

REPORT TO: Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 6 January 2010

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Environment

SUBJECT: Revision to Department for Transport's (DfT) Speed Limit Circular: Call for Comments

WARDS: All

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To inform the Board of the DfT's proposals to revise its speed limit circular and to seek the Board's comments on the proposals.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Board considers the Department for Transport's revisions to its speed limit circular and provides comments for submission to the DfT by 5 February 2010.

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 In December 2009, the Department for Transport (DfT) wrote to Highway Authorities, Road Safety Partnerships & Road Safety organisations seeking their views on proposed changes to its speed limit circular. The changes are focused on the advice relating to 20 m.p.h. zones and speed limits; and on rural A and B single carriageway roads.

3.2 The Executive Board Member, Planning, Transportation, Regeneration & Renewal is conscious of the benefits of 20m.p.h. speed limits in residential areas can potentially bring, particularly with regard to road safety, vehicle emissions and quality of life. He has therefore requested that this matter be brought to the Board to consider the DfT's proposals and to enable a view to be developed on the future implementation of 20 m.p.h. zones and limits within the Borough. These proposals will have resource implications, which would have to be considered in the development of any new policy. Comments are also welcome from the Board on the proposals for speed limits on rural roads.

3.3 The letter and appendix from the DfT outlining its proposals is shown in full in Appendix 1 to this report, but the following provides a summary of the proposed changes:

a) 20 m.p.h. zones and limits:

- Highway authorities are encouraged to introduce, over time, 20 m.p.h. zones or limits into streets which are primarily residential in nature and into town or city streets where pedestrian and cyclist movements are high, such as around schools, shops, markets, playgrounds and other areas, where these are not part of any major through route.
- The DfT wants to make it clearer that highway authorities have flexibility in the use of 20 m.p.h. zones and limits, and should apply the option best suited to the local circumstances and that brings most benefits in terms of casualty reductions and wider community benefits.
- It wants to draw attention to the initial evidence from the trial of wide area signed-only 20 m.p.h. limits in Portsmouth, and make clear that 20 m.p.h. limits over a number of roads may be appropriate elsewhere.
- Currently, traffic calming measures have to be provided in 20 m.p.h. zones and may be used in 20m.p.h. speed limits. However, the DfT indicates that it will consider the requirements for calming measures in 20 m.p.h. zones as part of the its Traffic Signs Policy Review, which was announced in September 2008. In exceptional cases, the Department could also look at giving special authorisation for the use of 20 m.p.h. repeater signs, together with accompanying painted roundels instead of calming measures, on individual streets with low average speeds within a 20 m.p.h. zone. Decisions will, however, be made by the DfT on a case by case basis.
- In addition to better road safety outcomes, the DfT will also look for these changes to contribute to its other goals, including those for the economy, emissions, equality of opportunity and quality of life.

b) Rural speed limits:

- The DfT proposes to restructure, remove repetition and rationalise the advice contained in chapter 6 on rural speed management and Annexes D and E of the Circular.
- It will reiterate its call for speed limit reviews by 2011, making it clearer that the emphasis for highway authorities should be on carrying out speed limit reviews on 'A' and 'B' class national speed limit single carriageways and adopting lower limits where the risks are relatively high and there is evidence that a lower limit would reduce casualties, by the end of 2011. Instead of focusing on 'A' and 'B' roads, authorities may choose to use the Institution of Highways and Transportation (IHT) definition of 'upper tier' roads and focus on these.
- Recognising pressures on resources, the DfT is not asking for a comprehensive speed limit review of minor rural roads, but only of those 'C' and unclassified roads (or those that fit the IHT definition of 'lower tier' roads) that have the highest risk of collisions or where there is particular local concern about the speed limit.
- It proposes to withdraw the technical assessment tool, which evaluates the consequences of changing a speed limit when undertaking rural speed limit reviews, as contained in Traffic Advisory Leaflet 2/06 and referred to in the current Circular. This approach is based on the informal feedback

that the DfT has received from users of the tool. The DfT proposes to leave in place the principles underlying the tool, which is designed to determine for example, the expected changes in the number of accidents, in time spent by vehicles on the road and in fuel consumption, and set them out more clearly in the Circular.

