

PS03 ITEM 32

- 2 JAN 2007

## Setting Local Speed Limits

DfT Circular 01/2006

Issues to be addressed in formulating a new  
policy



December 2006



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## **Setting Local Speed Limits**

### **DfT Circular 01/2006**

#### **Issues to be addressed in formulating a new policy**

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- Do buffer speed limits help with the reduction of vehicle speeds in village centres
- Do we need repeater signs for speed limits
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## **Background**

Traffic authorities are required to set 'local speed limits' in situations where local needs and considerations deem it desirable for drivers to adopt a speed which is different from the national speed limit. The limit should be self-explanatory and seek to reinforce people's assessment of what is a safe speed to travel, but without being seen as a target speed at which to drive in all circumstances.

## **Key Issues**

### **Do we need to be guided by communities?**

The introduction of reduced speed limits is not seen by all parish councils as universally desirable; some feel that speeding is not a sufficient local problem to justify the visual intrusion that would result from the introduction of the necessary signs. Others believe that only the centre of a village should have the lower limit as a long length of continuous limit can reduce the impact of its message to drivers at the location where it is most needed.

### **Do buffer speed limits help with the reduction of vehicle speeds in village centres?**

The introduction of buffer speed limits in villages is seen by many as sensible a way of achieving better compliance with lower speed limits in the centre of villages. Where used they should help in reflecting the gradually changing environment and road character as you enter a village and assist in encouraging drivers to drive more slowly.

### **Do we need repeater signs for speed limits?**





The guidance has not changed on signing speed limits and most speed limits above 30 mph other than the national speed limits requires the introduction of repeater signs to act as a reminder to drivers.

Under current legislation the use of repeater signs is prohibited on roads subject to a 30 mph speed limit that have a system of street lighting. This is because the presence of the lights themselves is an indication of the limit. However, it means that if, for example, an existing 40 mph limit on a road with lighting is reduced to 30 mph, repeater signs would not be allowed and the existing 40 mph repeaters would be removed and not replaced.

### **What are the national speed limits?**

The speed limits are not the same for all vehicles and are dependent on the type of vehicle. Advice on speed limits are set out in the Highway Code and a table has been reproduced from the Highway Code which sets out the national speed limits for different types of vehicle.

## Speed Limits

Type of vehicle	Built-up Areas*	Elsewhere		Motorways
		Single carriage-ways	Dual carriage-ways	
				
<b>Cars and motorcycles</b> (including car derived vans up to 2 tonnes maximum laden weight)	30	60	70	70
<b>Cars towing caravans or trailers</b> (including car derived vans and motorcycles)	30	50	60	60
<b>Buses and coaches</b> (not exceeding 12 metres in overall length)	30	50	60	70
<b>Goods vehicles</b> (not exceeding 7.5 tonnes maximum laden weight)	30	50	60	70 <sup>+</sup>
<b>Goods vehicles</b> (exceeding 7.5 tonnes maximum laden weight)	30	40	50	60

These are the national speed limits and apply to all roads unless signs show otherwise

\* The 30 mph limit applies to all traffic on all roads in England and Wales (only Class C and unclassified roads in Scotland) with street lighting unless signs show otherwise

## **A and B Class Roads Assessment**

### **Setting local speed limits on rural single carriageway roads**

Under the new guidance roads are categorised into two tiers, based on their function:

- Upper tier – roads catering primarily for through traffic, typically the A and B class network. The appropriate limit is likely to be 50 or 60 mph.
- Lower tier – roads providing a local or access function, typically the C class and Unclassified network. The limit is likely to be 40 or 50 mph.

In villages 30 mph is recommended as the norm, where appropriate, for both tiers.

An assessment framework has been developed by the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL) and is based on the presumption that single carriageway rural roads should operate at speeds that give the minimum total cost taking safety, mobility and environmental impact in to account.

Within the two tiers accident rates should generally be used to help decide whether a higher or lower speed limit is appropriate. The guidance sets the following accident threshold levels:

- Upper tier – 35 injury accidents per 100 million vehicle kilometres
- Lower tier – 60 injury accidents per 100 million vehicle kilometres

The assessment framework works on the basis that the choice of speed limit should be guided by whether the accident rate on a section of road is above or below the appropriate threshold. It is necessary to consider accident remedial measures for identified accident sites before considering the modification of speed limits.

### **Review of A and B class roads**

The new guidance places a requirement on local highway authorities to review the speed limits on A and B class roads by 2011.

### **Prioritizing A and B class roads**

The county has 30 A class roads, 4 of which form part of the A road network maintained by the government's Highways Agency as trunk roads. In addition to the A roads there are 42 B class roads.

A and B roads have been prioritised using the injury accident rate calculated using the number of crashes, road length and traffic volume. The priority list is shown in appendix A.

## Village Speed Limits

### **Character of Sussex**

Sussex is a primarily a rural county with a large number of small communities which have developed as a result of local need.

One of the qualities which can be found in many small communities is the unspoiled nature of the built environment without an excess of road signs and traffic management features.

The introduction of reduced speed limits supported by traffic calming could have an adverse affect on the existing appearance of many communities and rural roads, detracting from what is seen by many as one of the qualities of East Sussex.

### **Village Definition**

The dictionary definition: - A group of houses and other buildings, such as a church, a school and some shops, which is smaller than a town, usually in the countryside.

