

R V Rayner Middleton Sentencing Remarks

Nottingham Crown Court

His Honour Judge Steven Coupland

10 July 2025

1. Rayner Middleton, I have to deal with you for causing the death of Doreen Raynor by careless driving whilst over the specified limit for a drug.
2. Doreen ('Mar') Raynor died after being struck by your car on the 4<sup>th</sup> March 2023, just short of her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. Throughout her life, she had been the centre of a busy, large family – caring not just for her own children and grandchildren, but adopting others when they most needed help. She was a loving, caring, kind woman, despite the many difficulties and significant bereavements in her life. The victim personal statements read out in court by representatives of her family powerfully and eloquently describe the shock and horror of the manner of her death, and the devastating effect on the family as a whole. Her family and friends will suffer her loss for the rest of their lives – their future will be marked by an empty seat at the table and a gap in family photographs. I am acutely aware that no sentence I can pass today can begin to reflect their loss.
3. At the time of the collision, you were driving your Audi, intending to collect your son who had been staying with your mother. I accept that when you set out that day you did not set out to cause a collision or to harm anyone, but you caused the death of Doreen Raynor as a result of deliberate choices you made. You should not have been driving. Tests showed you had quantities of both alcohol and cocaine in your system. Although each was below the legal limit, the by-products of your cocaine use were still in your body at double the legally allowed limit to drive. The expert evidence makes plain that you must have had a

considerable amount of alcohol to drink the evening before to provide the reading you did after the collision, and likely taken cocaine at the same time. At the time of the collision, both readings would have been higher, and the combination of each substance is likely to have increased the effects of the other. The P do not suggest that the drugs in your system made you unfit to drive, but the purpose of the law is to reflect the obvious fact that such substances affect a person's ability to drive properly and safely – in particular by affecting their perception of risks, and their ability to react quickly in the circumstances.

4. Despite those limitations on your ability to drive properly, you chose to drive in a way that was entirely inappropriate for the road layout. You knew that Huntingdon Street was a busy City Centre street with numerous junctions leading onto it, and a number of traffic light controlled crossing areas often busy with pedestrians. The crossing you were approaching at the time of the collision (and the junction beyond it) is one of the busiest on that road, and the street was busy as usual with other vehicles and pedestrians.
5. You chose to drive in an aggressive way, at a speed far in excess of the 30 mph speed limit, a speed which was grossly inappropriate on that particular street, whilst changing lanes to pass other cars. From a standing start at traffic lights, you accelerated to 50 mph and changed lanes despite limited room between vehicles, causing another vehicle to have to brake. You were travelling at about 45mph when you approached the pedestrian crossing, and your speed was such that you were unable to stop when the lights at the crossing changed to amber.
6. Doreen Raynor rode her mobility scooter into the road in front of you intending to cross your side of the road, mistakenly believing that the crossing lights were on green (they were not). That act significantly contributed to the collision taking place, but the manner of your driving

also significantly contributed to it - because of the speed you were driving at, despite harsh braking, you were still travelling around the speed limit at the time you hit her. Had you been driving within the speed limit and paying proper attention, the collision may not have happened at all – other vehicles driving on the same road were able to slow and stop before the crossing – or at the very least, your speed would have been far lower at the point of impact and Doreen Raynor may well have survived.

7. The appropriate Sentencing Council Guidelines for the offence you have pleaded guilty to are those relating to s.3A of the Road Traffic Act 1988 (the title of that guideline summarising different ways in which an offence under that section can be indicted). Submissions made today are that I should instead sentence you on the basis of the guideline for 'causing death by careless driving', on the basis the P no longer assert that you were "unfit" as a result of the drugs taken. I do not accept those submissions. The former guidelines make specific reference to having "any quantity of a single drug detected above the legal limit", whilst providing a different category for cases where there is evidence of "substantial impairment". I note that when asked my view of the case before a plea was entered, the enquiry concerned the difference between being unfit or not, and whether I regarded this as a case where "a single drug" was appropriate (each of which features only have an application in the s.3A guidelines). I indicated my view that this fell within Culpability B and the starting point was 6 years imprisonment. No reference to the 'causing death by careless driving' guideline was made at that stage, nor until service of the Defence sentencing note on the day of sentence at 1215. Having considered those submissions (in writing and made orally) I reject those submissions, whilst making it plain that I could not deal with you on the basis you were unfit through drink and drugs in the absence of a plea to Count 1, and that there is no

evidence putting you within the category that describes “substantial impairment”.

