

Report to: Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Date of meeting: 5 June 2023

By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Title: Petition for a default 20-mph Speed Limit in residential areas

Purpose: To consider the petition to make 20-mph the default speed limit for residential areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Lead Member is recommended to advise petitioners that:

- (1) East Sussex County Council (ESCC) each year introduces a range of road safety improvements, which can include 20-mph schemes, traffic calming and pedestrian crossings, through the multi-faceted approach as set out in this report;**
 - (2) ESCC is committed to working with all stakeholders to improve road safety across East Sussex, including our partners from the Sussex Safer Roads Partnership;**
 - (3) The County Council has a finite amount of funding to develop local transport improvements and we need to ensure that we target our resources to those schemes which will be of greatest benefit to our local communities. A potential scheme to introduce a default 20-mph speed limit for residential roads across East Sussex has been assessed through our approved scheme prioritisation process and is not a priority for the County Council at the present time; and**
 - (4) The new Speed Limit Programme will assess the potential for lower speed limits across all A and B class roads within the county and identify a programme of improvements. Over the next three years, more than 25 stretches of road will benefit from speed limit reductions or measures that will increase the effectiveness of existing speed limits.**
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1 Background Information

1.1 At the County Council meeting on 7 February 2023 a petition was presented to the Chairman by Councillor Maples which states:

We, the undersigned are calling on East Sussex County Council to take a NEW approach to road safety that will:

- 1. Make 20mph the default for residential areas - #20splenty*
- 2. Reduce speed limits where there are potential deaths and injuries and not wait for people to die before taking action; follow the government guidance on safe speed limits*
- 3. Include residents' views!*

1.2 A copy of the petition is available in the Members' Room. Standing Orders provide that where the Chairman considers it appropriate, petitions are considered by the relevant Committee or Lead Member and a spokesperson for the petitioners is invited to address the Committee. The Chairman has referred this petition to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment.

2 Supporting Information

20-mph speed zones/limits

2.1 ESCC supports 20-mph speed limits where appropriate. National legislation imposes an automatic 30-mph speed limit on roads provided with a system of street lighting (defined as 'a system of street lighting furnished by means of lamps placed not more than 200 yards [183 metres] apart). This covers most residential roads. These roads are given 'restricted road' status and no speed limit signs are required to give effect to the speed limit.

2.2 To introduce a speed limit other than that imposed by restricted road status requires the making of a Traffic Regulation Order and the provision of traffic signs to give a continual reminder of that speed limit.

2.3 To be effective, speed limits need to be set at a level which appears reasonable to a driver and be reflective of the environment through which the road passes. The introduction of a lower speed limit will not automatically slow traffic down. It is nationally recognised that most drivers travel at the speed they consider to be safe for the conditions of the road, based on their assessment of the local environment. There are several factors that are taken into consideration when assessing a length of road for a speed limit, with the predominant factors being the character and appearance of the road, the level of visible frontage development and the average speed of traffic using the road.

2.4 Adopted Policy PS05/02 (which reflects national guidance and best practice) allows for 20-mph zones/speed limits to be considered where they are likely to be self-enforcing. An effective and self-enforcing 20-mph speed limit can be achieved with signs alone on roads where the mean (average) speed of traffic is below 24-mph. On roads where mean speeds are higher, appropriate traffic management/calming measures would need to be introduced. PS05/02 is attached as Appendix 1. Sussex Police would not support any proposed 20-mph speed limits unless they were likely to be self-enforcing.

2.5 Although it is recognised that 20-mph speed limits are often well supported by local communities, national research including a study commissioned by the DfT has evidenced that signed only 20-mph speed limits only produce a negligible change in driver behaviour with average speeds reducing by about 1-mph to 2 -mph. In addition, ESCC is not aware of any peer reviewed research that evidences that signed only 20-mph speed limits reduce incidents, anti-social driving or near misses.

2.6 There are over 1,000 kilometres of 'residential' roads in the county (comprised of more than 4,500 individual roads). Although some roads would only require a Traffic Regulation Order and speed limit signs to introduce a 20-mph speed limit, many would require traffic management/calming measures. The types of measures required (which would need to be determined through detailed investigation, design, and a full consultation process) would make it very expensive to introduce a default 20-mph speed limit on all residential roads in the county.

