

Place and Resources Overview Committee

21 April 2022

20mph Speed Limit Approach

For Recommendation to Cabinet

Portfolio Holder: Cllr R Bryan, Highways, Travel and Environment

Local Councillor(s): All

Executive Director: J Sellgren, Executive Director of Place

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Report Status: Public

Brief Summary:

Department for Transport (DfT) guidance and criteria are currently followed for setting speed limits across the Dorset Council area.

The DfT encourages highway authorities to introduce 20mph limits in urban areas and village streets where “there are or – could be – significant numbers of journeys on foot where pedal cycle movements are an important consideration, and this outweighs the disadvantage of longer journey times for motorised traffic.”

This report outlines the underlying principles that apply to all speed limits and specifically how these apply to 20mph limits with the aim of setting a standard approach to setting and implementing 20mph limits for Dorset Council.

At the 17 December 2020 committee hearing the decision was made to follow DfT guidance for setting speed limits and to further develop guidance on the principles, criteria, and process document, thus enabling officers and members to assess and prioritise requests objectively: returning the final version to this committee for approval.

Recommendation:

- a. To review the guidance for setting the principles, criteria, and process for 20mph schemes.
- b. To support the guidance and recommend it to Cabinet for approval.

Reason for Recommendation:

To ensure speed limit consistency across Dorset.

1. Report

- 1.1 DfT guidance and criteria for setting speed limits is currently followed by officers when considering/investigating request to change a speed limit. There are underlying principles that apply to all speed limits, an extract of the underlying principles is at Appendix A and the full guidance contained within the background papers.
- 1.2 Dorset Council's approach is to follow DfT guidance and criteria for setting speed limits. A copy of the current speed limit document is at Appendix B which provides a summary of the DfT guidance.
- 1.3 Speed limit reductions are usually actioned as a means to improve safety, either because there is evidence of a speed related collision problem or the nature, layout or use of a road has changed due to a highway improvement scheme or development.
- 1.4 DfT guidance states that the following factors are important when considering what an appropriate speed limit is:
 - History of collisions
 - Road geometry and engineering
 - Road functions (strategic, through traffic, local access etc)
 - Composition of road users (including existing and potential levels of vulnerable road users)
 - Existing traffic speeds
 - Road environment, including level of road-side development and possible impact on residents (e.g. severance, noise, or air quality)
- 1.5 The above factors should be considered for all road types; however, they may be weighted differently in urban or rural areas. The impact of speed limit changes on community and environmental outcomes should also be considered.

- 1.6 The DfT defines a 20mph limit or zone in urban areas as applicable “In streets that are primarily residential and in other town or city streets where pedestrian and cyclist movements are high, such as around schools, shops, markets, playground and other areas, where motor vehicle movement is not the primary function.”
- 1.7 DfT guidance on setting local speed limits states that it is government policy that a 30mph speed limit should be the norm through villages.
- 1.8 With regards to 20mph limits in rural villages, DfT guidance states that “It may also be appropriate to consider 20mph limits or zones in built-up village streets which are primarily residential in nature, or where pedestrian and cyclist movements are high. Such limits should not, however, be considered on roads with a strategic function or where the movement of motor vehicles is the primary function.”
- 1.9 DfT guidance states that speed limit reduction (including 20mph) assessments should include an assessment of the following factors:
- Collision and casualty savings
 - Conditions and facilities for vulnerable road users
 - Impacts on walking and cycling and other mode shift
 - Congestion and journey time reliability
 - Environmental, community and quality of life impact (may include emissions, community severance, visual impact, noise, and vibration as well as costs, including engineering, signing, maintenance and costs of enforcement)
- 1.10 DfT encourages local highway authorities to consider introducing more 20mph over time. DfT guidance on urban speed limit management states “Traffic authorities can, over time, introduce 20mph speed limits or zones on major streets where there are – or could be – significant numbers of journeys on foot where pedal cycle movements are an important consideration, and this outweighs the disadvantage of longer journey times for motorised traffic.

This is in addition to residential streets in cities, towns and villages, particularly where the streets are being used by people on foot and on bicycles, there is community support, and the characteristics of the street are suitable.

Where they do so, general compliance needs to be achievable without an excessive reliance on enforcement.”