- Include reference to new Road Safety Foundation EURORAP risk mapping of 'A' roads, charting the relative accident risk, which should assist highways authorities with speed limit reviews on those roads.
- Evidence from the use of average speed cameras shows that they are effective in reducing speeds over longer stretches of road. A number of highway authorities have submitted before and after evaluation data to the Department and this suggests reductions in the rate of those killed or seriously injured (KSI) and reductions in the percentage of vehicles exceeding the speed limit have taken place at each of the sites. It should however be noted that the data have not been independently validated or adjusted for national KSI trends or regression to mean effect. The DfT will include this information in its revised circular.

3.4 The proposed changes relating to rural roads will only have a minimal affect on Halton due to it being predominantly urban in nature. Work is progressing on the speed limit review on 'A' & 'B' classified roads and it is expected that the review will be completed well before 2011.

3.5 However, it is clear that the DfT wish to encourage highway authorities to introduce more 20 m.p.h. zones and speed limits on streets which are primarily residential or where there are high levels of pedestrian and cycling movements, though they are not part of a through route.

3.6 It is not yet clear what revised guidance will be given by the DfT on the requirements for traffic calming measures in 20 m.p.h. zones, where such speed limits are currently required to be supported by traffic calming measures. However, it would appear that the DfT is relaxing its view on the use of signing only for 20 m.p.h. limits.

3.7 The publication of this guidance will undoubtedly raise expectations amongst residents and communities within Halton with regards to the introduction of 20 m.p.h. zones and speed limits within the Borough. However, it should be noted that the DfT makes no reference to additional funding being made available to highway authorities to implement the new restrictions and therefore any proposals would have to be funded from either: existing limited revenue resources (£43K in 2009/10), if there is no treatable road casualty record; or from a relatively small LTP capital allocation for casualty reduction (£150K in 2009/10), if it was felt that casualties could be reduced by the measure. Other possible sources of funding could be explored, including the use of Area Forum budgets.

3.8 It is likely that, dependent on the final contents of the guidance, it will be necessary to develop a system to rank requests and proposals for 20m.p.h. zones and limits in the Borough to ensure that the maximum

benefits can be obtained from the limited resources that are currently available.

3.9 The Board is also requested to provide any views it has on the proposed changes to the DfT's speed limit circular to enable a response to be sent by officers by 5 February 2010.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no specific policy implications resulting from this report, but it is possible that a new policy could be developed covering the implementation of 20 m.p.h. zones and limits in the Borough.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 **Resource Implications:** There are no direct resource implications resulting from this report, but consideration of resources will be given in the development of any new policy covering the implementation of 20 m.p.h. zones and limits.

6.0 Implications for Council's Priorities

6.1 **Children and Young People in Halton** – There are no direct implications resulting from this report, but the development of a policy covering the implementation of 20 m.p.h. zones and limits could have significant benefits to the safety of children and young people in Halton.

6.2 **Employment, Learning and Skills** - There are no direct implications resulting from this report.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton:-** In addition to better road safety outcomes the DfT will also look for the proposed changes to contribute to its other goals, including the economy, emissions and quality of life.

6.4 **A Safer Halton:-** There are no direct implications resulting from this report, but the development of a policy covering the implementation of 20 m.p.h. zones and limits could have significant benefits to road safety within the Borough.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal;-** There are no direct implications resulting from this report.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS;-

7.1 There are no direct risks associated with this report

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES;-** There are no direct equality or diversity issues associated with this report, however, the DfT is looking for the proposed changes to contribute to its goal of equality of opportunity.

**9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
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None.		
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APPENDIX1

Department for **Transport**

Road User Safety Division
speedlimitcircular@dft.gsi.gov.uk

Call for comments on revision of DfT's speed limit circular

December 2009
Dear colleagues,

As you may be aware, DfT Ministers recently announced an independent expert review on the issues of drink and drug driving to inform the new Road Safety Strategy. The review, chaired by Sir Peter North, is already underway and will report to the Department by 31st March 2010.

As this work takes place, we would like to seek your views on a proposed revision to the Department's advice on setting local speed limits, Circular 01/06.¹

This year's consultation on the new Road Safety Strategy set out the overarching objective of reducing casualties among all road users. This objective should inform decisions on reviewing and setting speed limits and therefore provides context for the speed limit advice. In our consultation we committed to updating the speed limit circular and asked for views on specific policy proposals about speed limits. Comments in response to these proposals have informed the proposed amendments to the Circular summarised below.

