

Forward Plan reference number: N/A

Report title: Colchester Local Highway Panel - B1025 Blackheath, Colchester – Vehicle Activated Sign	
Report to: Councillor Kevin Bentley, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure	
Report author: Andrew Cook, Director for Highways and Transportation	
Date: 16 May 2019	For: Decision
Enquiries to: Vicky Presland – Essex Highways Head of Design Mobile: 07977 167136 Email:vicky.presland@essexhighways.org Officer: - Sonia Church – Essex Highways Highway Liaison Manager Mobile: 07712 490167 Email:Sonia.church@essexhighways.org	
County Divisions affected: Maypole	

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. To consider the progression of the installation of a Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS) on B1025 Blackheath, Colchester, Essex, following a request by local residents. This proposal does not meet Essex County Council's criteria under Highways Practice Note 032, Vehicle Activated Signs.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To agree that the request does not proceed to the installation of a VAS, as it does not meet Essex County Council Highways Practice Note (HPN) 032 due to the average speeds being lower than the requirement.

3. Summary of Issue

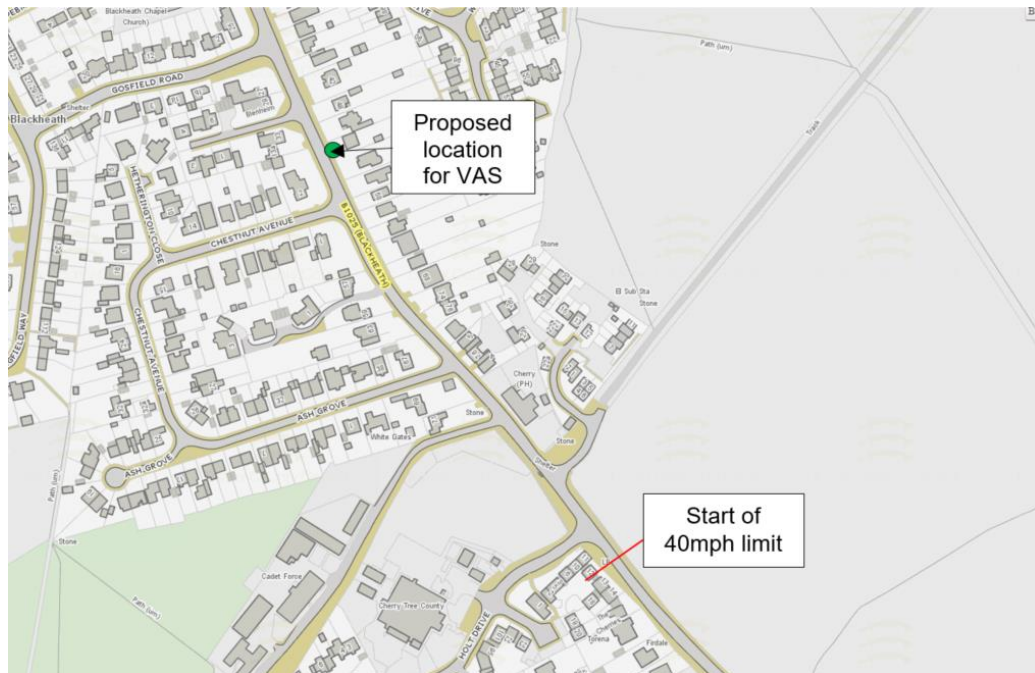
- 3.1. A speeding issue has been reported by members of the public to the County Member for the electoral division, Councillor Harris on the B1025. The B1025 has a 30mph speed limit by virtue of street lighting and is one of the main routes out of Colchester towards Mersea Island.
- 3.2. The concern has been raised that Cherry Tree Primary School is located off of the B1025, on Holt drive and that school children walk along the B1025 in the morning and afternoon times to access Holt Drive where the pedestrian access is located.
- 3.3. There are properties on the western side of the B1025 heading northwards and these are served by a reasonable footway that is separated from the highway by a grass strip that enables safe passage to the school grounds from the surrounding houses.

- 3.4. The speed limit on the B1025 changes to 40mph just south of Holt Drive, 300m further south of the proposed VAS location. It has been reported that vehicles are often seen leaving the roundabout located 400m south of Holt drive at high speeds before the limit change. The below shows that the school flashing warning signs are in situ as you approach the school along the B1025 which gives drivers warning of the school's presence.



- 3.5. For those driving children to the school, the access is not directly from the B1025 so vehicles should not need to stop on the B1025 but rather they access Holt Drive to take their children to school.
- 3.6. The County Member for the division has raised concerns over the speed of vehicles using the B1025 Blackheath through the Colchester Local Highways Panel and has requested that a VAS is installed after the roundabout exit, to reinforce the 30mph speed limit, as indicated below.

