

Puddock Road Safety Scheme

To: Highways and Transport Committee

Meeting Date: 5 March 2024

From: Executive Director Place and Sustainability

Electoral division(s): Whittlesey South
Ramsey & Bury
Warboys & The Stukeleys

Key decision: Yes

Forward Plan ref: 2024/028

Executive Summary: The report summarises the options assessment that has been undertaken to improve safety at Puddock Road. The committee are asked to approve the preferred option and its implementation.

Recommendation: The Committee are recommended to:

- a) note the steps already undertaken to improve the safety of Puddock Road, i.e. through the speed reduction measures set out in 3.5.
- b) approve the preferred option of a camera enforced closure of Puddock Road that would restrict access to the majority of vehicles and to undertake works next to the carriageway to remove rutting.
- c) if the closure is approved, note that consultation would take place informally, and formally through the Traffic Regulation Order consultation and decision-making process.
- d) delegate authority to the Executive Director Place and Sustainability in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of this Committee to award and execute a contract(s) and any other associated legal agreements or documents to implement the required works on Puddock Road.

Officer contact:

Name: David Mitchell

Post: Interim Senior Project Manager

Email: david.mitchell@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

1. Creating a greener, fairer and more caring Cambridgeshire

- 1.1 Improving safety at Puddock Road supports the Council's ambition to make travel across the county safer. The scheme forms part of the road safety programme with an overarching aim to make safety improvements to the road to reduce the risk of harm to road users from road traffic collisions on this stretch, where a number of fatal incidents have occurred in recent years.

2. Background

- 2.1 The 2.5km single-track stretch of Puddock Road heading south from Forty Foot Bank has seen 4 fatal incidents between 2016 and 2020 where a vehicle left the road and entered the adjacent watercourse.
- 2.2 It was reported to Highways and Transport Committee in July 2023 that outline options had been developed and that following informal consultation generating significant opposition, the option to close the route was not progressed. Alternative, physical solutions were proposed to be developed in 2022/2023 using a £400k allocation approved by the Highways and Transport Committee on 12 July 2022. An additional £300k allocation for the scheme was approved as part of the 2023/24 Road Safety Programme by this Committee in July 2023, bringing the total allocation for the scheme to £700,000.
- 2.3 A design was developed to install a vehicle restraint system along the section of Puddock Road where the incidents have occurred. The scheme had an estimated construction cost of £1.8m, with the total scheme cost expected to be higher. Delivery of the vehicle restraint system is not considered to represent good value for money and therefore alternative designs have been considered, which are outlined in section 3 of this report.
- 2.4 The Council is awaiting a Prevention of Future Deaths report from the Coroner.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1 **Options Assessment:** Further work has been undertaken to identify alternative designs including implementation of a reduced speed limit along the length of Puddock Road, a phased strategy for implementing a Vehicle Restraint System and a scheme looking to widen the carriageway whilst introducing a rib line to narrow the lane and warn drivers when approaching the edge of the carriageway. A range of options to improve safety along Puddock Road have been considered against the cost to implement and maintain, impact, benefits, risks and likely support. A summary of the options is included at Appendix 1. Options have been given a RAG rating.