2.7 Although the cost of introducing 20-mph limits on all residential roads in the county is uncertain, based on the number of roads, the total cost would be more than £15m.

2.8 The Community Match Initiative provides residents with the opportunity to take forward 20-mph zones/speed limits where appropriate when these are funded locally. Where possible, ESCC will support and assist local communities and town/parish councils to implement such schemes, if they are funded externally, or through Community Match.

Annual Road Safety Programme

2.9 All road safety concerns that are raised by Members and residents are assessed by a member of the Road Safety Team and where appropriate improvements introduced. In addition, annually the Road Safety Team identifies sites that have the most personal injury crashes (PIC's) and put in place a programme of works to help reduce the number of casualties on these roads.

As part of this year's Road Safety Programme, 49 locations have been identified where four or more PIC's have occurred in the three-year assessment period of 01/01/2020 to 31/12/2022.

Capital Programme for Local Transport Improvements

2.10 Each year the County Council develops and implements numerous local transport improvements funded through its capital programme of local transport improvements. In 2022/23 total funding of £11,776m was allocated (a combination of funding from the County Council, Local Growth Fund secured via the South East Local Enterprise Partnership and development contributions) which delivered over 50 schemes and studies across the county which include a number of road safety and active travel improvements.

2.11 All requested road safety and local transport improvements, including requests to change the speed limits are assessed against the established Local Transport Plan (LTP). The content of the capital programme is considered by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment on an annual basis. Key objectives against which requests are assessed include the extent to which it will:

- Improve the economy
- Improve public safety and health
- Tackle climate change
- Improve accessibility to employment, education, health facilities and other services
- Improve quality of life

2.12 The County Council has a finite amount of funding to develop local transport improvements and we need to ensure that we target our resources to those schemes which will be of greatest benefit to our local communities. A potential scheme to introduce a default 20-mph speed limit for residential roads across East Sussex has been assessed through our approved process and is not a priority for the County Council at the present time.

2.13 A review of ESCC's LTP commenced in Summer 2022. The Government's guidance on developing Local Transport Plans is due imminently and it is expected to indicate the need to focus on decarbonising transport as well as integrating the Government Levelling Up, Bus Back Better and Gear Change strategies into the Council's transport strategy for the county. A key element of the development of the new LTP has been to engage with Members, stakeholders, local communities and businesses early and throughout the process to actively seek their views and comments. This was initially through public and stakeholder consultation on issues, opportunities and priorities in autumn 2022 and at present via a series of workshops on the vision, objectives, preferred strategy and potential interventions to deliver the strategy. A LTP Reference Group comprising members of the Place Scrutiny Committee and chaired by Councillor Redstone has been established to provide Member input and challenge throughout the LTP's development.

2.14 Consultation on the draft LTP strategy, which will include an updated scheme assessment process, will be undertaken in autumn 2023 with final adoption of the strategy programmed for early 2024.

Speed Management Programme

2.15 A £500,000 budget has been allocated to undertake a new Speed Management Programme with additional ongoing funding identified within future Capital Programmes.

2.16 As part of the Speed Management Programme a review will identify lengths of the main road network that would benefit from a reduced speed limit. It will also check that existing speed limits are effective and producing the desired reductions in vehicle speeds using available speed data and new in-vehicle telematics. The review will also identify sites of greatest need and local concern where proven traffic management measures would have a positive effect and enhance the effectiveness of the speed limit. Over the next three years, more than 25 stretches of road will

benefit from speed limit reductions or measures that will increase the effectiveness of existing speed limits.

3 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 ESCC is committed to working with all stakeholders to improve road safety across East Sussex, and each year introduces a range of road safety improvements, which can include 20-mph schemes, traffic calming and pedestrian crossings, through the multi-faceted approach as set out in this report.

3.2 The County Council has a finite amount of funding to develop local transport improvements and we need to ensure that we target our resources to those schemes which will be of greatest benefit to our local communities. A potential scheme to introduce a default 20-mph speed limit for residential roads across East Sussex has been assessed through our approved process and is not a priority for the County Council at the present time.

3.3 The new Speed Limit Programme will assess the potential for lower speed limits across all A and B class roads within the county and identify a programme for improvements. Over the next three years, more than 25 stretches of road will benefit from speed limit reductions or measures that will increase the effectiveness of existing speed limits.

RUPERT CLUBB

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LOCAL MEMBERS

All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None