

Village Speed Limits Policy

This document sets out Shropshire Council's practical and realistic approach to the introduction of speed limits in villages across the county. It is intended to be the first part of our overarching speed management strategy for Shropshire; future documents will include our 'Rural Roads Speed Limits Policy' and 'Urban Speed Limits Policy'.

Background

Department for Transport Circular 01/2006 *Setting Local Speed Limits* states that "fear of traffic can affect people's quality of life in villages and it is self-evident that villages should have comparable speed limits to similar roads in urban areas. It is therefore government policy that, where appropriate, a 30 mph speed limit should be the norm in villages."

The Shropshire "People's Panel" survey in 2004 showed that the transport improvement that people considered to be most important was "slower traffic in towns and villages" (ref. LTP 2006-2011 para 3.2.2)



In our corporate plan 2006 – 2011 Shropshire Council set out a key aim that "We will always carry out our core duties – to educate, to care, to keep Shropshire moving". As part of this aim we have highlighted a key priority of improvement for 2009/2010 to be to "maintain the condition and improve the safety of Shropshire's roads."

Shropshire's Local Transport Plan 2006-2011 set out our four overarching aims for transport in Shropshire (ref LTP 2006-2011 para 2.2.1) under the headings of:

- Accessibility
- Economy

- Environment
- Safety and Health

In the case of Environment our strategic aim is:

- To protect and improve the built and natural environment and reduce the impact of traffic on local communities.

and for Safety and Health our strategic aim is:

- To create safer roads and healthier, more secure communities.

Delivery of the above aims is measured by a series of casualty reduction targets and through customer satisfaction surveys.

National research indicates that there is a clear relationship between traffic speed and the risk of accidents. It has been shown that a 1 mph reduction in speed can cut accident frequency by about 4% on lower speed rural roads.

Given the above Shropshire Council is committed to the introduction of speed limits in villages. However, speed limits must be set which will achieve a reasonable degree of compliance and for this reason our approach will not be a 'blanket approach' to speed limits instead we will relate our interventions to the average speed of traffic in a particular village. This approach will avoid some of the potential problems of poor compliance with the speed limit which have been encountered as a result of the 'blanket approach' elsewhere in the country.

Previously our approach has required the use of traffic calming to ensure that speed limits are complied with; this is commonly referred to as 'self enforcing'. This has meant that with the level of resources available to Shropshire Council only a few speed limits could be implemented each year.



While Shropshire Council recognises the contribution that physical measures can make to reducing traffic speeds and casualties it has to be realistic in setting policies which can be delivered within the budgets that are available.

However, it would clearly be unacceptable to establish a policy that met the demand for speed limits but failed to reduce speeds and more importantly failed to deliver casualty reductions. In addition it is also important to take account of the view that the introduction of speed limits which are not 'self enforcing' could increase casualties.

A review of low cost approaches by other local authorities has been undertaken to determine whether they reduce speeds and casualties. Approaches undertaken by Suffolk, Oxfordshire and Norfolk were examined and the overall conclusions were as follows:

- The introduction of low cost speed limits involving just the minimum regulatory signing and without physical traffic calming does reduce average traffic speeds by approximately 5 mph.
- The use of low cost vehicle activated signs on a rotational basis (around a series of sites) to raise awareness of a speed limit reduces speeds by a further 4 mph on average.
- The adoption of a countywide marketing campaign to ensure all residents are aware of the approach that is being taken, together with local promotion of new speed limits, is critical to the acceptability and general awareness levels of speed limits.
- Casualties were reduced.

The evidence from this review does **not** suggest that, where speed limits are not complied with, there is a potential increase in casualties within a village. Indeed the review has demonstrated the opposite and casualties have been reduced. Shropshire Council therefore believes that a low cost approach is an acceptable way forward.

Policy approach

Identify - For the purposes of this policy the definition of a village is as defined in Department for Transport Circular 01/2006.

- 20 or more houses (on one or both sides of the road); and
- a minimum length of road of 600m

All the villages which meet the above definition but do not have an existing speed limit have been identified.

Prioritise – Villages qualifying for a speed limit under this policy will be prioritised in accordance with the criteria set out in Appendix A.

Level of intervention –In line with the reduction in average speed achieved elsewhere in the country by the introduction of both low cost speed limits involving just the minimum regulatory signing and without physical traffic calming, and the use of vehicle activated signs, the following table sets out the intervention that will be applied

depending upon the existing average speed in the village. This approach should ensure that the average speeds after the introduction of a speed limit are below current enforcement thresholds. The approach taken to measuring the average speed is set out in Appendix B.

