



# Scrutiny Review of Local Speed Limit Policy

## Report by the Review Board:

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# The report of the Scrutiny Review of Local Speed Limit Policy

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## Recommendations

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2	The Board recommends that the ESCC website pages are updated to provide clearer information on the purpose of local, county wide speed limits and the wider policy context they are applied in.	9
3	The Board recommends that officers review the speed limit assessment process and criteria that other local authorities have introduced to manage demand to identify any potential efficiencies in officer time.	12
4	The Board recommends that the Council introduces a step-by-step process and guide for changes to local speed limits.	15
5	<p>The Board recommends:</p> <p>1) A review is undertaken on the information provided to local communities, including Parish Councils; and</p> <p>2) Information is provided on the Road Safety section on the ESCC website, including case studies, on the potential cost of designing and implementing signed only speed limits and also speed limit schemes where traffic calming is required. In addition, information is provided on the length of time it can take to deliver speed limit schemes.</p>	17
6	The Board recommends that officers refresh the information on speed limits on the ESCC website pages and create a speed limit change enquiry page.	17
7	<p>The Board recommends that the Council considers whether additional communication materials are required that:</p> <p>1) Outline the Council’s approach to assessing local speed limits and the prioritisation process to help local communities understand the types of speed reduction measures that might be possible;</p> <p>2) Explain that potential schemes that meet our policy, but are not currently a priority for the County Council, may be implemented if externally funded and delivered through the Community Match programme or a Section 278 agreement; and</p> <p>3) Assist with the recruitment of volunteers to local Community Speed Watch groups (e.g. through Parish and Town Councils).</p>	18

## Introduction

1. The Place Scrutiny committee has observed that after potholes, concerns about road safety including speeding concerns are the most frequently raised issues with local Councillors as part of their constituency work. This is reflected in the topic also frequently being raised with councillors and officers on a county-wide basis. In addition, in July 2023 a Notice of Motion was debated at Full Council regarding reviewing and updating Policy PS05/02 on Local Speed Limits. During the debate it was suggested that the Place Scrutiny committee could look at the issues raised by the Motion as part of a scrutiny review.
2. A scoping meeting was held by the committee to discuss and explore in more detail what the focus of a potential scrutiny review could be. At the Place Scrutiny committee meeting held on 12 July 2024 the committee agreed to proceed with a scrutiny review of Local Speed Limit Policy with the following scope:
  - Consideration of the purpose of a local speed limit policy and examining how local speed limits are reviewed, assessed and delivered by East Sussex County Council (ESCC).
  - Examining whether the ESCC local speed limit policy PS05/02 is in line with national Department for Transport (DfT) guidance.
  - Reviewing examples of other local authority speed limit policies (e.g. our nearest neighbours and those with similar road networks to ESCC).
  - Reviewing national and local evidence on the impact and effectiveness of lower speed limits and zones (including 20mph limits).
  - Exploring other measures local authorities and developments are bringing forward to deliver low speed environments in both urban and rural areas.
  - Exploring how ESCC currently communicates the local speed limit policy and wider policy context to residents and considers potential improvements.
  - Reviewing the amount of officer time spent carrying out assessments of road safety concerns and preparing petition reports.
3. The Review Board gathered evidence for the review over a number of meetings held with officers who are involved in delivering the service and Sussex Police. The Board also examined evidence on the approach other local authorities are taking to local speed limits, the [Department for Transport Circular 1/2013 Guidance: Setting Local Speed Limits \(updated March 2024\)](#), and national studies undertaken on the impact of setting lower speed limits.
4. The Board did not have the capacity within the time available to hear detailed evidence from officers of other local authorities on their approaches to 20mph limits and zones, or the outcome of the review of speed limits on all 'A' and 'B' roads in the County. The Board suggests that the Place Scrutiny Committee may wish to consider these subjects as part of its future work programme.

