

Report to: Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Date of meeting: 22 May 2024

By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Title: Petition: Make 20mph a default on our residential streets (Hastings and St Leonards)

Purpose: To consider the petition requesting that the Council make 20mph a default on residential streets (Hastings and St Leonards).

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

- (1) East Sussex County Council each year introduces a range of road safety improvements, which can include 20mph schemes, traffic calming and pedestrian crossings, through the multi-faceted approach as set out in this report;
 - (2) The Council is committed to working with all stakeholders to improve road safety across East Sussex, including partners from the Sussex Safer Roads Partnership;
 - (3) The 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 20mph speed limit for residential roads across Hastings and St Leonards has been assessed through our approved scheme prioritisation process and is not a priority for the Council at the present time;
 - (4) A potential scheme to introduce a default 20mph speed limit for residential roads across Hastings and St Leonards would not comply with the revised national guidance on setting local speed limits as it would be a blanket measure; and
 - (5) The East Sussex County Council Speed Management Programme has assessed the potential for lower speed limits across all A and B class roads within the county and will now identify a programme of improvements, which will include reductions in speed limits or measures that will increase the effectiveness of existing speed limits.
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1 Background Information

1.1. At the Full Council meeting on 6 February 2024, a petition was presented to the Chairman by Councillor Hilton on behalf of a group of residents from Hastings and St Leonards. The petitioners request that the Council implement a default 20mph speed limit on all residential roads throughout Hastings and St Leonards. A copy of the petition is available in the Members' Room.

1.2. 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

2.1 The Department for Transport (DfT) Circular 01/2013 Guidance Setting local speed limits was revised in March 2024, and states, the 'guidance retains and builds upon many of the underlying principles of DfT Circular 01/2006, but provides additional evidence of the safety and wider benefits of setting appropriate speed limits.' Following this revision by the DfT, a review was undertaken of the relevant national guidance issued by the DfT (including the March 2024 revision of Circular 01/2013 and the January 2022 revisions to the Highway Code) and this concluded that adopted Policy PS05/02 continues to reflect national guidance and best practice (included as Appendix 1 to this report).

2.2 With regard to 20mph speed limits the Guidance includes the following statements. 'Traffic authorities should use the right speed limits in the right places. They should keep their speed limits under review and only introduce 20mph limits and zones in the right places, over time and with local support in urban areas and built-up villages that are primarily residential', and where 'the characteristics of the street are suitable'.

2.3 In addition the Guidance includes that 'while 20mph limits and zones can be an important tool in improving road safety in residential areas, over use risks undermining public acceptance, as well as burdening car and bus users with slower journeys, potentially with increased pollution. 20mph schemes should be considered on a road-by-road basis based on the safety case to ensure local support, not as blanket measures.'

2.4 East Sussex County Council (ESCC) supports 20mph speed limits where appropriate. National legislation imposes an automatic 30mph 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.

2.5 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. Due to the current legislation this means that it would not be possible to introduce a 20mph speed limit on all residential roads across Hastings and St Leonards without following the lengthy statutory process including extensive public consultations, required to create a Traffic Regulation Order. A significant number of signs and posts would also be required to correctly sign the speed limit itself, 20mph repeater signs would be required every 200 metres.

2.6 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.

2.7 Adopted Policy PS05/02 allows for 20mph zones or speed limits to be considered where they are likely to be self-enforcing. An effective and self-enforcing 20mph speed limit can be achieved with signs alone on roads where the mean (average) speed of traffic is below 24mph. On

roads where mean speeds are higher, appropriate traffic management/calming measures would need to be introduced. PS05/02 is attached as Appendix 1.

2.8 Sussex Police have confirmed that they will not support any lower speed limits that cannot demonstrate that they will be self-enforcing and that they will not provide any additional enforcement over that which would have been provided prior to the introduction of any lower limit.

2.9 Although it is recognised that 20mph speed limits are often well supported by local communities, national research including a study commissioned by the DfT has evidenced that signed only 20mph speed limits only produce a negligible change in driver behaviour with average speeds reducing by about 1mph to 2mph.

2.10 There are over 190 kilometres of 'residential' roads in Hastings and St Leonards. To introduce a 20mph speed limit across all residential roads in Hastings and St Leonards, would require detailed investigation including speed surveys, design, and a full consultation process to determine the measures required on each road to ensure the new 20mph speed limit was self-enforcing. Although some roads where the average speed of traffic was below 24mph would only require a Traffic Regulation Order and speed limit signs to introduce a 20mph speed limit, many roads where the average speed limit was over 24mph would require traffic management/calming measures which would make it very expensive to introduce.