The Consultation set out the aims of tackling pedestrian casualties and reducing the risks for road users on rural single carriageway roads. In line with this emphasis, we will focus our revision of the Circular on the advice on 20 mph zones and limits; and on rural A and B single carriageway roads.

We carried out a comprehensive review and full consultation exercise to produce the current circular, issued in 2006. Informal feedback from users has generally been positive, confirming that the advice remains largely fit for purpose, so we are not proposing substantial changes. We are also keen to give you certainty on the new advice as soon as possible to allow progress with introducing more 20 mph schemes and with carrying out rural speed limit reviews. We aim to issue a revised Speed Limit Circular in early 2010.

¹ Circular 01/06, www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/roadsafety/speedmanagement/dftcircular106/dftcircular106.pdf

We are therefore asking for your comments on areas of change through this letter, before finalising the new advice. We will be making additional changes aimed at clarifying or rationalising the advice, or where changes to other sections are required as a result of the changes proposed here.

We would ask you to use the advice contained in his letter to continue with your speed management activity until the final new guidance is in place.

If you would like to comment please respond **by 5th February 2010**, either in writing, to:

Speed Management Branch
Road User Safety Division, Zone 2/13
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
76 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DR

or by e-mail to the following address:
speedlimitcircular@dft.gsi.gov.uk

In summary, we propose the following changes:

On 20 mph zones and limits:

- Draft revised text is at Appendix A to this letter.
- We want to encourage highway authorities to introduce, over time, 20 mph zones or limits into streets which are primarily residential in nature and into town or city streets where pedestrian and cyclist movements are high, such as around schools, shops, markets, playgrounds and other areas, where these are not part of any major through route.
- We want to make it clearer that highway authorities have flexibility in the use of 20 mph zones and limits, and should apply the option best suited to the local circumstances and that brings most benefits in terms of casualty reductions and wider community benefits.
- We want to draw attention to the initial evidence from the trial of wide area signed-only 20mph limits in Portsmouth, and want to make clear that 20 mph limits over a number of roads may be appropriate elsewhere.
- We are setting out that we will consider the requirements for calming measures in 20 mph zones as part of the DfT's Traffic Signs Policy Review, which was announced in September 2008. In exceptional cases, the Department could also look at giving special authorisation for the use of 20 mph repeater signs, including with accompanying painted roundels, instead of calming measures, on individual streets with low average speeds within a 20 mph zone. Decisions will, however, be made on a case by case basis.

- In addition to better road safety outcomes, we will also look to contribute to the DfT's other goals, including for the economy, emissions, equality of opportunity and quality of life.

Please let us know whether you agree that this is the right approach, or have any comments.

On rural speed limits:

- We propose to restructure, remove repetition and rationalise the advice contained in chapter 6 on rural speed management and Annexes D and E of the Circular.
- We will reiterate our call for speed limit reviews by 2011, making it clearer that the emphasis for highway authorities should be on carrying out speed limit reviews on 'A' and 'B' class national speed limit single carriageways and adapting lower limits where the risks are relatively high and there is evidence that a lower limit would reduce casualties, by the end of 2011. Instead of focusing on A and B roads, authorities may choose to use the Institute of Highways and Transportation (IHT) definition of 'upper tier' roads and focus on these.
- Recognising pressures on resources, we are not asking for a comprehensive speed limit review of minor rural roads, but only of those C and unclassified roads (or those that fit the IHT definition of 'lower tier' roads) that have the highest risk of collisions or where there is particular local concern about the speed limit.
- We also propose to withdraw the technical assessment tool for rural speed limit reviews, contained in Traffic Advisory Leaflet 2/06² and referred to in the current Circular. This approach is based on the informal feedback we have received from users of the tool. We propose to leave in place the principles underlying the tool, and set them out more clearly in the Circular.
- We will also include reference to new Road Safety Foundation EURORAP risk mapping of A roads, charting the relative accident risk, which should assist highways authorities with speed limit reviews on those roads. Maps can be found on the Road Safety Foundations' website.³
- Evidence from the use of average speed cameras shows that they are effective in reducing speeds over longer stretches of road. A number of highway authorities have submitted before and after evaluation data to the Department and this suggests reductions in the rate of KSI and reductions in the percentage of vehicles exceeding the speed limit have taken place at each of the sites. It should however be noted that the data have not been independently validated or adjusted for national KSI trends or regression to mean effect. We will include this in our revised circular.