## Background

5. Speed limits should be evidence-led and self-explaining and seek to reinforce peoples' assessment of what is a safe speed to travel. They should encourage self-compliance. Speed limits tell road users about the maximum permitted speed for a road. This is not the target speed people should travel at and often the appropriate and safe speed is significantly lower. Factors that impact the safe speed to travel include weather, light conditions, forward visibility, road width etc. There are three national speed limits that apply to the road network:
  - 30mph - where there is a system of street lighting
  - 60mph - which is the national speed limit on single carriageway roads
  - 70mph - which is the national speed limit on dual carriageways and motorways
6. These national limits are not always appropriate for all roads and local transport authorities, such as ESCC, can set different limits where they may be more appropriate for the road conditions. To introduce a speed limit other than that imposed by restricted road status requires the making of a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) and the provision of traffic signs to give a continual reminder of that speed limit. Where the road in question is part of the Strategic Road Network (SRN) which is the responsibility of National Highways, they are responsible for setting the speed limit, not ESCC (e.g. the A21 outside of Hastings). East Sussex has a low proportion of roads that are the responsibility of National Highways in comparison with other neighbouring local authorities.
7. The Department for Transport (DfT) circular 1/2013, which was updated in March 2024, provides guidance and advice to local authorities when considering setting local speed limits. Local speed limits are determined by transport authorities having regard to guidance issued by DfT and ensuring compliance with all relevant legislation. Research has indicated that neighbouring local authorities are following this guidance to ensure that there is a safe distribution of speeds, that speed limits are self-enforcing, that vehicle speeds are safe and appropriate for the road and its surroundings and there is consistent approach to setting local speed limits, between different authorities.
8. The ESCC Policy PS05/02 Local Speed Limits (Appendix 2) was developed in order to set out ESCC's approach to setting local speed limits. ESCC is not required to change speed limits from the national default limits but does have statutory duties under Section 39 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 to take steps to reduce collisions and injuries on the road network in East Sussex. The Council also has a duty to investigate with Sussex Police the cause of serious road collisions, also referred to as Killed and Seriously Injured (KSI) road collisions. In this context ESCC annually develops a Casualty Reduction Programme and has also developed an innovative programme to change driver behaviour with the aim of reducing the number of KSIs on the County's roads.
9. The DfT circular 1/2013 states that 'Speed limits are only one element of speed management'. Local speed limits should not be set in isolation. They should be part of a package with other speed management measures including:

- a. engineering and road geometry that respect the needs of all road users and raise the driver's awareness of their environment
  - b. education
  - c. driver information
  - d. training and publicity
10. The DfT circular continues '*The aim of speed management policies should be to achieve a safe distribution of speeds consistent with the speed limit that reflects the function of the road and the road environment*'. The principal aim is to provide a consistent message between the speed limit and the road layout and characteristics which will encourage the self-enforcement of the speed limit.
11. In the past ESCC has reviewed the speed limits on the county's roads when the DfT guidance has changed, when specific funding has been allocated or when a road safety issue had been identified at a specific location. This has led to the introduction of 30mph limits in most rural villages and changes to speed limits (e.g. 20mph, 40 mph or 50 mph) on other roads. More recently, during 2024, the Road Safety Team has undertaken a review of speed limits on all 'A' and 'B' classification roads in the county.
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 the East Sussex Local Transport Plan (LTP), as well as the LTP related criteria and prioritisation process followed when setting the annual Capital Programme for Local Transport Improvements, and the Annual Casualty Reduction, Community Focused Road Safety and Speed Management Programmes.

## Review Board Findings

### *Purpose of the local speed limit policy and wider policy context.*

#### Local speed limit policy

14. The Board heard evidence from officers that the purpose of the local speed limit policy PS05/02 is to achieve a safe distribution of speeds consistent with the speed limit that reflects the function of the road and the road environment.
15. It is based on the DfT guidance as set out in Circular 1/2013 to ensure that the approach taken is consistent with other transport authorities across the country and that speed limits are self-enforcing. A self-enforcing signed only speed limit can be achieved where the mean vehicle speeds are below those set out in policy PS05/02. Where average speeds are higher and it is assessed a lower speed limit is required, traffic calming measures will be required to reduce speeds to at or below the mean vehicle speed.
16. The Board heard that the primary determinant when assessing and selecting a speed limit should be the appearance and character of the road. Road users may not automatically comply with a limit if it is set unrealistically low for a particular road function and condition. When looking at the character of the road environment, consideration is given to the amount of frontage development which may indicate the greater presence of Vulnerable Road Users (VRUs) such as pedestrians, wheelers and cyclists. Other criteria used to determine the appropriate speed limit for a road include:
  - the type/function of road (e.g. road classification, primary route etc.);
  - the measured average (mean) speed of vehicles which would suggest whether a new limit would be self-enforcing;
  - vulnerable road users;
  - where there is a history of speed related personal injury crashes at a location, engineering measures are investigated to reduce vehicle speeds to below the required average speed for the limit.
17. The Board also heard from officers that in most locations the majority of drivers drive at or near to the posted speed limit. For the small minority who do not drive at an appropriate speed, a change in the speed limit is unlikely to change their driving behaviour, and engineering measures (such as traffic calming measures and changes to the road layout) or enforcement measures will be required to tackle speeding behaviour. Consequently, reducing a speed limit by signs alone is unlikely to be effective in dealing with speeding.
18. The 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.

