

A379 Holcombe Dip

Report of the Area Engineer (South)

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| <p>Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.</p> |
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Recommendation: It is recommended that:

- (a) Members note the decision making process and the data used to validate the engineering decision on the centre line marking regime on the A379 at Holcombe.**
- (b) The work on a review of speed limits on the A379 is noted and that no action is taken to change the existing situation at Holcombe until recommendations of the review process are known.**

1. Summary

At the Teignbridge HATOC meeting on the 16 June members received a verbal report on actions dealt with under the scheme of delegation, by officers. One item which was discussed was the A379 at Holcombe and this followed receipt, by officers, of a petition from residents asking for the reinstatement of double white centre lines. Members requested that a report be presented to the November HATOC to cover the issue in more detail.

This report gives background to the decision to replace the previous double white centre line marking with single white line hazard markings on sections of the route following the completion of resurfacing works on the road.

The report sets out the Department for Transport's (DfT) criteria for the provision of double white centre line markings. It goes on to present site measurements and network performance data (including visibility measurements, speed data and traffic flow data).

The report refers to the principles established by Executive for a review of speed limits on the A road network in Devon (Executive Report EEC/06/92/HQ) and explains how the process affects the A379 at Holcombe.

2. Background

Prior to resurfacing of the A379 between the Teignmouth and Dawlish boundaries, double white lines were provided along the centre line of the road through the Holcombe Dip.

Double white lining was originally installed when the speed limit on the road was 60 mph. This has now been reduced to 40 mph.

When the resurfacing work was planned, the lining regime was reviewed in relation to the DfT's national criteria for such lining. Taking account of the speed limit reduction, and based on an assessment of the 85thile speed of traffic using the road, the forward visibility criteria was considered. This process informed the decision to install a single hazard line marking.

Following local concerns after completion of the resurfacing and lining, the crest of the hill just to the north of Windward Lane was reviewed and double white centre line markings were reinstated on this section of the road.

Residents have continued to express concerns, and a petition asking for the reinstatement of double white centre lines, of 55 signatures, was submitted to Officers on 9 May 2006. The petition states “We the undersigned, want the double white lines reinstated along the original length through Holcombe Dip on the A379 (we have no objection if double white lines are extended)”.

The Holcombe Resident’s Association has submitted a report titled: “The safety of all road users on the A379 through Holcombe.” This report has been considered and shared with DfT. The report sets out a number of local concerns, however there are inaccurate statements about speed compliance, and the application of DfT criteria for double white centre lines. DfT have confirmed that “it is not the case that even when the visibility criteria are met, that there is a legal requirement to provide double white lines”

In relation to the Association’s report, DfT also confirm that “the criteria for Double White Lines is not related to the visibility for side road traffic joining the main road”.

3. Department for Transport Criteria for Double White Centre Line Markings

The National Criteria for the use of Double White Centre lines is contained in the Traffic Signs Manual, Chapter 5. This states that Double White Lines are used to prohibit overtaking where visibility is restricted. The Visibility Distances is defined as “the maximum distance at which an object 1.05m above the carriageway can be seen by an observer at the same height, taking account of vertical as well as horizontal curvature”. Visibility distances for a range of speeds (85%ile) for the purpose of considering the use of Double White Centre lines is given in Table 5.2 of the Traffic Signs Manual.

The other criteria to be considered are the level of frontage development abutting the road (DfT say that Double White Lines should not normally be used in built up areas) and DfT also recommend consideration of the use of warning marking instead of double white centre lines in appropriate circumstances.

The Traffic Signs Manual Chapter 5, states that:

- “where the forward visibility is less than the minimum desirable it does not follow that double lines should always be installed...”
- “It is important that the marking is not used where the appropriate criteria are not satisfied...”

The Department for Transport have been contacted specifically in relation to Holcombe Dip and they confirm “the criteria for Double White Lines is not related to the visibility for side road traffic joining the major road”.

Visibility for side road traffic is given in Department for Transport Technical Note TD 42, which is actually intended for side road connections to a trunk road. There are no distances set for visibility criteria at existing historic side road connections and the need for any improvements at such locations is made on a case by case basis taking account of crash data and, if appropriate, developer proposals.

Speed measurements have been carried out on the A379 at Holcombe. The 85%ile speeds measured in Holcombe are 35 mph, 36 mph, 41 mph and 43 mph.

The maximum of these falls within the range 41 to 50 mph in table 5.2 of the Traffic Signs Manual for which a desirable minimum visibility distance is 120m. A visibility distance less than 120m would raise the question about the need for a double white centre line marking.

A visibility distance survey has been carried out on the A379. This shows that forward visibility for vehicles travelling south, from the end of the double white lines which have been laid over the crest of the hill, exceeds the criteria given in the Traffic Sign manual. Beyond that point and to the start of the Teignmouth 30 mph limit, a warning sign is provided for the bend and the use of a single hazard marking is appropriate.

