proposed temporary reduction of 30mph is made permanent as shown on Plan T3/1528-01 in the interests of improved road safety and promotion of sustainable travel modes in Wolverhampton.

3.0 Evaluation of alternative options

3.1 One alternative would be to “do nothing”. However, the Ring Road has a record of casualties caused by road traffic collisions. To do nothing would not address this and the likely result would be a continuation of the upward trend in annual PIC statistics. This approach would not be aligned to either Wolverhampton or Regional Road Safety objectives and the drive to encourage increased walking and cycling.

3.2 Alternative traffic calming measures including road humps and/or chicanes are not appropriate measures to be introduced on a road of this type and so were dismissed as an option early in considerations.

3.3 Average Speed Enforcement has been considered and is currently being trialled across the Black Country. At the current time no new locations are being considered until the outcome has been determined.

4.0 Reasons for decision

4.1 The proposal including the introduction of “Watchman” Variable Message Signs designed to encourage speed compliance, is the most appropriate option available to address the relatively high number of casualties involved in PICs on the Ring Road by improving road safety and compliance with the posted speed limit, for all road users, and promoting and encouraging sustainable travel. The proposals will assist the City Council reduce the number of Personal Injury Collisions on Wolverhampton’s Highway Network.

5.0 Financial implications

The costs of implementing the “Watchman Variable Message Signs” will be funded from the existing Ring Road 30mph and City Centre budget allocation as approved in the 2021/22 Transport Capital Programme valuing £180,000. This report seeks approval to meet the costs associated with the Traffic Regulation Order and permanent signage for the 30mph speed limit relevant to this report amounting to £30,000 to be funded from the annual TRO/Lines/Signs/ Guardrail budget allocation as set out in the Transportation Capital Programme for 2021/22.

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6.0 Legal implications

6.1 Under Section 122(1) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (“the 1984 Act”) the Council, as the traffic authority, has a duty to secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic (including pedestrians) and the provision of suitable and adequate parking facilities on and off the highway. Section 1(1) of the 1984

Act enables the Council to make a Traffic Regulation Order “where it appears to be expedient to make the order”.

6.2 The procedure for making a traffic regulation order under the 1984 Act is contained in the Local Authorities ‘Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England & Wales) Regulations 1996 (SI 1996/2489). There are consultation requirements before an order can be made. The procedure for dealing with any objections received during the consultation period is laid down in the 1996 Regulations and having determined any objections received, the TRO may be brought into force.

6.3 The new 30mph speed limit on the Ring Road has been supported by West Midlands Police and the limit will be supported by Watchman signs located around the ring road to reinforce the speed limit and to reduce non-compliance.

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7.0 Equalities implications

7.1 The proposed measures are likely to improve road safety for vulnerable road users and therefore have a positive impact on equality. This is relevant for the existing and proposed crossing points on the ring road. Reducing speeds approaching and travelling through the many access points across the ring road will improve the travelling experience of all and especially those with physical and mental conditions who might be intimidated at crossing a road with heavy fast-moving traffic.

8.0 Climate change and environmental implications

8.1 Further work is planned to explore how to improve the air quality around the ring road and a 30mph speed limit will positively contribute towards the objectives of this work and our commitment of being carbon neutral by 2028.

9.0 Human resources implications

9.1 There are no human resource implications arising from the recommendation in this report.

10.0 Corporate Landlord implications

10.1 There are no corporate landlord implications arising from the recommendation in this report.

11.0 Health and Wellbeing Implications

11.1 Looking at associated factors the function that the ring road serves needs to evolve to meet the regeneration needs of the city. Historically, the composition of traffic using the ring road has been dominated by the car, however, more recently this is beginning to change, and, in the future, there will be a greater priority being placed on public transport, pedestrians and cyclists.

12.0 Covid Implications

12.1 There are no Covid implications arising from the recommendation in this report.

13.0 Schedule of background papers

13.1 Briefing Note: Ring Road Speed Limit Review – 13 September 2021.

14.0 Appendices

14.1 Plan T3/1528-01– RING ROAD SPEED LIMIT TRO PLAN