- 3.2 **Preferred Option:** The recommended preferred option is to reduce the speed limit, together with restricting users to only those with “rights of access” and using speed limit signs and marker posts is the most practical response to the current issues which can be delivered within the available funding. It should be noted that the introduction of the 40mph speed limit buffer zone and restriction to access only use will require advertisement of the necessary traffic regulation orders.
- 3.3 **Decision-Making Process:** The traffic regulation order process enable individuals to raise objections. Any objections will in the first instance be considered by the County Traffic Manager.
- 3.4 **Speed Limit:** The current speed limit along Puddock Road is set at the national speed limit. The critical section of the road is straight but narrow. Due to uneven settlement of the concrete road the surface of the road is uneven. The road is used by large farm vehicles, and these are believed to be the cause of deep rutting at the side of the road. These issues with the road mean that the national speed limit is no longer appropriate and it is these features of the road that will influence driver behaviour to reduce their speed. A reduction in the speed limit will promote lower vehicle speeds and improve road safety with the aim of reducing the number and severity of road traffic collisions.
- 3.5 Following consultation with the police, an application was made for a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) to reduce the speed limit along Puddock Road between Forty Foot Bank and Ramsey Hollow to 30mph, which was approved in January 2024. Further consideration will be given to physical measures to support the reduced speed limit, such as reflective bollards and additional lining. Following the road safety audit on the speed limit reduction a 40mph “buffer zone” will be included to the immediate south of the proposed 30mph new speed limit to allow transition from the national speed limit.
- 3.6 **Access only:** non-physical closure of the route, allowing access only, could be achieved through use of an automatic number plate recognition system, and powers are expected to be in place later this year to support this. The County Council is seeking to gain the appropriate powers which would be transferred to the enforcing authority which is anticipated to be Huntingdonshire District Council. Further discussions will be held with Huntingdonshire District Council officers so that arrangements for maintenance and enforcement systems including the permitting of permitted vehicles can be agreed when the powers become available. Closure of the road will reduce vehicles utilising the route with only access permitted to those who have a right of access.
- 3.7 **Procurement:** The procurement strategy for the scheme has been considered against the expected value of the construction contract necessary to complete the project. The existing Highway Term Services contract is considered the most appropriate and compliant contracting method in this instance given Milestone’s previous work and knowledge of Puddock Road. Officers are working with Milestone on the design and specification and will work to ensure costs are appropriately scrutinised.

4. Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 Alternative options to improve road safety along Puddock Road have been identified in section 3.

5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

- 5.1 Based on the assessment undertaken of options to improve safety along Puddock Road, officers recommend using enforcement cameras to restrict access to only those users with rights of access to reduce the likelihood of any further serious incidents. This is in addition to the reduction in speed limit to 30mph which is already being implemented. A trial section to treat the deep rutting with a gabion mattress solution is also included in the recommended action.

6. Significant Implications

6.1 Finance Implications

A budget of £700k has been allocated for safety improvements at Puddock Road from the road safety budget. The speed reduction, proposed soft closure, and edge of carriageway trial can be implemented within the current allocated budget.

6.2 Legal Implications

The Council is awaiting a Prevention of Future Deaths Report from the Coroner. Should closure of the road be considered, this will be subject to approval by Policy and Regulation.

6.3 Risk Implications

Key risks are outlined within the section 3 of the report and include risk of poor ground condition leading to challenges on the installation and maintenance of the VRS and insufficient funding to deliver the full scheme.

6.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

What are the equality and diversity implications?

An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and no significant implications were identified.

6.5 Climate Change and Environment Implications (Key decisions only)

The carbon impact of the proposed solutions has been considered as part of the design process. Due to the poor ground conditions, there is limited scope to further reduce the concrete foundations required to support the vehicle restraint system. Whilst widening the road is likely to reduce the carbon impact of the scheme, it has not been recommended as the preferred solution as it is not considered sufficient to address the safety issues raised.

The lowest carbon impact solution would be to implement a soft or partial closure of the road allowing access to properties only. The option to physically close the road has previously been ruled out due to a lack of support in the local community.

6.6 Public Health Implications

There is a Public Health Outcome measure that is measured on for Killed Seriously Injured on England's Roads (there is also a separate indicator for Children's KSI), therefore this road improvement directly contributes to the indicator and therefore would be significant implication (in a positive way as it intends to reduce KSIs).

7. Source Documents

- 7.1 Road Safety Schemes 2022/23 – Highways and Transport Committee, 12 July 2022
[Document.ashx \(cmis.uk.com\)](#)

Road Safety Programme 2023-24 – Highways and Transport Committee, 04 July 2023
[Document.ashx \(cmis.uk.com\)](#)