

Report to: Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Date of meeting: 15 July 2024

By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Title: Petition: We call on East Sussex County Council to proceed without further delay with our simple and affordable 20mph Safety Scheme, which requires just the change of signage

Purpose: To consider the petition asking that the County Council change the existing 30mph speed limit in Burwash High Street to a signed only 20mph speed limit.

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

- (1) The introduction of a signed only 20mph speed limit through Burwash village cannot be supported by East Sussex County Council as it would not comply with the design standards and guidelines laid down by the Department for Transport or the East Sussex County Council Local Speed Limit Policy as it would not be self-regulating;**
- (2) It would be inappropriate for East Sussex County Council to implement a signed only 20mph speed limit through Burwash village as it would not address the concerns raised through the independent Road Safety Audit or be supported by Sussex Police; and**
- (3) The amended scheme presented to the Parish Council by East Sussex Highways in May 2023, which would enable an effective and self-regulating 20mph speed limit to be introduced through Burwash can still be implemented. Should the Parish Council decide that it wishes to proceed with the amended scheme with all the additional traffic calming features through the Community Match initiative, East Sussex Highways would commence the detailed design phase which would then produce a detailed construction cost for approval by the Parish Council.**

1 Background Information

1.1 At the Full Council meeting on 6 February 2024, Councillor Kirby-Green presented a petition to the Chairman from residents requesting that a 20mph speed limit is introduced through the village rather than the scheme designed by East Sussex Highways that was presented to the Parish Council in May 2023 through the Community Match initiative. Their concerns are the length of time taken to progress the scheme under the Community Match initiative and the redesigns that have been necessary.

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

2.1 Burwash village is located on the A265 which serves as an important east/west distributor route linking the A21 Trunk Road with the A267. The village has a 30mph speed limit with regular 30mph repeater signs through the village and 30mph road roundels painted on the carriageway on the eastern and western approaches and in the village centre. A vehicle activated sign has been provided at both ends of the village near the start of the 30mph speed limit to reinforce the speed limit to drivers. At the western approach to the village there is a 40mph speed limit which covers the less developed part of the road. The local primary school is located on School Hill with a school crossing patrol funded by the County Council operating on the A265 to the east of School Hill. School warning signs have been provided either side of the crossing point on the A265 with the sign to the east of the school being supplemented with flashing lights. School warning signs are also provided either side of the school entrance on School Hill.

2.2 Crash data supplied by Sussex Police (shown at Appendix 1) shows that there have been two slight injury crashes and one serious crash recorded in the latest available three year period (up to 31 March 2024) within the extent of the 30mph speed limit on the A265 through the village. None of these crashes show excessive speed as a causation factor.

2.3 Since 2015, East Sussex County Council (ESCC) Officers have met with the Parish Council on a number of occasions to understand the concerns of local residents and provide information on a range of possible scheme options for a lower speed limit and/or traffic calming through the village.

2.4 In July 2018, a petition to support traffic measures including a 20mph through the High Street was considered by the Lead Member for Communities and Safety. The Lead Member resolved to inform petitioners that the introduction of a 20mph speed limit through the village, chicanes at either end of the village and the provision of pedestrian crossings in the village would not be a priority for the County Council at the present time. A potential scheme was assessed through the High Level Sift (HLS) process but only scored 59. A score of 70 is the benchmark for a scheme to be considered further for funding from the County Council's capital programme.

2.5 The County Council has a limited amount of funding to develop local transport improvements and we need to ensure we target our resources to those schemes which will be of greatest benefit to our local communities. To help us prioritise the numerous requests for improvements we developed an evidence-based process to determine which schemes should be funded through the Integrated Transport programme.

2.6 In July 2018, the Lead Member resolved to inform petitioners that Burwash Parish Council could consider a Feasibility Study at a cost of £500 to explore some of the options presented in the petition as the A265 through the village is not a current priority for the County Council. The feasibility study is the initial stage of the Community Match process.

2.7 As is the case with many Parish led projects, it can take time to identify what the issues are and for a consensus to be reached by the majority of residents on a potential scheme that the community wish to take forward and fund. We continued to provide advice while Burwash Parish Council decided if they wished to proceed with a Feasibility Study. The Parish Council submitted a Community Match application in January 2021 for a 20mph speed limit with traffic calming measures, and this was approved on 25 October 2021.

