

Durham County Council

Introduction of New 20 mph Speed Limits and Zones Policy 2016

Altogether better



Introduction of New 20 mph Speed Limits and Zones

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Introduction

1. 20 mph speed limits and zones can be summarised as follows:

20 mph Speed Limits – These involve 20 mph traffic signs only. They are suitable for residential estate roads and side streets, where the nature of the road tends to result in naturally low average speeds of less than 24 mph. Research indicates that limits achieve an average speed reduction of 1 mph.

20 mph Speed Limit Zone - These involve 20 mph traffic signs plus traffic calming measures to ensure that the 20 mph limit is self-enforcing. In order that drivers are aware of the zones, traffic signs must be erected at every entrance/exit to the zone. Research indicates that a 20 mph speed limit zone can result in speed reductions of around 10 mph.

20 mph Part-time Speed Limits – These involve advisory part-time flashing 20 mph signs on main/distributor roads outside of facilities for vulnerable road users such as schools that would otherwise be unsuitable for a full-time 20 mph speed limit or zone. The normal speed restriction for the road remains the legally enforceable limit.

Legislation

2. The Council as the local Highway Authority has the power to introduce 20 mph speed limits and zones by creating a Traffic Regulation Order on adopted public highway roads in accordance with the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (as amended) and The Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedures) 1996.
3. Traffic calming for 20 mph zones is provided under provisions within the Highways Act 1980 and where vertical traffic calming features are provided, The Highways (Road Hump) Regulations 1999. The introduction of 20 mph zones requiring physical traffic calming measures are not appropriate on A and B class roads as they are of strategic importance and require the efficient and effective movement of vehicles.
4. The Council has the power to introduce advisory 20 mph part-time speed limits under the Traffic Sign Regulations and General Directions (TSRGD).

Consultation

20 mph Speed Limits and Zones

5. Informal consultations are undertaken with affected parties including the statutory consultees (Police, Ambulance Service and Fire & Rescue Service). This allows any issues to be identified at an early stage and the plans amended as appropriate where possible.
6. A formal consultation is then undertaken with affected parties including statutory consultees on the amended plans.
7. Outstanding representations and objections from the informal and formal consultation are reported to the Council's Highways Committee for consideration and Members make a recommendation. The final decision to proceed and seal the Traffic Regulation Order is delegated to the Corporate Director – Neighbourhood Services.

20 mph Part-Time Speed Limits

8. 20 mph Part-time Speed Limits do not require a Traffic Regulation Order. Therefore, an informal consultation is undertaken with statutory consultees and stakeholders including the Local Members, Schools, Area Action Partnerships, Durham Constabulary, Town Councils, Parish Councils and Road User Groups.

Department for Transport Guidance

9. The updated guidance issued in 2013 includes a specific objective relating to 20 mph speed limits that local authorities should:

“Consider the introduction of more 20 mph limits and zones, over time, in urban areas and built-up village streets that are primarily residential, to ensure greater safety for pedestrians and cyclists.”
10. The circular goes on to outline that:

“Successful 20 mph zones and 20 mph speed limits are generally self-enforcing i.e. the existing conditions of the road together with measures such as traffic calming or signing, publicity and information as part of the scheme, lead to a mean traffic speed compliant with the speed limit. To achieve compliance there should be no expectation on the police to provide additional enforcement beyond their routine activity, unless this has been explicitly agreed.”

Criteria

11. The Council's criteria for supporting the introduction of new 20 mph speed limits and zones subject to available funding are:
 - Where meet Department for Transport legislation and guidance;
 - 20 mph self-enforcing zones should be considered on residential/side roads where measured average speed is greater than 24 mph;
 - 20 mph speed limits should be considered on residential/side roads where the measured average speed is lower than 24 mph; and
 - The use of 20 mph part-time speed limits on main/distributor roads outside of schools should be considered where measured average speed at school start and end times is greater than 24 mph.
12. The use of 20 mph limits should be introduced alongside a co-ordinated programme of wider social marketing and road safety education to slow traffic speeds, change driver behaviour and promote walking, cycling and active lifestyles.
13. The local consultation and funding will ensure that schemes are both evidence and demand-led and have strong support from Local Members, Area Action Partnerships, Durham Constabulary, Schools, Town Councils, Parish Councils and the public.

Funding

Existing Roads

14. The Schools 20 mph Part-Time Speed Limit Project is providing Council funding on a priority basis on main/distributor roads outside existing schools countywide.
15. Further schemes to introduce 20 mph speed limits/zones on existing roads must be funded from other sources such as Area Action Partnerships, Member Neighbourhood Budgets, Town Councils, Parish Councils and Schools.

New Roads

16. New roads are funded by the developers in accordance with the planning consent.

17. The Council's 'Highway Design Guide for Residential Developments - 2014' requires that residential roads should be designed such that the geometry and physical features limits vehicle speeds to 20 mph.
18. Physical traffic calming measures should be considered where the highway design layout does not reduce speeds to an acceptable level.
19. The Council will require all new residential/side roads to have a 20 mph limit from 1st April 2016.

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