## Wider policy context

19. The wider policy context is two-fold. Firstly, there are a range of measures that ESCC utilises to fulfil the Council's statutory duties under Section 39 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 to take steps to reduce collisions and injuries on the road network. Where appropriate these may include a change to the speed limit in line with the local speed limit policy.
20. Secondly, within the context of the adopted East Sussex Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) there are a number of policies therein, including the local speed limit policy which specifically cross-refers to Policy PS05/02, that will be considered when potential transport and road safety schemes are being assessed for potential inclusion in future capital programme. Please refer sections 45-48 below on the LTP4, and sections 49-53 on lower speeds in new development.
21. The Board concluded that if speed limits are set too low there will be poor compliance. Some Board members also observed that there is a potential conflict between some residents' desire to have lower speed limits near to where they live whilst at the same time wanting to be able travel more quickly through other parts of the county. The Board heard from Sussex Police that it can be common, at speed enforcement sites, that a higher proportion of speeding tickets are often issued to local people, whilst most speeding complaints are made by people who live in the local area.
22. The Board noted that neighbouring authorities, who are also members of Transport for the South East (TfSE), have speed limit policies which are broadly in line with the national guidance. This ensures that a consistent message about speed limits is given to road users across a wider geography than East Sussex. The Board heard evidence that other local authorities (e.g. Surrey County Council and Kent County Council) have in the last two to three years reviewed some of their speed limit policies including where they relate to 20mph speed limits and zones.
23. The Board concluded that it is important that Policy PS05/02 Local Speed Limits is reviewed when there are changes to national guidance.

### ***Recommendation 1:***

***The Board recommends that the Council regularly reviews Policy PS05/02 Local Speed Limits when there is a change in national guidance.***

24. The Board also concluded that more information about the purpose of local speed limits and the wider policy context should be provided on the Council's website pages to explain how we set local speed limits. This could include case studies. For example, further information on the purpose of speed limits could be provided on the website page: [Speeding and speed limits | East Sussex County Council](#)



**Recommendation 2:**

***The Board recommends that the ESCC website pages are updated to provide clearer information on the purpose of local, county wide speed limits and the wider policy context they are applied in.***

***DfT guidance and other councils' approach to speed limits***

25. The Board heard evidence from officers that the DfT Circular 1/2013 guidance recommends which factors are taken into account in any decisions to introduce or change local speed limits. These are reflected in the ESCC Policy PS05/02 and include:

- history of collisions
- road geometry and engineering
- road function
- composition of road users (including existing and potential levels of vulnerable road users)
- existing traffic speeds
- road environment

26. The Board had the opportunity to review the contents of the current DfT guidance and compare it with ESCC's speed limit policy. The Board also considered evidence from Sussex Police, officers and written evidence from other councils who had based their policies on the DfT guidance. From the evidence seen by the Board it concluded that ESCC's policy is compliant with the DfT guidance.

27. The Board also reviewed examples of other councils' speed limit policies which included:

- Surrey County Council (SCC)
- West Sussex County Council (WSCC)
- Buckinghamshire Council
- Oxfordshire County Council
- Durham County Council
- Hampshire County Council
- Kent County Council (KCC)

28. The majority of Board members found that ESCC's speed limit policy is broadly in line with the majority of examples from neighbouring and other local authorities with a similar road network. All refer to, and are based on, the DfT guidance and state that speed limits should be self-enforcing. Almost all examples given use the average speed of 24mph as the cut off point for signed only 20mph limits to be self-enforcing.

29. However, there are some differences. For example, WSCC uses a cut off of an average speed of 26mph for signed only 20mph limits but still requires them to be self-enforcing. Surrey County Council's speed limit policies also include a separate policy for rural roads and for outside schools. Although there were some specific differences, these often reflect local circumstances and there were no consistently different approaches to that taken by ESCC.

### **Funding for 20mph speed limits and zones**

30. Several authorities have prioritised the roll out of new 20mph speed limits and zones and have allocated significant additional funding to enable this (e.g. Surrey £2.5 million, Oxfordshire £8 million, Cornwall £4 million). In terms of this recent investment that some local authorities have made we are unaware whether they are using existing grant funding (and diverting funding away from other priorities) or funding the investment from borrowing or reserves.
31. 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.
32. The Board considered examples of other authorities' approach to 20mph speed limits from Oxfordshire, Cornwall, Surrey, and Buckinghamshire councils and the Welsh Government's approach. The Board noted the comments from officers that, as a result of the approaches other local authorities were taking, there was a risk that the increased number of requests for 20mph limits, alongside all the other requests for transport improvements received (e.g. pedestrian and cycle improvements, bus infrastructure improvements, traffic management and traffic calming, junction improvements etc), would further significantly exceed the level of funding available. Therefore, a prioritisation process would be required to identify which schemes would be implemented.
33. The Board heard that the current ESCC speed limit policy has clear criteria to enable the introduction of 20mph limits and zones, but the Board noted that some improvements in initial communications would be beneficial. Any scheme requests will be assessed using the Casualty Reduction and LTP4 prioritisation process to ensure they support the current policies and priorities.
34. The Board concluded that, given ESCC's current financial position and the limited availability of external funding, it would be unlikely that the Council could adopt a similar approach of allocating large sums of capital funding to implement 20mph speed limits and zones (see section 58 below for more details on funding).

