

Meeting with Highways England to discuss A66 Safety – held Thursday 12th October 2017

As discussed in the meeting of our A66 action group held on 6th June 2017, a meeting was arranged with Highways England to gain an update on plans they had reported to prepare an improved scheme for the New Lane junction with the A66,

Attendees:

Mr Hayden Green – Highways England
Cllr. Angus Thompson – NYCC
Mr Malcolm Burgess – Ravensworth
Mr Ken Bell - Ravensworth

Hayden Green started by tabling the proposed new layout for the New Lane junction – separately communicated.

Current status

The scheme shown in the outline plan view represents the basis for a design currently in progress for an improved layout of the New Lane-A66 junction. The design is being carried out by the Highways England design team based in Birmingham. The design stage will be completed within the current budget year, which finishes at the end of Q1 2018.

Features of the proposed new junction layout include:

- Elongated central lane for vehicles travelling east and turning right into New Lane
- Improved transition sections on each side of this turning lane
- Improved visibility to the west of the junction for vehicles entering the A66 from New Lane
- Improved road signage
- Final approach on New Lane just before the A66 will be raised to allow vehicles to join the A66 at the same level.

Next stage

Progress beyond the design stage will depend on various factors. These include:

- The scheme will compete for funding in the next financial year (2018-19) with other road improvements elsewhere
- The funding for the next stage of this improvement will include
 - provision for drilling a number of bore holes to establish ground conditions,
 - finalising the required land purchases (additional land will be required to the south on both sides of New Lane,
 - finalising an improved design of the culvert which runs under the A66 to the west of New Lane,
 - resolving matters linked to existing utilities and services, such as relocation of water piping and electric power lines, and
 - preparation of a final project cost for financial approval to complete the project at a later date.

The clear intention to improve this junction was agreed to be very welcome. However from the discussion on stages of the project and associated financing it was also clear that the potential final

implementation date could still be some time away (2-3 years or even more), due to the complexity, cost and budgeting process.

Measures to control speed on A66

In view of the realisation that we could still be some years away from an improved junction layout, we then discussed and agreed that as an interim measure the inherent safety of the junction (and a number of other busy junctions nearby), could be greatly improved if a managed scheme to control traffic speed could be implemented on the single-carriageway section of the A66 between Black Hill and Stephen Bank.

As previously discussed in our local action group, we therefore talked about the possibility of an average-speed-camera enforced approach (40 mph or 50 mph, as has been adopted in other single-carriageway sections of the A66 and elsewhere). Hayden seemed to buy into this suggestion and offered to make enquiries about this with the relevant people within Highways England. He promised to get back to us on this matter.

Implementation of such a speed-control zone would obviously also have immediate benefits for all other local road junctions joining the A66 in the single-carriageway section.

In the short-term more active enforcement of the existing 'temporary' 40 mph speed limit in the location of the New Lane junction via deployment of a police camera van might be an option worth considering. It was agreed that this suggestion would be discussed with North Yorkshire Police. Cllr Thompson offered to act as an intermediary on this matter.

It was also mentioned that A-1+, the organisation previously in charge of temporary road works and associated traffic management (e.g. temporary road signs), no longer has this contract for the local area. This has been taken over by another organisation (believed to be CH2M – contact details not known currently).

We expressed our thanks to Hayden for his openness and apparent support for our cause and told him we would keep in touch regarding progress of the above matters.

Ken Bell
For Ravensworth Parish Council