8. Applying those guidelines, I am satisfied that your culpability falls within Category B, involving aggressive driving at a speed inappropriate for the road conditions. The harm caused falls within the category reflecting “any quantity of a single drug detected above the legal limit”. That provides for a starting point (after trial) of 6 years’ imprisonment, with a range between 4 and 9 years’ imprisonment. I emphasize that in this case, in the moments leading up to the collision you were travelling at around 1 ½ times the speed limit, with double the legal amount of specified drugs in your system – each of which require an uplift from the starting point.
9. In this case, the statutory aggravating factor is that Doreen Raynor was a vulnerable road user. The statutory mitigating factors include the facts that you are effectively of good character; the fact that the actions of Doreen Raynor riding across the road when the crossing light was on red significantly contributed to the collision; your remorse at the scene for the injuries suffered by Doreen Raynor; and your caring responsibilities.
10. I take into account in your favour the following features of personal mitigation –
  - a. the fact you are 31 years old (and were 29 at the time of this offence);
  - b. that you have a good driving record;
  - c. I have read a series of references from friends, employers and your son’s school describing you as kind, caring, honest, trustworthy and someone who would do anything for her friends and family;

- d. I have read a PSR and an addendum highlighting a number of significant life events, including a significant bereavement and the loss of your home when a teenager, and the effects on you of mental health difficulties experienced by your mother – I recognise that despite that, you have studied and worked hard throughout your life;
- e. You have caring responsibilities for your mother who suffered a stroke between the offence and now;
- f. You have caring responsibilities for your young son (who would be greatly affected by being separated from you and would be required to live with his father). I have no doubt that the references that speak of your care of him and describe you as a fantastic mother are genuine and accurate, but that is tempered by the fact that you were prepared to pick him up on the day of the collision despite having consumed drink and drugs the night before. I have well in mind the sentencing authorities relating to sentencing in cases where the sentence would impact a child;
- g. The fact that you have in the past suffered with your own mental health – experiencing post-natal depression; and since the collision, anxiety and depression, and (potentially) PTSD. I make plain that if I felt obtaining a psychological report or waiting for a Mental Health Treatment Requirement report would affect the appropriate sentence, I would adjourn for one.
- h. The fact that you have never received a custodial sentence before;
- i. The assessment of probation (that I agree with) that you pose a low risk of re-offending.

11. I accept that you have now accepted responsibility for your actions by pleading guilty and have expressed remorse over the harm you have caused. That has to be tempered by the fact that you chose not to accept responsibility sooner, as you could and should have done. Instead, you chose to lie about the amount of drink you had had and the fact you had taken drugs; you denied driving above the speed limit; and you denied that your driving was careless. That denial was repeated in your defence statement and repeated in court as being one of the issues in your case. That position adopted by you caused considerable extra distress to Doreen Raynor's family. The delay between the collision and now provides no mitigation, because the sole reason for that delay was your decision not to accept responsibility. Similarly, the maximum credit available to you for your plea (entered only on the day of trial) is limited to 10%. I reject submissions it should be greater than 10% - if the issue preventing an earlier plea had been the issue of unfitness, you could have offered a plea to Count 2 or 3 (neither of which required that feature, but each of which would have reflected an acceptance of responsibility for driving carelessly).
12. The offence you have pleaded guilty to plainly crosses the custodial threshold, and the only appropriate sentence is one of imprisonment. You will serve up to half the sentence I impose, less any time you have spent in custody. You will then be released on licence for the remainder of your sentence. If you breach the conditions of your licence or re-offend you can be recalled to custody.
13. Balancing the aggravating and mitigating features, after a trial the least possible sentence (reduced considerably to reflect your personal mitigation and statutory mitigating factors) would have been in the region of 4 ½ years' imprisonment. Allowing credit of 10%, the sentence I impose is 4 years' imprisonment.

14. I disqualify you from driving for 4 years. That is made up of a 2 year disqualification, with an uplift (s.35A RTOA 1988) to reflect the period of time you are likely to serve in custody of 2 years. That disqualification will start from the date I imposed an interim disqualification on you following your plea of guilty. You will need to pass an extended re-test before you can drive again.
15. Finally, you must pay a surcharge – a fee to the court. You will receive paperwork indicating how much and how to go about paying it.

HHJ S Coupland

10<sup>th</sup> July 2025