## ***How local speed limits are assessed***

35. The Review Board heard that when road safety concerns are received by the Council, including requests to lower the speed limit, the correspondence is examined, and a desk top study is carried out. This includes checking to see if there is a scheme already planned for the area and whether there is a crash history for that site/location. If required, a site visit is carried out to examine the issues raised and to make sure there are not any other issues evident that might be affecting the situation. The site assessment includes consideration of the following:
- Existing road signs and street furniture
  - the character of the road and road function;
  - the road environment; and
  - the composition of road users/traffic.
36. If the request meets the policy criteria in Policy PS05/02 and there is a history of speed related personal injury crashes (recorded by Sussex Police) then it will be considered for inclusion within the annual Casualty Reduction Programme. If there is not a history of speed related crashes, a scheme to reduce the speed limit will be assessed for potential inclusion within the capital programme of local transport improvements.
37. The Board heard evidence from Sussex Police that they assess requests to change speed limits against the DfT guidance contained in circular 1/2013 and consider that all speed limits should be self-enforcing. Speed limits are also assessed when the Council is consulted on planning applications for new developments (more detail is given section 49 below).
38. The Board noted that, when considering setting local speed limits, it is important to balance the needs of vulnerable road users against the need for vehicles to be able to travel across the county in an efficient and effective way. The Board saw examples where some local authorities have assessed their A & B class roads and stated that new requests for lower speed limits would not be considered due to the function of the road (e.g. Oxfordshire County Council). This would keep the strategic route network available for travel around the county. Other local authorities have stated that they will not consider 20mph limits on roads that have an existing speed limit above 30mph (e.g. Surrey County Council). These factors could be used to filter out requests for changes to speed limits that are unlikely to be successful (see recommendation 4).
39. The Board observed that there appears to be a disconnect between the desires of local communities who want to see lower speed limits and the national evidence that signed only speed limits will only reduce traffic speeds by 1 to 2 mph. In addition, due to finite funding it is necessary that schemes are prioritised that will deliver the greatest benefit to our local communities. This is evidenced by the high number of requests that the Council receives and the relatively low number of schemes that are implemented as a result of community requests (also see section 54-55).

40. The Board concluded that the Council needs to be clearer with the community about the criteria that are used to review speed limits and the financial constraints that exist (see sections 58-62). In many cases local councillors would like to be able to implement more transport and road safety schemes but are unable to do so as the limited available funding has to be prioritised to meet a number of wider policy objectives.
41. The Board discussed a number of measures that may improve the situation, including how officer time is used and the assessment process. However, the Board also noted that the Council has a legal responsibility to investigate crashes that take place on our road network and take appropriate steps to reduce collisions and injuries.

***Recommendation 3:***

***The Board recommends that officers review the speed limit assessment process and criteria that other local authorities have introduced to manage demand to identify any potential efficiencies in officer time.***

### **Impact of lower speed limits**

42. The Board heard evidence from officers that the experience of the introduction of 20mph speed limits by other councils was consistent with the national research studies on the impact of lower speed limits, which showed that signed only speed limits would reduce average speeds by 1-2mph at best. It was therefore likely that in many locations in Wales and Oxfordshire the new 20mph zones would not be self-enforcing and therefore would have a poor level of compliance. In Wales, although there was initially a good level of compliance due to significant additional police enforcement, levels of speeding have since increased and, due to a lack of compliance and following a high number of complaints, a number of the new limits are being reverted back to 30mph. A Board member noted that other local authorities are reporting greater reductions in average speeds as a result of introducing signed only 20 mph speed limits.
43. The Board also considered evidence from the national research on 20mph zones from the [Centre for Public Health, Queens University, Belfast](#) and [Atkins](#) studies. These studies had found that reducing speed limits to 20mph in towns and city centres did not significantly reduce road traffic collisions, casualties or driver speeds.
44. The Board also heard that a number of 20mph schemes, either as specific projects or as part of wider transport schemes, have been delivered across the county through under the auspices of the previous Local Transport Plan (LTP3) and the Council's capital programme for local transport improvements. However, the Board were advised that many of these have been funded through external sources such as the Government's Local Sustainable Transport Fund, Local Growth Fund, development funding rather than via County Council funding allocations.