A village in terms of the revised guidance for setting speed limits:-

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

The above criteria should give an adequate visual message to drivers to reduce their speed

This definition is open to interpretation and therefore it is important that it is made more robust before agreeing a revised policy. The County Council's Transport and Environment Scrutiny Committee has been consulted and they are minded to support the following definition:-

"20 or more houses served by private drives which adjoin the main road (on one or both sides of the road) and located within a minimum distance of 600 metres and clearly visible to the driver".

Following further consideration at officer level, it is being recommended that the word 'house' should be changed to 'property' to allow for commercial premises etc and the word 'drive' be changed to 'access' to include properties that only have pedestrian access onto the road in question.

The proposed revised definition is therefore as follows:-

**"20 or more properties served by private accesses which adjoin the main road (on one or both sides of the road), located over a length of not less than 600 metres, and clearly visible to drivers".**

## Setting Speed Limits

### Underlying principles

The underlying aim of speed management policies should be to achieve a 'safe' distribution of traffic speeds that reflects the function of the road and the impacts on the local community. This should imply achieving a mean speed appropriate to the prevailing conditions, and all vehicles moving at speeds as close to the posted speed limit as possible.

A key factor when setting a speed limit is what the road looks like from the road users' perspective, such as its geometry (width, bends junctions and accesses, etc), and its environment (e.g. whether it is rural, residential or commercial, or passing schools, shops, etc). Drivers are likely to expect and respect lower limits, and be influenced when deciding on what is an appropriate speed, where they can see there are potential hazards, for example in built up areas.

It is known from experience that if a speed limit is set too far below the existing mean speed of traffic on that road, the limit will be ineffectual and poorly observed, and there is a danger that this will bring similar limits elsewhere into disrepute. It is therefore proposed that before a speed limit alteration is advertised the following mean speeds need to be achieved:-

**Sussex Mean Speed Criteria for Speed Limits**

Speed Limit	20	30	40	50	60
Mean Speed to be within	22	32	41	51	61

For the purpose of assessing villages for the possible introduction of 30 mph limits it is proposed that once speed measurements have been taken, the village will be placed into one of three categories and the following action taken:-

- MEAN SPEED OF 32 MPH OR LESS – this indicates that the limit can be introduced by means of signs alone, so we will discuss with the parish council the provision of a 30 mph speed limit.
- MEAN SPEED GREATER THAN 32 MPH BUT LESS THAN 35 MPH – in this band it will be necessary to consider minor remedial engineering works including the provision of Vehicle Activated Signs where appropriate, and these measures will have to be prioritised in comparison with other locations.
- MEAN SPEED OF 35 MPH OR GREATER – this indicates that more intensive measures are needed to bring speeds down to appropriate levels, so we will add these sites to the Traffic Calming Priority Assessment list.

## **Traffic calming**

The process for prioritising traffic calming requests has been designed to assess sites in the urban environment rather than in rural villages, primarily to address issues of rat-running where, due to congestion on the main road, drivers were seeking convenient short cuts. With this in mind, the present assessment procedure overlooks certain quality of life issues which affect villages such as:-

- Equestrian activity
- Footways
- Crossing by Public Rights of Way
- Severance – community based facilities located on one side of the road i.e. school, shops, post office, church etc.
- Percentage of drivers currently exceeding the proposed speed limit under consideration.

It is intended to review the priority assessment procedure to give more emphasis to rural issues.

## **Prioritizing speed limit review in villages**

A time frame has been set to review the speed limits on all A & B roads and this exercise needs to be completed by 2011. A large number of villages affected by traffic speed and volume have classified roads running through them and will be considered as part of the A and B road review.

A list of villages/ settlements for each parish (Appendix B) has been compiled using a 1:50 000 scale map based search, the list does not reflect the presences of a speed limit or the potential of introducing changes to existing speed limit. The list comprises of 448 settlements some of which form part of the urban area. The list is not comprehensive and if parish councils wish to see further settlements included on the list which are named on the Ordnance Survey 1:50 000 map they can be added to the list. In addition to settlements any comments in respect of the extent of existing speed limits are welcomed as changes in development and environment may in some cases give the opportunity to adjust the existing speed limit.

## Appendix A

### Priority list for A and B class roads.

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>A</b>		<b>B</b>	
<b>Roads</b>		<b>Roads</b>	
1	A272	1	B2103
2	A2102	2	B2159
3	A277	3	B2106
4	A2101	4	B2193
5	A295	5	B2098
6	A21	6	B2095
7	A268	7	B2182
8	A269	8	B2191
9	A2021	9	B2203
10	A2040	10	B2087
11	A259	11	B2238
12	A229	12	B2101
13	A265	13	B2202
14	A2270	14	B2244
15	A271	15	B2092
16	A2036	16	B2124
17	A275	17	B2247
18	A264	18	B2104
19	A2029	19	B2089
20	A2280	20	B2188
21	A28	21	B2116
22	A267	22	B2096
23	A26	23	B2165
24	A2290	24	B2183
25	A2100	25	B2192
26	A22	26	B2100
		27	B2157
		28	B2093
Trunk	Roads	29	B2088
	A21T	30	B2110
	A26T	31	B2204
	A259T	32	B2026
	A27T	33	B2099
		34	B2112
		35	B2082
		36	B2102
		37	B2169
		38	B2123
		39	B2239
		40	B2109
		41	B2113
		42	B2136