1.11 It is important to note that Dorset Police's position on enforcing 20mph limits follows the Association of Chief Police Officer (ACPO) speed enforcement policy guidelines 2011-2015. The ACPO guidance can be found in the background papers and states that the police service position on the enforcement of speed limits (including 20mph) is:

- Appropriate speed limits are supported, so long as they look and feel like the limit giving visiting motorists who wish to conform that chance;
- The desired outcome has to be speeds at the limit chosen so as to achieve safe roads for other and vulnerable users not high speeds and high enforcement;
- Self-enforcing (with reducing features) not requiring large scale enforcement;
- Only introduce where average speeds are already close to the limit imposed (24mph in a proposed 20mph area) or with interventions that make the limit clear to visiting motorists;
- Speeding problems identified in an area must have the engineering, site clarity and need reassessed, not simply a call for more enforcement; and
- Enforcing against drivers who simply misread the road may not be appropriate.

1.12 With regard to 20mph limits, DfT guidance states "It is important to consider the full range of options and their benefits, both road safety and wider community and environmental benefits and costs, before making a decision as to the most appropriate method of introducing a 20mph scheme to meet the local objectives and the road conditions."

1.13 As with most signed only speed limit changes, vehicle speeds should be at or close to the proposed speed limit change. For 20mph limits DfT guidance suggests that a mean average speed of 24mph or lower would be required for a signed only 20mph limit to be well adhered to.

1.14 The current approach that follows DfT speed limit guidance and criteria offers a clear and objective means of assessing the appropriateness and validity of speed limit change requests.

1.15 DfT guidance offers flexibility in assessing each speed limit change request/proposal for distinct sites of concerns or area wide proposals. The guidance offers a variety of different reasons and justifications for setting speed limits which can be applied to suit the desired outcome.

1.16 Defining the wanted outcome of a 20mph limit (as with any speed limit change) is key and the DfT guidance and criteria allow for that to happen.

For example, a speed limit could be introduced as a means to prevent/reduce road traffic collisions or it could be introduced to encourage/support an increase in active travel (walking and cycling).

- 1.17 At the 17 December 2020 committee hearing it was noted that the initial draft scheme guidance could have been clearer to better enable communities to understand the principles and criteria of setting 20mph limits. In recognition of this a new '20mph schemes – A guide to principles, criteria, and process' document has been produced. The principles reflect DfT guidance for setting local speed limits and offer a means for officers to assess and prioritise requests objectively. A copy of this document is at Appendix C.
- 1.18 Within the guidance there is advice to enable communities to fund the installation of a 20mph scheme where the request does not reach sufficient priority to allow funding from the capital programme. There are a series of additional qualifying criteria a community would have to satisfy, and these are contained in the guidance.

2 Financial Implications

- 2.2 Costs associated with 20mph schemes will be dependent upon the scale and scope of particular schemes. A relatively simple scheme involving only lines and signs could be delivered in the region of £5K, a far more complex scheme with traffic calming measures would be considerably more expensive.
- 2.3 It is proposed to allocate £75k of LTP budget per annum to the delivery of 20mph schemes, focused on the highest priority schemes. This would be reviewed annually. Any very large-scale priority schemes would potentially receive separate funding from the LTP budget and would need to be prioritised using the standard LTP scheme prioritisation process.
- 2.4 Local Town/Parish Councils will also have the opportunity to self-fund lower priority schemes that would not be delivered as part of the high priority Dorset Council programme, provided that they meet the essential criteria.

3 Climate Implications

- 3.2 DfT guidance states that 20mph schemes may have “environmental benefits as, generally, driving more slowly at a steady pace will save fuel and reduce pollution, unless an unnecessarily low gear is used.”

- 3.3 Providing low speed in low traffic areas also promotes increased walking and cycling.

4 Well-being and Health Implications

DfT guidance states that “Important benefits of 20mph schemes include quality of life and community benefits, and encouragement of healthier and more sustainable transport modes such as walking and cycling”. The importance of this has been picked up as a key issue in the recently published LTN 1/20 Cycle Design standards.

5 Other Implications

None

6 Risk Assessment

HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

7 Equalities Impact Assessment

Not applicable

8 Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix A – Extract from DfT Circular 01/2013 ‘Setting Local Speed Limits’ – The Underlying Principles of Local Speed Limits
- 8.2 Appendix B – Dorset Council speed limit setting overview
- 8.3 Appendix C - 20mph schemes – A guide to principles, criteria, and process
- 8.4 Appendix D – Process for assessing a 20mph limit or zone

9 Background Papers

- 9.1 DfT Circular 01/2013 ‘Setting Local Speed Limits’ [Setting local speed limits - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

9.2 ACPO Speed Enforcement Police Guidelines 2011-2015: Joining Forces for Safer Roads [Microsoft Word - Speed Enforcement Guidance ACPO_2011 2015_May 2013_Internet \(npcc.police.uk\)](#)