## ***East Sussex Local Transport Plan and lower speeds in new development***

### **Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4)**

45. The Board heard that the vision of the adopted East Sussex LTP4 focuses on ‘planning for people and places’ and moves away from planning solely for vehicles. There is a transition towards enabling sustainable modes of transport (walking, wheeling, cycling and use of public transport), more choice and enabling integrated journeys. The LTP4 has series of high-level policies which support low speed environments and connectivity including:
- B1 - Healthy Lifestyles
  - B2 - Active Travel
  - B3 - Road Safety
  - B4 - Placemaking
  - D1 - Strategic connectivity - [Keeping East Sussex connected](#)
  - D3 - The needs of business and the visitor economy
46. Policy B3 Road Safety in the adopted LTP4 sets out in paragraphs 6.77 - 6.79 that:
- 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 delivery of lower speed limits including 20mph speed limits and zones in the county is done in accordance with the ESCC adopted Policy PS05/02. This reflects national guidance and best practice for setting speed limits.
  - The policy allows for lower speed limits, including the introduction of 20mph limits/zones, to be considered where they are likely to be self-enforcing. This may be through engineering measures to bring the speed down.
47. The LTP4 policies clearly highlighted that the adopted ESCC Policy PS05/02 is the determinant for setting lower speed limits in the county.
48. The Board also heard that local transport schemes for low-speed environments could be brought forward as part of the implementation of LTP4, but this would be subject to the funding being available and such schemes being identified as a priority relative to all the other scheme requests received for inclusion in ESCC’s capital programme of local transport improvements. The existing scheme prioritisation process used to assess and identify which transport schemes, including lower speed limits, that are to be included in annual capital programme of local transport improvements is currently being reviewed as part of the post-adoption work on the LTP4.

## Transport Development Control for new developments

49. The Transport Development Control Team considers the potential impact on the transport network of planning applications for new developments. They have 21 days to submit comments during which time they can make recommendations to local planning authorities (the district and borough councils and South Downs National Park Authority) on improvements, changes, conditions, and legal agreements to attach to planning permissions.
50. The Board heard that ESCC's design guidance follows the DfT Manual for Streets and has been in place since 2007. The Transport Development Control Team seek to ensure the design of new residential developments supports lower speeds. Whilst comments are made to the respective planning authorities on a development's layout in relation to Manual for Streets, ESCC does not have any authority over the final development design.
51. The Transport Development Control Team's guidance states that:

*"The design speed for new streets is a key principle to their success in achieving a sense of place. All residential roads should therefore be designed to achieve an 85th percentile speed of 20mph."*
52. The Board heard that this is an example of the way that ESCC seeks to ensure low speed environments are designed into new developments. The Board also saw examples of other low speed environment schemes that had been implemented in Lewes Town Centre and Eastbourne Town Centre phase 1. The Board found that ESCC has been implementing 20mph limits and zones and low speed environments as part of transport schemes and has been promoting low speed environments in new residential developments for over fifteen years.
53. The Board concluded that ESCC has policies and processes in place which can support the development of low-speed environments including 20mph limits and zones. This can be in new residential developments, industrial estates and as part of larger transport related schemes such as those in town centres where there may be high numbers of vulnerable road users who would benefit from a low-speed environment.

## ***Funding and use of resources***

### **Use of officer time**

54. The Board heard from officers that the Road Safety Team receives around 4,000 pieces of correspondence a year relating to road safety concerns. Over recent years, the Team also received between six to twenty petitions a year, with around one third of them relating to a request for a lower speed limit.
55. The Board noted the amount of officer time involved in assessing road safety concerns and requests to lower speed limits, which often do not lead to a scheme being implemented. However, it is important to highlight that assessing the concerns raised is a key element of ensuring ESCC fulfils the Council's statutory duties under Section 39 of the Road Traffic Act 1988.

56. The Board considered examples of the processes in place at other local authorities. Some councils state they will not consider requests to change speed limits unless there have been material changes such as the occurrence of a number of KSIs, or a change in the road environment (e.g. Hampshire County Council, Oxfordshire). Some require there to be evidence of personal injury collisions and provide a link to a ‘crash map’ for people to check if there has been any reported KSIs before proceeding with a request (e.g. Kent County Council). Others such as Surrey and Kent County Councils set out a step-by-step approach, where making a request is dependent on meeting the criteria at each step/stage of the process.
57. The Board considered the potential for introducing a step-by-step or sifting process. Members considered that this could reduce the number of requests for speed limit changes that are unlikely to proceed, which would be helpful both in addressing community expectations and reducing officers’ time spent on assessments. This could enable officers time to be re-focused on other road safety work.

***Recommendation 4:***

***The Board recommends that the Council introduces a step-by-step process and guide for changes to local speed limits.***

**Funding and scheme prioritisation**

58. The Board reviewed the various sources of funding available for local transport schemes, which are used to fund transport and road safety improvements, including speed limit and traffic calming schemes. The main source of funding ESCC has for this work is the Integrated Transport Block funding the Council receives from central Government, which is currently around £3 million per year. This is used to fund a range of local transport schemes, not just those related to road safety. External funding is also secured through bids to external funding sources where available (e.g. the Local Growth Fund) and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) or Section 106 planning agreement payments. Funding is also available to help fund schemes jointly with communities through the ESCC Community Match Fund.