2.11 Although the cost of introducing 20mph limits on all residential roads in Hastings and St Leonards is uncertain, based on a high level estimate the total cost would be several million pounds.

ESCC assessment and prioritisation of road safety concerns and requests for local transport improvements.

2.12 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. When considering how ESCC assesses and prioritises road safety concerns including requests for lower speed limits, it is important to consider not only the Local Speed Limit Policy PS05/02 but also the wider policy and operational context. This includes ESCC's Local Transport Plan, and the processes and criteria followed when setting the annual Capital Programme for Local Transport Improvements, and the Annual Road Safety, Community Focused Road Safety and Speed Management Programmes.

Capital Programme for Local Transport Improvements

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

2.14 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

2.15 Each year ESCC develops and implements numerous local transport improvements funded through its capital programme of local transport improvements. In 2024/25 total funding of £8.108m has been allocated (a combination of funding from the Council, Local Growth Fund secured via the South East Local Enterprise Partnership and development contributions - s106 and Community Infrastructure Levy) which will deliver around 40 local transport schemes and studies across the county including a number of road safety and active travel improvements.

2.16 The Council is currently reviewing the County's Local Transport Plan (LTP). Since the current LTP was adopted in 2011, there have been changes in the social, environment and economic evidence base underpinning the Plan as well as changes in how people travel, especially arising from the Covid 19 pandemic. In addition, over this period there has been changes in policy and priorities with greater emphasis on decarbonising transport as well as the need to integrate the county's transport strategy with the Government's Levelling Up, Bus Back Better and Gear Change (Walking & Cycling) strategies alongside Transport for the South East's Transport Strategy and Strategic Investment Plan. The draft Plan's vision and objectives are focussed on delivering a 'Completely Connected Communities' strategy which, whilst still supporting some planning for vehicles, will place greater priority on planning our transport system for people and places. The updated Plan (LTP4) will cover the period 2024 to 2050 and is supported by an Implementation Plan which sets out, at a high level, the schemes and interventions that will need to be delivered to support the vision, objectives and strategy including which schemes will be studied, developed and/or delivered in the first 5 years of the Plan.

2.17 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 during the strategy's development via a series of regular workshops. A LTP Reference Group comprising members of the Place Scrutiny Committee and chaired by Councillor Redstone was established to provide Member input and challenge throughout the LTP's development.

2.18 Public consultation on the draft LTP strategy, Implementation Plan and supporting assessment documents was undertaken between 27 November 2023 and 25 February 2024. The outcomes of the consultation are currently being analysed and the Plan will be adopted in autumn 2024. In parallel an updated scheme assessment process is currently being developed which aligns with the updated LTP's objectives and strategy.

Annual Road Safety Programme

2.19 Annually the Road Safety Team identifies sites that have the most personal injury crashes (PICs) and puts 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, 21 locations have been identified where 4 or more PICs have occurred in the three-year assessment period of 01/01/2021 to 31/12/2023.

Speed Management Programme

2.20 The ESCC Speed Management Programme has assessed the potential for lower speed limits across all A and B class roads within the county and will now identify a programme of improvements, which will include reductions in speed limits 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 20mph schemes, traffic calming and pedestrian crossings, through the multi-faceted approach as set out in this report.

3.2 The 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 20mph speed limit for residential roads across Hastings and St Leonards has been assessed through our approved process and is not a priority for the Council at the present time.

3.3 A potential scheme to introduce a default 20mph speed limit for residential roads across Hastings and St Leonards would not comply with the revised national guidance on setting local speed limits as it would be a blanket measure.

3.3 The ESCC Speed Management Programme has assessed the potential for lower speed limits across all A and B class roads within the county and will now identify a programme of improvements, which will include reductions in speed limits or measures that will increase the effectiveness of existing speed limits.

RUPERT CLUBB

Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Contact Officer: Kelly Burr

Tel. No. 07769 164195

Email: Kelly.burr@eastsussex.gov.uk

LOCAL MEMBERS

Councillors Beaver, Daniel, Hay, Hilton, Marlow-Eastwood, Pragnell, Scott and Webb

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None