Travelling north out of the Teignmouth 30mph speed limit, a warning sign is provided for the bend, a single hazard centre line marking is in place and, once around the bend, forward visibility exceeds the DfT criteria on the approach to and through the Holcombe Dip.

4. Site Data

Traffic Speed:

To validate the assessment of speed, measurements have been carried out over a period of 1 week.

The 85thile speed is the value used by DfT to assess the appropriate visibility requirement for double white centre lines. It represents the speed below which 85% of the traffic travels.

The measurements show that on the A379 just north of the junction with Windward Lane the average speed southbound is 30 mph and northbound 31 mph; the 85thile speeds are 35 mph southbound and 36 mph northbound.

On the A389 just south of the junction with Hall Lane the average speed southbound is 37 mph and northbound 36 mph; the 85thile speeds are 43 mph southbound and 41 mph northbound.

Forward Visibility:

Forward visibility was assessed when the decision to change the lining regime was made. The assessment was based on a judgement that the 85thile traffic speed is less than 50 mph where the mandatory 40 mph speed limit is in place. The maximum 85thile speed has been measured as 43 mph. Visibility measurements have been carried out to validate the decision on the centre lining regime through Holcombe Dip. They support the decision, and forward visibility distances in Holcombe Dip exceed 120m, which is the intervention trigger for 85thile speed in the range 41 to 50 mph.

Crash Data:

Crash data for the section of the A379 through Holcombe, between edge of the Holcombe community and the start of the built up area of Teignmouth, which includes the Holcombe dip, has been analysed. The data used is that collected by the police when they are called to the scene of a reportable crash. The data shows:

| Year | Number of police crash reports | Crashes involving vehicle damage only | Crashes involving slight injury to persons | Crashes involving serious injury to persons |
|------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| 2001 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 0 |
| 2002 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2003 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 2004 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| 2005 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| 2006 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0 |

The investigation criteria for the County Council's Casualty and Severity Reduction programme is 4 injury crashes within 100metres, within a 3 year period. The data shows that injury crashes are dispersed along this section of the A379 and that there have not been 4 such incidents within a 100 metre length of the road in a 3 year period.

Of the 15 reported crashes from 2001 onwards, 6 were shunts (rear impact on vehicle ahead), 5 were loss of vehicle control (e.g. pressed wrong pedals and loss of control on bend), 1 was due to turning out of a side road without proper observations, 1 was due to an animal running into the road, 1 was due to overtaking on double white lines and 1 was due to driving whilst under the influence of alcohol.

Of the 3 reported crashes in 2006, one (slight Injury) was the drink driving incident the other 2 were shunt incidents (one damage-only the other involved slight injury). One of these shunt occurrences may be related to traffic management for road works which were in place at the time for work by a Utility Company.

5. Interpretation of Data

Measurements show that through the Holcombe Dip there is adequate forward visibility and using the DfT criteria, therefore there is no visibility justification for Double White Centre lines.

Traffic speed data, has validated the visibility assessment and shows that there is reasonable compliance with the mandatory speed limit.

Crash data shows that the road is performing better than the national average for this type of road.

6. HATOC Terms of Reference

The HATOC Terms of reference incorporate a scheme of delegation to officers. These include the delegation of decisions relating to all road markings. It was therefore appropriate for officers to assess the conditions and apply national criteria to the A379 at Holcombe in deciding the appropriate centre line markings.

7. Countywide Review of Speed Limits

At its meeting on 1 August 2006, the Executive considered a report, Speed Management in Devon (EEC/06/92/HQ) and approved the recommendation for a review of A road speed limits.

The review for the A379 between Exeter and Teignmouth has already started. It will involve the collation and consideration of speed data, crash data and other factors in relation to the Executive agreed principles for setting local speed limits.

The output of the speed limit review process will be a set of proposals for changes to speed limits, signing and lining. The idea is to provide route consistency and ensure that the traffic management regime for a route provides the driver with clear messages about the appropriate speed and driving style for a route. The benefit of such an approach should be continued countywide progress on reductions in crash frequency and severity.

As the A379 at Holcombe is covered by the first route to be reviewed, it would not be appropriate, given the existing performance data on the route, to pre-empt to outcome of the process by instigating any changes to speed limits, signing or lining at Holcombe.

8. Reasons for Reaching the Recommendation

The decision to replace the double white centre line has been validated by the speed data and the visibility survey. The DfT have stressed the need for consistent application of the criteria for the provision of double white centre lines.

The crash data has shown that the route performs reasonably well, there are no cluster sites on the route and no trend in the crash records to trigger a Casualty and Severity Reduction Scheme.

Executive have approved a countywide review of A road speed limits and this may lead to changes to speed limits, signing and lining on the route. It would be unwise to pre-judge the outcome of the review and change the regime currently in place at Holcombe.

Brian George

Ward:

County Ward:

Local Government Act 1972

List of Background Papers

Contact for enquiries: Derek Moss

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| Background Paper | Date | File Ref. |
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None

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