59. The Board heard from officers that the total costs for the design and implementation of a signed only speed limit speed limit vary but could range between £20,000 - £30,000. However, schemes that require traffic calming to reduce the average speed and ensure a speed limit is self-enforcing will cost considerably more to implement. The cost of designing and implementing a traffic calming scheme will vary significantly and will be dependent on the type of measures introduced, traffic management, extent of the scheme, any changes to drainage etc. (Buckinghamshire Council cited costs of up to £100,000 for traffic calming schemes, however it is important to highlight that this would be at the lower end of the cost for implementing a scheme). Some councils publish estimated costs for various traffic calming measures together with typical costs for schemes. As a consequence of the relatively high cost of transport and road safety schemes, funding has to be prioritised carefully.
60. The Board heard in evidence that transport and road safety schemes including lower speed limits, active travel, School Streets, etc. are assessed either through the road safety prioritisation processes and/or the LTP prioritisation process, which includes a scored high level sift, and if the proposed scheme scores highly enough it goes forward for further development and implementation. The annual funding for the Casualty Reduction Programme is prioritised to reduce road casualties and is targeted at locations that have had four or more KSIs in the last three years.
61. The Board explored the time it takes to deliver schemes on the highway, including transport and road safety schemes, and that due to the legislative framework these contain a number of stages. The stages include feasibility, preliminary design, consultation and communications, seeking Lead Member approval to proceed post-consultation, detailed design, undertaking surveys and the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) process which involves statutory consultees. Members heard that schemes can take between two to four years to design and implement, but this can vary depending on the scale and complexity of the scheme. If there are significant concerns raised at the consultation stage, further design and engagement may be required which can delay continued development and implementation of a scheme. Similarly, objections at the TRO stage can also delay implementation as these objections need to be reported to and considered by the County Council's Planning Committee or possibly mean a scheme does not proceed.
62. The Board concluded that funding appears to be the main constraint on the number of local transport schemes that ESCC can deliver, and that the length of time it takes to deliver schemes can be a source of concern with local communities. There can be a significant period of time between a request being made and a scheme being implemented.



**Recommendation 5:**

**The Board recommends:**

**1) A review is undertaken on the information provided to local communities, including Parish Councils; and**

**2) Information is provided on the Road Safety section on the ESCC website, including case studies, on the potential cost of designing and implementing signed only speed limits and also speed limit schemes where traffic calming is required. In addition, information is provided on the length of time it can take to deliver speed limit schemes.**

**Communications and engagement**

63. The Board heard from officers that there is information on the ESCC Council website, including on our road safety policies, prioritisation process and speed limits. Officers gave examples of other local authorities who take a similar approach to providing information on their speed limit policies and for requests to change speed limits. The Board explored suggested changes to the way the Council presents the information on the website with officers and the creation of a dedicated speed limit request page with the following information on it:

- The context upon which speed limits are assessed (e.g. DfT Guidance, Speed Limit policy)
- The factors which are considered when assessing a speed limit
- A photographic guide on how the speed limit policy is used to assess the appropriate speed for the road.
- A step by step explanation of the assessment process
- Information on how to report speeding to the Police
- Information on how to join Community Speed Watch

64. The Board considered that refreshing the web page information and creating a speed limit enquiry page, incorporating the step-by-step process, would be helpful in better communicating the Council's policy approach to local speed limits. The Board also considered that the proposed webpage content includes the policy context as mentioned in recommendation 2.

**Recommendation 6:**

**The Board recommends that officers refresh the information on speed limits on the ESCC website pages and create a speed limit change enquiry page.**

65. The Board also considered other forms of communication and engagement, noting that not everyone looks at website information. In particular, it is important to communicate with Parish Councils and other community groups who often make requests for changes to speed limits. The Board concluded that it was important to maintain active communication with stakeholders on the Councils' approach to speed limits.
66. The Board also heard from Sussex Police about the important role of local Community Speed Watch groups and the impact they have on driver behaviour. They are part of a range of speed management measures that increase compliance with speed limits. Board members highlighted the challenge of recruiting sufficient volunteers for these groups and considered what could be done to promote their work.

***Recommendation 7:***

***The Board recommends that the Council considers whether additional communication materials are required that:***

***1) Outline the Council's approach to assessing local speed limits and the prioritisation process to help local communities understand the types of speed reduction measures that might be possible;***

***2) Explain that potential schemes that meet our policy, but are not currently a priority for the County Council, may be implemented if externally funded and delivered through the Community Match programme or a Section 278 agreement; and***

***3) Assist with the recruitment of volunteers to local Community Speed Watch groups (e.g. through Parish and Town Councils).***

67. The Board noted that finding solutions to road safety issues and speeding concerns requires partnership working as well as an effective local speed limit policy. During the review the Board became aware that Sussex Police was withdrawing from the Sussex Safer Roads Partnership (SSRP). Although this is outside of the scope of the review, the Board considered that it will be important for the Council to establish the future arrangements for partnership working with Sussex Police and other partners to ensure a coordinated and strategic approach to road safety across Sussex.