2.8 Following approval of the Community Match application, the ESCC Highways team developed the detailed design for the scheme. The design work was informed by various traffic surveys, including an additional survey following the request from the Parish Council in February 2022 to extend the 20mph limit along School Hill. The whole scheme design was then submitted for a road safety audit, an independent assessment of the scheme design which seeks to minimise future road accident occurrence and severity once a scheme is built and comes into use.

2.9 In addition, our highways team undertook an initial statutory consultation on the proposals, a process that is required for the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) to introduce the proposed change to the speed limits. To introduce any speed limit, a Traffic Regulation Order is required. This is the legal process that defines the exact length over which the restriction applies and is subject to extensive statutory consultations. Once the comments from the statutory consultees have been considered and any amendments made to the scheme design, the proposal is then advertised publicly. From these public consultations, any objections must either be resolved or considered at the County Council's Planning Committee.

2.10 The initial stage of consultations was carried out on a proposal for a 20mph speed limit through Burwash village with road narrowing features to encourage lower speeds. Sussex Police's response to the initial consultation was that they could not support the scheme as presented, stating that although the proposed speed reducing features at either end of the scheme would address high approach speeds, the scheme would require additional, regular features throughout the High Street (and in particular the wider sections of road) to ensure that it would be self-regulating.

2.11 The Road Safety Audit also raised a number of concerns which had to be addressed. In order to address the concerns raised by the independent Road Safety Audit and Sussex Police, East Sussex Highways amended the scheme design which included the introduction of additional features. The requirement for the additional features did increase the estimated cost of the scheme, however it is not possible to remove any of the new features that have been introduced as it is incumbent on ESCC to develop a scheme that satisfies the concerns raised through the design process.

2.12 The amended scheme which was presented to the Parish Council in May 2023 would enable an effective and self-regulating 20mph speed limit to be implemented through Burwash. Should the Parish Council decide that it wishes to proceed with the amended scheme with all the additional features through the Community Match initiative, East Sussex Highways would commence the detailed design phase which would then produce a detailed construction cost for approval by the Parish Council. A contribution of up to £50,000 from East Sussex County Council has already been agreed, with the remaining costs to be funded by the Parish Council

2.13 The Department for Transport (DfT) guidance on the introduction of speed limits was updated in March 2024. The updated guidelines clarify the previous guidance and states that 'Where new speed limits are introduced, they should be in places where the majority of drivers will comply with them. General compliance needs to be achievable without an excessive reliance on enforcement'. Specifically relating to 20mph speed limits, the guidance states that 'We know that compliance is better on smaller, narrower roads than on wider roads where the layout gives drivers a clear run'.

2.14 Research into signed-only 20mph limits shows that they generally lead to only small reductions in traffic speeds – less than 1mph on average. Signed-only 20mph limits are, therefore, most appropriate for areas where vehicle speeds are already low. This may, for example, be on roads that are very narrow, through engineering or on-road car parking. If the mean (average) speed is already at or below 24mph on a road, introducing a 20mph limit through signing alone is likely to lead to general compliance with the new speed limit.

2.15 The introduction of a signed only 20mph scheme through Burwash village cannot be supported by ESCC as it would not comply with the design standards and guidelines laid down by the DfT or the ESCC Local Speed Limit Policy (Appendix 2) as it would not be self-regulating. In addition, it would be inappropriate for ESCC to implement a signed only 20mph through Burwash village as it would not address the concerns raised through the independent Road Safety Audit or be supported by Sussex Police.

3. Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 It is recommended that the Lead Member advises petitioners that a scheme to introduce a signed only 20mph speed limit through Burwash High Street would not comply with national guidance on setting speed limits or ESCC's policy on setting local speed limits as it would not be self-regulating.

3.2 The amended scheme presented to the Parish Council in May 2023 which would ensure an effective and self-regulating 20mph speed limit through Burwash can still be implemented.

3.3 Should the Parish Council decide that it wishes to proceed with the amended scheme with all the additional traffic calming features, through the Community Match initiative, East Sussex Highways would commence the detailed design phase which would then produce a detailed construction cost for approval by the Parish Council. A contribution of up to £50,000 from East Sussex County Council has already been agreed, with the remaining costs to be funded by the Parish Council.

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LOCAL MEMBERS

Councillor Eleanor Kirby-Green

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None