

**REPORT TO:** Environment & Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board

**DATE:** 15<sup>th</sup> February 2023

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Operational Director – Policy, Planning and Transportation

**PORTFOLIO:** Environment and Urban Renewal

**SUBJECT:** Preston Brook Petition

**WARD(S)** Borough wide

## 1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 A petition has been received via Preston Brook Parish Council containing 52 signatures.
- 1.2 The petition requests the following actions:

*“Reduce the speed limit on both Windmill Lane and Chester Road from 30MPH to 20MPH and reduce remove the section of Chester Road that is currently 40 MPH and remove unnecessary industrial signage.”*

- 2.0 **RECOMMENDED: That the requests set out in the petition are not supported for the reasons given in the report.**

## 3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 A56, Chester Road – M56 to Preston Brook

‘A Roads’ are major roads intended to provide large-scale transport links within or between areas. The A56, Chester Road, is a busy strategic route, linking eastern Runcorn, including a large industrial estate, with the motorway network. This section of the A56 from the M56 Junction 11 to Preston Brook was original National Speed Limit (60mph). In recent years this has been reduced to 40mph, and given that there are no frontages and few side junctions, 40mph is an appropriate speed limit. In previous dialogue, Cheshire Police have stated that they would not support a 30 limit along this section.

- 3.2 A56, Chester Road – through Preston Brook

A 30mph limit is already in place. A 20 limit through Preston Brook would not be suitable for an ‘A Road’. It should be noted that a 20mph limit would require the speed camera to be removed. Research does indicate that 20mph speed limits have negligible impact on both traffic speeds and collisions. In previous dialogue, Cheshire Police have stated that they would not support a 20 limit along this section.

### 3.3 Windmill Lane

Windmill Lane runs through Preston-on-the-Hill, Runcorn, it varies in width from approximately 5.2 meters wide at its narrowest point to over 8 meters wide in the village centre. There are a variety of houses, including terraces, semi-detached and detached houses. In addition, there is a building supplier yard, a plant centre and Windmill Farm. The speed limit starts at 30 mph before increasing to 40 mph (towards the junction with the A56), and whilst vehicles do park on the road, there is enough space for cars to pass.

The Council has previously consulted with Cheshire Police on reducing the speed limit from 30 mph to 20 mph. The Police have advised that they would only support a lower speed limit alongside full traffic calming intervention. The Council's Traffic Calming Assessment Procedure sets out the criteria for prioritising requests for traffic calming and provides that no location will be considered for traffic calming if there has not been an injury accident on the road in question in the previous 5 years. As the Council's road traffic collision data (as supplied by Cheshire Police) confirms that the last and only collision was in 2011, the road does not qualify for traffic calming. As this accords with the Council's assessment criteria and the police do not support lowering the speed limit without traffic calming, a 20mph limit here is not supported.

The option of a community speed watch (CSW) scheme has been discussed with some residents of Preston-on-the-Hill who have contacted the Council in relation to traffic in the village. However, currently there is insufficient interest to implement a CSW scheme.

### 3.4 Industrial Signage

The Chair of the Parish Council, has already engaged in extensive dialogue with the Council over the presence of industrial signage on the A56.

As explained in that dialogue, the legal duties imposed on the Council under section 122 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and section 16 of the Traffic Management Act 2004 require the Council to secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic on the road network. The Department for Transport in its circular on the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016 states:-

*“Even in this technological age, traffic signs remain the only method of communicating to all road users what they need to know to complete their journey safely, efficiently and within the law”.*

In terms of the sign for the Whitehouse Industrial Estate on Chester Road, Runcorn, the A56 is the only main road from junction 11 M56 to the Whitehouse Industrial Estate. This is a large industrial estate which employs over a 1000 people and generates a vast amount of traffic. The sign was erected in 2010 to mitigate the risk of traffic, especially HGVs, migrating from Chester Road onto the surrounding minor roads. At that time, the Council had

received complaints from local residents and the Parish Council about the level of traffic on the likes of Windmill Lane which was allegedly being used as a 'rat run'. The retention of signage is based not only on the views of the local residents and Parish Council, but a site assessment which found that there were safety reasons which justified the installation of a sign. Retaining the sign secures the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of traffic on and around Chester Road. Retaining signage is therefore legally compliant and entirely reasonable.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no policy implications associated with this report.

#### **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no financial or other implications arising from this report.

#### **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 The recommendation of this report maintain the current position as regards speed limits and signage. Therefore there are no implications for the Council's priorities.

#### **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 There are no risks arising from this report.

#### **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 There are no equality or diversity issues as a result of this report.

#### **9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no implications for climate change arising from this report.

#### **10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None.