## **Conclusions**

68. The Board has considered a wide range of information and evidence on the policy approach to local speed limits both in ESCC and other local authorities. It has also considered other measures the Council takes to implement low speed environments through local transport schemes, the LTP4 and the planning system.

69. Overall, the Board found that the Council's local speed limit policy and approach to setting speed limits is in line with the current DfT guidance and is broadly similar to the approach taken by other local authorities. The Board has made a number of recommendations to better communicate the Council's policy approach and has suggested changes for dealing with the number of requests the Council receives for amendments to local speed limits.

## **Appendix 1:**

### **Scope and terms of reference of the review**

The Review was established to consider and make recommendations on the following scope of the review which included:

1. The purpose of a local speed limit policy and how local speed limits are reviewed, assessed and delivered by East Sussex County Council (ESCC).
2. Whether the ESCC local speed limit policy PS05/02 is in line with national Department for Transport (DfE) guidance.
3. Examples of other local authority speed limit policies (e.g. our nearest neighbours and those with similar road networks to ESCC).
4. National and local evidence on the impact and effectiveness of lower speed limits and zones (including 20mph limits).
5. Other measures local authorities and developments are bringing forward to deliver low speed environments in both urban and rural areas.
6. How ESCC currently communicates the local speed limit policy and wider policy context to residents and consider potential improvements.
7. The amount of officer time spent on carrying out assessments of road safety concerns and preparing petition reports.

The aims of the review were to:

- Gain an understanding of assessment criteria and processes used to set local speed limits
- Establish whether the current local speed limit policy PS05/02 is in line with national guidance.

The review also sought to

- Explore whether improvements could be made in how the Council communicates the local speed limit policy and wider policy context to residents, and
- Whether the amount of officer time spent on undertaking assessments could be reduced.

### **Board Membership and project support**

Review Board Members: Councillors Ian Hollidge (Chair), Matthew Beaver, Julia Hilton, Eleanor Kirby-Green, Philip Lunn, Steve Murphy, Paul Redstone and Brett Wright.

The Project Manager was Martin Jenks, Senior Scrutiny Adviser with additional support provided by Patrick Major, Scrutiny and Policy support Officer.

Ismina Harvey and Kelly Burr provided ongoing support to the Board throughout the review.

### **Review Board meeting dates**

Scoping meeting - 21 May 2024

Board meetings

04 September 2024

04 October 2024  
 22 October 2024  
 30 October 2024  
 08 November 2024  
 19 November 2024

**Witnesses providing evidence**

**The Board would like to thank all the witnesses who provided evidence in person:**

ESCC officers

Nick Skelton, Assistant Director Communities

Ismina Harvey, Head of Communities

Kelly Burr, Team Manager Road Safety

Lisa Simmonds, Infrastructure Planning & Policy Manager

Jon Wheeler, Team Manager - Infrastructure Planning & Place

Michelle Edser, Team Manager Transport Development Control

Mark Weston, Assistant Manager - Implementation Team, Transport Development Control

Other representatives

Chief Inspector Matthew Wightwick, Sussex Police

**Evidence papers**

Item	Date considered
ESCC Policy PS05/02 Local Speed Limits. March 2018.	4 Sept 2024
<a href="#">Department for Transport Circular 1/2013 Guidance: Setting Local Speed Limits. March 2024.</a>	4 Sept 2024
<a href="#">Atkins, AECOM and Maher (2018) 20mph Research Study: Process and Impact Evaluation. London: DfT</a>	4 Oct 2024
ESCC Local Transport Plan 4. October 2024	22 Oct 2024
Hunter RF, Cleland CL, Busby J, <i>et al</i> (15 November 2022). Investigating the impact of a 20 miles per hour speed limit intervention on road traffic collisions, casualties, speed and volume in Belfast, UK: 3 year follow-up outcomes of a natural experiment  <a href="#">J Epidemiol Community Health 2023;77:17-25.</a>	4 Oct 2024

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## Appendix 2: Policy PS05/02 Local Speed Limits

### EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL, LEAD MEMBER - COMMUNITIES AND SAFETY POLICY SUMMARY

<b>LOCAL SPEED LIMITS</b>	<b>PS05/02</b>
<p><b>PURPOSE OF POLICY</b></p> <p>To achieve a safe distribution of speeds consistent with the speed limit that reflects the function of the road and the road environment</p>	
<p><b>SPECIFIC POLICIES</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. On trunk roads, speed limits (in common with other orders regulating traffic) are the responsibility of the Department for Transport (DfT), through its executive agency, Highways England. The County Council has no jurisdiction over this class of road.</li> <li>2. On all other roads Orders are made by the County Council subject to the Statutory requirements for the advertisement of the proposals and considerations of any objections.</li> <li>3. The principle determinant of a proposed speed limit should be the appearance and character of the road as described in Appendix A.</li> </ol>	
<p><b>SUPPORTING STATEMENT</b></p> <p>Adherence to the criteria ensures consistency in the introduction of Local Speed Limits on a countywide basis and supports the work that has been undertaken with neighbouring authorities. It is recognised that, where appropriate, a lower speed limit can assist in the reduction of the number and severity of casualties and help to improve environmental aspects and quality of life for local residents. Reference should always be made to the latest national guidance available.</p>	
References — Further Information	Date of Approval
<p>Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984            Department for Transport — Circular Roads 01/2006            Department for Transport — Circular Roads 02/2006            Department for Transport — Traffic Advisor Leaflet 1/04            Department for Transport — Traffic Advisory Leaflet 2/06            Department for Transport- Circular Roads 01/2013            H &amp; T Committee — Agenda Item 10            H &amp; T Committee — Agenda Item 18            Cabinet Committee — Agenda Item 5            Lead Member for Transport and Environment — Agenda Item 11            Lead Member for Communities &amp; Safety - Agenda Item ??</p>	<p>17.03.1993            19.10.1994            15.11.2000            25.06.2007            16/03/2018</p>

#### APPENDIX 2

## SPECIFIC POLICIES (CONTINUED)

4. Subject to paragraphs 5 and 6 below, villages may be considered for the introduction of a 30 mph speed limit in accordance with recommendations of DfT guidance for setting local speed limits providing that there are 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.
5. Speed limits should be set in accordance with the table below :-

Speed Limit	Average Speed Below
20	24
30	33
40	42
50	52
60	62

6. Where the average speed is above the figures quoted in paragraph 5 for a particular speed limit being investigated then, subject to available resources, either:-
  - a) Where the history of injury crashes at the site justifies the necessary expenditure, engineering measures appropriate to the function of the road should be investigated to reduce vehicle speeds below the figures quoted in paragraph 5 for a particular speed limit. **If** this can be achieved a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) for the proposed speed limit may then be made in conjunction with the introduction of engineered measures.
  - b) Where engineering measures are not appropriate due to the function of the road or cannot be justified by the history of crashes a TRO may be considered for a higher limit than that originally proposed which reflects the speed quoted in paragraph 5.

### 7. 20mph Speed Limits and Zones

20mph speed limits or zones can positively contribute to quality of life and encourage healthier modes of transport such as walking or cycling. They can also help in creating a sense a place, better serving the local communities' needs. However, to ensure that they are effective, they will only be pursued if the following general criteria are met: -

- a) It can be demonstrated that there are clear benefits to be gained in terms of casualty reduction, particularly involving vulnerable road users;
- b) The lower limit is an integral part of either an area wide traffic calming scheme, a School/ Community Safety Zone or a Town Centre Management Scheme; and
- c) The lower limit is effectively self-enforcing

**Proposed Speed Limit Criteria — Route Assessment**

*Below gives an indication of appropriate speed limits, reference should be made to the latest Department for Transport guidance for more detailed information.*

<b>SPEED LIMIT/ CHARACTER OF ENVIRONMENT</b>	<b>CHARACTER OF ROAD</b>	<b>TRAFFIC COMPOSITION</b>
<b>20 mph Speed Limit</b>		
Town centres, residential areas, in the vicinity of schools	Constrained in terms of vehicle movement with existing conditions or engineered features influencing vehicle speed with available alternative routes for through traffic	Mean vehicle speed below 24 mph  High proportion of vulnerable road users in direct conflict with traffic
<b>30 m h Speed Limits</b>		
Built up areas, visible properties with frontage access, the road giving a clear indication to drivers of the need to reduce speed	Urban streets  Roads through villages and identified rural settlements with 20+ visible properties within a 600m length	Mean vehicle speed below 33mph  Significant number of vulnerable road users in conflict with vehicular traffic
<b>40 m h Speed Limits</b>		
Less built up areas, set back properties with frontage access indicating to drivers the need to reduce speed	<b>Urban</b> Suburban distributor roads buildings set back from the road  <b>Rural</b> Roads through villages and identified rural settlements over a minimum length of 600m	Mean vehicle speed below 42mph  <b>Urban</b> Vulnerable road users segregated from road space  <b>Rural</b> A noticeable presence of vulnerable road users
<b>50 mph Speed Limits</b>		
Limited frontage development	Higher quality urban distributors with few points of access  Low standard classified roads	Mean vehicle speed below 52mph
<b>60 mph Speed Limits (Dual Carriageways)</b>		
Limited frontage development	High standard rural classified roads	Mean vehicle speed below 62mph

*Note: Vulnerable road users include pedestrians (particularly children, the elderly and disabled) and cyclists.*