Average speed	Intervention
Less than or equal to 39 mph	Signed 30mph limit only; in villages with street lighting this will involve 30mph speed limit signs at the start of the village. Where there is no street lighting this will involve 30mph speed limit signs at the start of the village and smaller 30mph repeater signs throughout the speed limited area. It is anticipated that this will reduce speeds by up to 5mph.
40 to 44 mph	As above but due to the higher speeds involved vehicle activated signs (VAS) which flash a reminder to drivers of the speed limit will be used at targeted locations. These signs will not be permanent but will be rotated around a number of sites or villages as research has shown that they are most effective when used in this way. It is anticipated that this combined approach will reduce speeds by up to 9mph. (5mph signing 4mph VAS)
45 to 51 mph	Signed 40mph limit only; this will involve 40mph speed limit signs at the start of the village and smaller 40mph repeater signs throughout the speed limited area. It is anticipated that this will reduce speeds by up to 5mph.
51 mph and over	As above but due to the higher speeds involved vehicle activated signs (VAS) which flash a reminder to drivers of the speed limit will be used at targeted locations. These signs will not be permanent but will be rotated around a number of sites or villages as research has shown that they are most effective when used in this way. It is anticipated that this combined approach will reduce speeds by up to 9mph. (5mph signing 4mph VAS)

It is unlikely that reasonable compliance would be achieved with speed limits where the nature of the environment suggests to a driver a higher speed than that signed. For this reason where the main road through or adjacent to a village has a lower density of development with fewer than 20 properties it is considered that a 40mph limit will be appropriate on most occasions.

Where there is outlying development to the main village or where approach speeds are particularly high consideration will be given to the introduction of a buffer limit 10mph above that proposed for the main village.

Consultation – As required by law we will consult with local people and with interested parties before making speed limit traffic regulation orders under this policy. We will take account of any objections before deciding whether or not to make the order and introduce the speed limit. Our approach to consultation is set out in Appendix C.

Publicity – The general principles of this policy will be widely publicised to ensure all residents are aware of the approach that is being taken and will understand why this policy has been put in place. This wider publicity will be linked with local promotion of any new speed limit.

Monitoring – Speeds and accidents will be monitored in villages receiving a speed limit to monitor the effectiveness of the policy and to allow for annual reviews to be undertaken.

Priority will be given to establishing speed limits in villages, however, where average speeds remain above enforcement thresholds 12 months after implementation we will consider implementing additional measures to reduce speeds. Those villages with the highest speeds will be given priority. These measures will include publicity and education initiatives together with support for Community SpeedWatch. Consideration will also be given to the introduction of traffic calming features.

20 mph speed limits

Our policy is to only consider 20 mph limits within the main shopping areas of our town centres, outside schools where they can be justified as part of our safer routes to school work or as part of an appropriate local safety scheme to address the level of reported injury collisions.



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Appendix A – Village Speed Limit Prioritisation Process

We will aim to deliver new or reduced speed limits in up to 100 villages over the five years of the Local Transport Plan 2006 - 2011. We believe this is realistic with the introduction of this policy.

Villages which are already in the programme for 2007/08 will be implemented first. All other villages will be subject to the following priority assessment which will determine their priority.

Priority will be given to villages ranked according to the scoring system set out below as agreed in our draft speed limit policy which was presented to the former Shropshire County Council's Cabinet on 9 May 2006.

This has not changed as part of this approach, however, the Department for Transport Circular 01/06 "Setting Local Speed Limits" asks all local authorities to review speed limits on all of their A and B roads and implement any necessary changes by 2011. This review will in particular seek to improve consistency across the highway network. As a result it may be opportune and appropriate to implement certain village speed limits in advance of the priority given by the priority assessment in order to achieve route consistency. These decisions will be determined by the Assistant Director for Strategic Transport and Highways in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning and Transport and the local councillor.

Determining the priority score for a village			
	Score	Weight	Weighted score
Collision Index (see below)		2	
Community facilities - school Score 2 for a school (max unweighted score = 2) (see below)		1	
Community facilities – other Score 1 for each facility (max unweighted score = 4) (see below)		0.5	
Class of road: A = 2 B = 1		1	
TOTAL SCORE			

Collision Index

Records of personal injury collisions on the length of road where a speed limit is being considered should be obtained for the most recent five year period.

If there have been significant changes to the road layout or speed limit during that period, a shorter time interval may be used and the results factored up to represent 5 years.

The number of personal injury collisions, rather than the number of casualties should be used for the purposes of calculating the Collision Index, although the number of casualties should also be noted.