Please let us know whether you agree that this is the right approach, or have any comments.

² <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/roads/tpm/tal/trafficmanagement/ficadvisoryleaflet206spe1767.pdf>

³ EuroRAP, Risk Rating of Britain's Motorways and A Roads, www.eurorap.org/library/pdfs/20090620_RSFRiskMap.pdf

If you have any wider comments about the Circular, beyond the issues raised above, please feel free to also share them with us.

Road User Safety Division
DfT

Appendix A – Proposed draft new section on 20 mph limits and zones

20 MPH SPEED LIMITS AND ZONES

20 mph zones and limits are now relatively wide-spread, with an estimated over 2,000 schemes in operation in England, the majority of which are 20 mph zones.

There is clear evidence of the impact of reducing traffic speeds on reducing collisions and casualties, as accident frequency is lower at lower speeds, and where collisions do occur, there is a lower risk of fatal injury at lower speeds. Research shows that on urban roads with low average traffic speeds any 1 mph reduction in average speed can reduce the accident frequency by around 6 % (Taylor, Lynam and Baruya, 2000). There is also clear evidence confirming the greater chance of survival of pedestrians in collisions at lower speeds.

Further benefits of 20 mph schemes include quality of life and community benefits, encouragement of healthier and more sustainable transport modes such as walking and cycling. There may also be environmental benefits, as generally, driving more slowly at a steady pace will save fuel and carbon dioxide emissions, unless an unnecessarily low gear is used.

Based on this positive effect on road safety, and a generally favourable reception from local residents, we want to encourage highway authorities, over time, to introduce 20 mph zones or limits into

- streets which are primarily residential in nature; and into
- town or city streets where pedestrian and cyclist movements are high, such as around schools, shops, markets, playgrounds and other areas; where these are not part of any major through route.

Successful 20 mph zones and 20 mph speed limits should be generally self-enforcing, i.e. the existing conditions of the road together with any measures such as traffic calming or signing as part of the scheme, should lead to average traffic speeds 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.

Evidence from successful 20 mph schemes shows that the introduction of 20 mph zones generally reduces average traffic speeds by more than is the case when a signed-only 20 mph limit is introduced. Currently, zones make up about 90% of all 20 mph schemes in England.

Early evidence from the area-wide 20 mph limit scheme in Portsmouth confirms previous findings that the introduction of signed-only 20 mph limits reduced average traffic speeds by less than 20 mph zones (by around 1 mph). However, the Portsmouth scheme indicates that where average traffic speeds before the installation of 20 mph limits were above 24 mph, average speeds were significantly reduced, by around 7 mph. (Atkins, 2009). Early evidence also suggests that overall casualty benefits above the national trend are likely.

Circular Roads 05/99 (DETR, 1999) sets out the legislative regime for introducing 20 mph limits and zones and Traffic Advisory Leaflet 09/99 (20 mph Speed Limits and Zones) (DETR 1999a) gives additional advice on how and where to implement 20 mph speed limits and 20 mph zones. A comprehensive and early consultation of all those who may be affected by the introduction of a 20 mph scheme is an essential part of the implementation process. This needs to include local residents, all tiers of local government, the police and emergency services and any other relevant local groups.

It is important to consider the full range of options and their benefits, both road safety and wider community and environmental benefits, and costs before making a decision as to the most appropriate method of introducing a 20 mph scheme to meet the local objectives.

20 mph zones

20 mph zones are very effective at reducing collisions and injuries. Research has shown that overall average annual accident frequency may fall by around 60%, and the number of accidents involving injury to children may be reduced by up to two-thirds. Zones may also bring further benefits, such as an overall reduction in traffic flow, where research has shown a reduction by over a quarter (Webster and Mackie, 1996), as well as a shift towards more walking and cycling.

20 mph zones are predominantly used in urban areas, both town centres and residential areas, and in the vicinity of schools. They may also be used around shops, markets, playgrounds and other areas with high pedestrian or cyclist traffic, though they should not include any major through roads. It is generally recommended that they are imposed over an area consisting of several roads.