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- 3.7. A speed and volume survey was conducted approximately 25m south of Blenheim Drive which is mid-way between the roundabout and Holt Drive, between Tuesday 4th October 2016 and Monday 10th October 2016. The data was taken prior to the VAS request however still suitable for the assessment.
- 3.8. The average speed of vehicles was recorded under 35mph. The ECC policy states that ECC will not provide VAS in a 30mph speed limit area if average speeds are under 35mph.

Year	Location on B1025 Blackheath	Speed limit	Direction of Travel	Mean average speed	Volume of traffic
2016	25m south of Blenheim Drive	30mph	South bound	34.5mph	37,899
2016			North bound	33.4mph	37,931
2019	25m south of Blenheim Drive	30mph	South bound	30.6mph	38,528
2019			North bound	27.6mph	39,830
2019	Between Nathan Court and Holt Drive	30mph	South bound	31.7mph	36,201
2019			North bound	30.4mph	36,463

- 3.9. New data was sourced on the 1st March 2019 where the average mean speed is significantly slower than 2 years prior, the new speed survey was taken closer to the 40mph speed limit where higher speeds are perceived. This is about 250m South of the proposed VAS location. The newer 2019 speed survey at the VAS location also shows lower speeds being recorded than in previous 2016 survey.

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The road is wide and gives very good visibility to drivers hence the fact that speed at certain times is significantly higher than the posted limit but during the time children would be taken to and from school southbound speeds are shown to be consistently lower than 35mph if above 30mph and much nearer 30mph northbound and some days even below.

- 3.10. The B1025 is classified as Priority Route 1 with two recorded slight personal injury collisions along the stretch in question. One involved a vehicle overtaking a lorry causing a head on collision, the second involved a pedestrian stepping out into the road and making contact with the nearside wing of a car.



- 3.11 The Highways Practice Note which clarifies the process when considering requests for VAS and supersedes section 12.5 of the Essex Speed Management Strategy 2010. It states that the mean average speed will need to be more than 5mph above the posted speed limit in order to demonstrate there is an issue with compliance. In this instance the requested location is 0.5mph outside of this criteria.
- 3.12. Failure to observe the speed limit is during the early morning and evening commuter peaks, are enforceable by Essex Police. Therefore future enforcement by Essex Police in this area would be the suggested solution rather than the installation of a VAS which is not guaranteed to slow speeds.

4. Options

- 1) **Agree to the implementation of a Vehicle Activated Sign on the B1025 Blackheath, Colchester.**

This option is not recommended as this site does not meet the criteria set out in the HPN also the scheme would add to the highway asset and the maintenance burden. The risk of choosing this option is that the VAS sign will only activate for between 3.4% and 5.9% of the traffic travelling past at school times (as they will be the only ones to activate it). There may be the perception that the VAS is ineffective.

2) Agree to the recommendations and remove the scheme from the Colchester Potential Schemes List.

This option would fall in line with the HPN criteria and not add to the maintenance burden in the future. The risk of choosing this option is that speeds may remain the same. The risk with choosing this option is that those travelling more than 35mph will not be alerted to their high speed by the VAS.

5 Issues for consideration

5.1 Financial Implications

- 5.1.1 If ECC chose to install the VAS in this location, the design and implementation could be progressed through the Colchester Local Highway Panel. The estimated cost for the design and delivery of the VAS is £12,500.
- 5.1.2 There would be no financial implications of proceeding with the recommendations set out in this report.

Legal Implications

- 5.2.1 ECC has the power but no duty to install a vehicle activated sign. This is a matter for the Cabinet Member to exercise discretion. In making a decision the Cabinet Member will wish to consider policy but is not bound to follow policy and must consider whether this is a case where it is appropriate to depart from the usual policy.

6 Equality and Diversity implications

- 6.1 The public sector equality duty applies to the council when it makes decisions and this is covered by the equality impact assessment dated 29th November 2018.

The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:

- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful
- (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

(c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

6.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).

6.3 The equality impact assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

7. List of appendices

7.1 Appendix 1 - EqIA

8. List of Background papers

8.1 Scheme Request Forms and pertaining documentary evidence,

8.2 Validation Report, Proposal Scheme Lists,

8.3 Highways Practice Note 032, Vehicle Activated Signs.

I approve the above recommendations set out above for the reasons set out in the report.	Date
Councillor Kevin Bentley, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure	25/09/19

In consultation with:

Role	Date
	23/05/2019
Andrew Cook, ECC Director for Highways and Transportation	
ECC Executive Director for Corporate and Customer Services (S151 Officer)	Consent not required
Margaret Lee	
	21/05/2019
Liz Burr – Traffic Manager	
ECC Director, Legal and Assurance (Monitoring Officer)	16/05/2019

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Paul Turner	
Vicky Presland, EH Highways Head of Design	08/02/2019