The Collision Index should then be calculated as set out below:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Collision Index} = & \text{ number of fatal collisions} && \times 4 \\ & + \text{ number of serious collisions} && \times 2 \\ & + \text{ number of slight collisions} && \times 1 \end{aligned}$$

Information about non-injury collisions, where available, should be recorded carefully and verified by the local police. In exceptional circumstances, where this information is judged to reveal an unusually high risk of injury collisions occurring in the future, the Collision Index may be increased by a maximum of 2 points. This will be agreed by the Assistant Director for Strategic Transport and Highways in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning and Transport and the local councillor.

Community facilities

The number and location of the following community facilities should be noted and recorded on a plan:

- Infant school
- Primary school
- Secondary school or college
- Local shops
- Church
- Village hall
- Surgery
- Children's playground
- Equestrian centre
- Other equivalent community facilities

These facilities should only be counted (and scored) if they lie on the main road where the speed limit is being considered, or if they generate pedestrian, cycle or equestrian activity on the main road.

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Appendix B – Measuring average speeds

For the purposes of this policy average speed will be calculated as follows.

Measurements

The following speed measurements will be made:

- An automatic counter will measure speed over a full week at a location near the centre of the village where speeds are likely to be at their highest. The mean speed will be calculated.
- Short period speed measurement will be made with a speed gun at the entry points to the village (where any speed limit is likely to start), at a time of the day when speeds are likely to be at their highest. The mean speed at each entry point will be calculated.

Average speed

The average speed used to determine the appropriate limit will be that measured within the centre of the village and the average speed on entry will be used to determine appropriateness of potential buffer limits.

Monitoring

Approximately 3 months after implementation these speed measurements will be repeated at the same locations. Where average speeds remain above enforcement thresholds consideration will be given to additional publicity and education initiatives together with support for Community SpeedWatch to encourage compliance with the new limit. In those villages where average speeds are above these thresholds, speed measurements will be repeated after 12 months and we will consider implementing additional measures to reduce speeds. Those villages with the highest speeds will be given priority.

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Appendix C – Consultation

We are required by law to consult with local people and with interested parties before making traffic regulation orders, including speed limits. We then have to take account of any objections before deciding whether or not to make the order.

In addition we will consult with interested parties, particularly local councillors and local parish councils, at an earlier stage to determine whether there is general support for a proposed speed limit, and to ensure we have all relevant information.

The process which we will follow is set out below:

Stage 1 Initial Consultation

Stage 1 initial consultation will be done when a village has been identified as a possible priority scheme for the current financial year, based on accident records, road type and area characteristics and the appropriate speed readings have been undertaken. The consultation will involve a site meeting between officers, the local councillor, and representatives of the parish council. The police will also be invited. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the appropriate speed limit and the start and end points,

Stage 2 Informal Consultation

Stage 2 informal consultation will involve the development of a plan clearly showing the appropriate speed limit and the start and end points which were discussed and if possible agreed at stage 1.

Informal consultation letters and this plan will then be sent to;

- The local councillor
- Parish Council
- Police
- Fire and Rescue service
- Ambulance service
- Local schools
- Local bus operators
- Other local groups as appropriate

We will simply ask consultees to give us their views on the proposed speed limit. We will not follow up “nil returns” at this stage. If invited to do so, officers will attend local joint committees or a local meeting to explain the proposals and listen to any comments.

A simple report – the Stage 2 consultation report - will be prepared summarising the results of the consultation and any resulting change to the proposal. A copy will be sent to all consultees, with a letter explaining what will happen next.

Stage 3 Formal Consultation

Stage 3 formal consultation will be done when:

- a detailed scheme has been drawn up for the proposed scheme limit, showing the proposed signs, road markings and any other features
- we have a cost estimate and an adequate budget to deliver the scheme
- we have prepared a draft Traffic Regulation Order for the speed limit

In line with our current standard practice for traffic regulation orders a letter and plans will be sent to all the consultees identified in Stage 2, together with:

- motoring organisations,
- freight organisations,
- the Campaign to Protect Rural England

At the same time the draft traffic regulation orders will be advertised in the press, and notices posted locally, as required by statute. The scheme plans and draft orders will be posted on the council's website.

The statutory consultation period will be 21 days, but we will make a reasonable allowance for the meeting cycle of local joint committees and parish councils. In the unlikely event of a non-response, we will follow this up in writing and by phone with a parish council, local councillor or police.

A formal decision report setting out the recommended actions, including any changes to the proposal will be produced and sent to members of the relevant Area Regulatory Committee. This will allow members to make a decision at the monthly Area Regulatory Committee meeting and also enable the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning and Transport and the local councillor to give their views.

The aim of the above procedure is to ensure that we take account of people's views firstly on the principle and then on the detail of a proposed speed limit.