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## **20 MPH Speed limits (including outside Towers School)**

To: **Ashford Joint Transportation Board – 6 June 2023**

By: **Tim Read, Head of Transportation, Kent County Council**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Ward: **Ashford District**

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**Summary:** **This report provides information on 20mph speed limit assessment criteria and considerations, as well as assessment information for a 20mph speed limit on the A2042 Faversham Road, in the vicinity of the Towers school.**

### **For Information**

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#### **1.0 Introduction and Background**

1.1 The Department for Transport set guidance on the setting of local speed limits in their *Circular 01/2013 Setting Local Speed Limits*. To highlight a few of the key general principals this document specifies that:

- Speed limits should be evidence-led and self-explaining and seek to reinforce people's assessments of what is a safe speed to travel.
- Speed limits and schemes should be self-enforcing, encouraging self-compliance.
- Speed limits should be seen as a maximum rather than a target.
- The existing road environment is key to the setting of appropriate speed limits – road geometry, road function, roadside development, pedestrian/cycle activity, existing speeds, crash record.
- Speed limits should not be reliant on the Police for enforcement to achieve compliance.
- Local speed limits should not be set in isolation, but as part of a package with other measures to maintain vehicle speeds and improve road safety.
- Speed limits should not be used to attempt to solve the problem of isolated hazards.
- Speed limits should generally not be less than 600m to avoid too many changes of speed limit along a route.
- Existing mean speeds are the basis for determining local speed limits.

1.2 More specifically on 20mph speed limits and zones, the DfT supports the introduction of 20mph limits and zones where its criteria are met as these can bring about a positive effect on road safety and quality of life and health.

1.3 Such locations could include:

- Urban Streets – which are primarily residential/town/city streets where pedestrian and cycle movements are high.
- Village Streets – may be appropriate to consider 20mph in built-up village street (but 30mph should be the norm) that are primarily residential and where pedestrian and cycle movements are high.

1.4 The DfT advise that 20mph speed limits should not include roads where motor vehicle movement is the primary function (e.g. Strategic A and B Class roads). They also only recommend 20mph speed limits only be considered where existing mean speeds are already at or below 24mph.

## **2.0 KCC Policy on 20mph limits/zones**

2.1 KCC will implement 20mph schemes where:

- There is clear justification in terms of achieving casualty reduction (Casualty Reduction Programme)
- There are clear public health benefits (linked to Kents Health & Well Being Strategy)
- Schemes cannot be justified by road safety or public health benefits but are locally important (e.g. Combined Members Grant schemes).
- All schemes must however meet implementation criteria set by the DfT in Circular 01/2013 and KCC's Policy update 2019 for 20mph limits/zones.

2.2 To allow more flexibility, KCC policy allows 20mph schemes to be considered when prevailing average speeds are recorded between 24mph and 28mph. It also allows the use of more innovative and less intrusive traffic calming measures between these speeds.

2.3 Examples of innovative/less intrusive traffic calming measures can include: centre line removal; provision of bus build outs; on-road cycle facilities; hatching and edge of carriageway markings; changes to parking layouts; gateway features; and speed limit repeaters and roundels.

2.4 Successful speed limit schemes form part of a package of measures, not just a speed limit reduction in isolation. This can include engineering, education and training, driver information/ awareness and publicity. The most successful schemes have community support and public understanding of the scheme purpose.

## **3.0 20mph scheme feasibility considerations**

3.1 Before introducing a new 20mph speed limit/zone the Highway Improvements team will appraise each proposal on its own merits acknowledging that each will have a unique set of characteristics. This appraisal incorporates the guidance set by the DfT Circular 01/2013 and KCC's Policy on 20mph speed limits.

3.2 A summary of the key points for consideration include:

- Existing road environment
  - road geometry (width, sightlines, bends, junctions, accesses and safety barriers etc)
  - road function (strategic, through traffic, local access etc)
  - roadside development

- composition of road users – including pedestrian and cycle activity
  - Existing traffic speeds (mean and 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speeds)
  - Likely level of compliance (from traffic speed data)
  - Crash history and potential casualty savings
  - Public Health factors (when information is available)
  - The view from Kent Police (Kent Police will not routinely enforce 20mph limits/zones as they should be self-enforcing by design)
  - Level of community support.
- 3.3 Kent County Council will consider where the intervention is likely to address several issues e.g. reducing speeds, crashes, and improving road environment for pedestrians and cyclists. There needs to be clear evidence of local support, which outweighs opposition. All the factors affecting a road environment are of importance, not just existing average speeds. It is important to note that signs alone do not normally reduce actual speeds by much more than a couple of miles per hour.

#### **4.0 A2042 Faversham Road fronting Towers School**

- 4.1 KCC have considered the feasibility of reducing the speed limit from 30mph to 20mph on A2042 Faversham Road, in the vicinity of the Towers School. This has been deemed unfeasible.
- 4.2 The crash history has been considered for the last 3-year period we hold data for (to 31.12.2022) for Faversham Road between Trinity Road and Ulley Road. In the investigation period there has been one crash resulting in personal injury, categorised as slight. This involved a single vehicle loss of control in wet weather with possible aquaplaning noted as a contributory factor. The crash record here does not indicate a need to reduce the speed limit or justify the prioritisation of casualty reduction funds for other engineering measures.
- 4.3 Traffic surveys were carried out in January this year. Traffic volumes, speed and class were recorded 24 hours a day for 1 full 7-day week. In that week 50,937 vehicles were recorded, representing an average daily two-way traffic flow of 7,277 vehicles. The average traffic speed was 27.4mph (26.5mph northbound and 28.7mph southbound). The 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed was recorded to be 32.4mph. The 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed is the speed at which or below 85% of the traffic is travelling. In total 93.7% of traffic was travelling under the enforcement threshold of 35mph. The survey data shows a good level of compliance with the 30mph speed limit by the majority of motorists.
- 4.4 Based upon the existing traffic speeds, should a 20mph speed limit be introduced, by signing alone, we could only expect compliance levels of 13.9% northbound and 2.7% southbound.
- 4.5 While KCC policy allows consideration to be given to the introduction of 20mph speed limits with innovative speed reduction measures, where average prevailing speeds are recorded between 24mph and 28mph, this site is deemed unsuitable. This is due to the average recorded speeds being on the 28mph threshold and the poor likely level of compliance with a 20mph speed limit. In addition to the crash record and the speed data, we have considered the road class and function – being a strategic A-class road, the Faversham Road is not suitable for a 20mph speed limit. Kent Police would not support or enforce a 20mph speed limit here and it would not be a credible limit for such a road at all times of day.
- 4.6 Acknowledging the proximity of the school and the volume of pedestrians and cyclists, other measures have been installed here in previous years. These include,

off-road cycle facilities, signalised pedestrian crossings, a vehicle activated sign (VAS), and 'slow' road markings. The VAS displays a school warning sign with the slow down legend at the beginning and end of the school day which then switches to the 30mph speed limit roundel at other times of the day. We have also recently installed 'road narrows' warning signs on the approaches to The Gate House.

## **5.0 Financial and VAT**

5.1 None for Ashford Borough Council.

## **6.0 Legal**

6.1 None for Ashford Borough Council.

## **7.0 Corporate**

7.1 None for Ashford Borough Council

## **8.0 Recommendation(s)**

8.1 That Members note the contents of the report.

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## **9.0 Referencing**

9.1 Department for Transport (DfT) Circular 01/2013 Setting local speed limits.

9.2 Kent County Council 20mph Policy 2013 and 2019 review.