A 20 mph zone is indicated by specially designed 20 mph zone entry and exit signs (TSRGD, diagrams 674 and 675). The statutory provisions (Direction 16(1) TSRGD) require that no point within the zone must be further than 50 metres from a traffic calming feature (unless in a cul-de-sac, where it may be up to 80 metres).

No additional speed limit or traffic calming signs are required within a 20 mph zone, as these are implicit in the 20 mph zone signs.

There may be cases where a wider area is considered for a 20 mph zone, but contains small individual roads or stretches of road where average speeds are already so low that a signed-only limit would be appropriate to achieve compliance. However, the introduction of 20 mph zones and 20 mph limits bordering immediately on each other should be avoided where possible as this and the signing to indicate this may be confusing for road users. The Department would recommend including these roads as part of the zone and use the available lighter touch traffic calming measures, such as overrun areas rather than more substantive engineering measures.

Where this is not practical, in exceptional cases the Department could also look at giving special authorisation for the use of 20 mph repeater signs, including with accompanying painted roundels, instead of traffic calming measures, within a 20 mph zone. Decisions will, however, be made on a case by case basis.

20 mph speed limits

Research into signed-only 20 mph speed limits shows that they generally lead to only small reductions in traffic speeds. Signed-only 20 mph speed 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 average speeds are already around 24 mph on a road, introducing a 20 mph speed limit through signing alone, is likely to lead to general compliance with the new speed limit. Early research from the area-wide 20 mph limit in Portsmouth suggests that greater reductions can be achieved through signed only limits where previous average speeds were significantly above 20 mph.

The implementation of 20 mph limits over a larger number of roads, which we previously advised against, should be considered where the conditions are right. Highway authorities are already free to use additional measures in 20 mph limits to achieve compliance, such as some traffic calming measures and vehicle activated signs or speed cameras.

A 20 mph speed limit is indicated by terminal speed limit signs, and repeater signs are required at regular intervals along the roads covered by the limit (TSRGD, diagram 670 and Direction 11). Where traffic calming measures are placed they should be signed in line with regulations (TSRGD Diagram 557.1-4 and 883).

Variable 20 mph limits

Highway authorities have powers to introduce 20 mph speed limit that apply only at certain times of day. These variable limits may be particularly relevant where for example a school is located on a road that is not suitable for a regular 20 mph zone or limit, for example a major through road. To indicate these limits, variable message signs are available (TSRGD, Regulation 58).

The Department has occasionally granted special authorisation for the trialling of a more cost-effective sign indicating “20 mph when lights flash”. Pending evidence about the level of compliance that can be achieved through this sign, the DfT may consider this as part of the signs review.

Traffic Calming Measures

Traffic calming involves the installation of specific physical measures to encourage lower traffic speeds. There are many measures available to traffic authorities to help reduce vehicle speeds and ensure compliance with the speed limit in force. As set out above, these are required at regular intervals in 20 mph zones and may be used in 20 mph limits.

A recent review of 20 mph zone and limit implementation (DfT, 2009) shows that the vast majority of calming measures in use are speed humps, tables, cushions or rumble devices, so called vertical deflections, but highway authorities will want to consider the full set of available measures.

The Highways (Road Humps) Regulations 1999, The Highways (Traffic Calming) Regulations 1999 and Direction 16 of TSRGD give details of the traffic calming measures that meet the requirements for a 20 mph zone.

It is important to consider fully which measures might be appropriate for the specific local requirements. These calming measures range from more substantive engineering measures to lighter touch road surface treatments and include for example:

- road humps
- road narrowing measures, including e.g. chicanes, pinch-points or overrun areas,
- gateways
- road markings
- rumble devices.

The DfT’s Traffic Signs Policy Review, announced in September 2008, will consider the requirements for traffic calming measures within 20 mph zones. Any changes to this would require regulatory change, and will be taken forward as part of the review.

The Department does not currently advise the use of average speed cameras to enforce 20 mph zones. Transport for London is working with some London boroughs piloting the implementation of some 20mph zones where average speed cameras will play a role in enforcing the speed limit. The evaluation of these pilots will show whether this approach has any benefits over existing measures and whether highway authorities may want to consider whether it is appropriate for their own areas.