

A guide to how local communities can change local speed limits

The Council's approach to speed management

Speeding continues to be one of the key road safety concerns being raised by local communities. When considering changes to existing speed limits, or the need for new speed limits in areas, the Council uses the revised Circular 01/13 entitled 'Setting Local Speed Limits' developed by the Department for Transport (DfT). The Council also uses a speed limit assessment tool also developed by the DfT that takes into account various factors, including mean traffic speed, collision injury history, the level of use by vulnerable groups (pedestrians and cyclists) and the characteristics of the road. Using both the revised Circular and the speed limit assessment tool, the Council can determine the most appropriate speed limit for roads to help provide compliance and make the roads safer. Speed limits should be evidence-led and self-explaining and seek to reinforce people's assessment of what is a safe speed to travel and encourage self-compliance. This means a driver should be able to determine the speed limit by the look and feel of the road. Experience and research suggests that lowering an existing speed limit, itself, will not necessarily achieve lower vehicle speeds or reduce collisions. However, some communities have challenged this and have called for greater flexibility when setting speed limits.

Localism

The Council wishes to be a local council, with a clear expectation that communities will have more say in the way that services are delivered and prioritised. As part of its Localism agenda, the council has introduced this guide to provide flexibility for both the council and communities. Under the new guide, where the council is unable to respond to a request for a change in speed limit on a road because it does not meet the criteria in full and where it only meets parts of the DfT's guidance, local communities will be able to decide on the setting of speed limits in their areas, provided they are willing to cover the costs involved. This can be provided through themselves, local Members' budgets, Parish Councils or secure funding through Section 106 agreements (agreements between developers and local planning authorities that are negotiated as part of a condition of planning consent enabling the Council to negotiate contributions towards a range of infrastructure). Whilst the Council would like to allow more flexibility in local community decision making, it also expects that local communities will be financially accountable for any decisions it takes in the same way that the Council is.

What do we mean by local communities?

Under the Council's new guide, changes to speed limits can be promoted by local groups such as residents' associations or Parish and Town Councils, provided they are prepared to fund the changes either in full or at least 50%, are willing to undertake public consultation and take ownership of the outcomes. For changes that affect part of an area, such as within a housing estate, a local residents' association may be best placed to promote any change. Where the changes affect a major route such as a village high street or a sub-urban distributor road, it may be better for the Parish or Town Council to take ownership. Regardless of who takes on the role of the promoter, they will be expected to consult with other interested parties.

How will it work?

The Council will undertake an initial assessment of any request for a change in speed limit and make a decision on whether the request meets or partially meets DfT guidance. If an initial assessment of a request does not meet any sections of the guidance then the Council will provide a written response with the reasons why and discuss any alternative measures if at all possible. It is paramount the assessments undertaken will need to have a robust and consistent approach so that the most appropriate speed limit can be determined.

If the request partially meets DfT guidance, local community groups will be able to promote a change in the speed limit, subject to all costs involved being met by the local community and taking ownership. Local communities are encouraged to discuss their ideas and reasons for changing speed limits with Council Officers who will provide advice and recommendations from the speed limit assessment undertaken.

Changing or extending a speed limit requires the making of a Traffic Regulation Order. This involves a statutory process whereby interested parties need to be consulted and a draft Speed Limit Order be formally advertised for objection. If any objections are raised, these have to be considered by the Council through the powers of appropriate delegation before a final decision is taken. If the advertised draft Order is approved, the Council will then implement it and make the required changes to road signs to make the new speed limit legally enforceable by the Police or through self-managed enforcement by the local community should this apply.

The process

A flow chart and table summary at the end of this guide shows how the process will work and sets out who does what. Throughout the process, Council Officers will provide advice, guidance and support the undertaking of consultation by the local community. Officers will also handle the formal advertisement and making of the Speed Limit Order. The Council will provide an estimate of the costs (whether this is full or 50%) involved in making the proposed speed limit change, prior to any decision by a local community to the process.

Consultation, particularly within the local community, is a key requirement to ensure that there is genuine local support for any change, that the local community supports spending its own money on the change and to ensure that expectations over the outcomes are managed. In order to demonstrate the need for a change in speed limit within a community there needs to be at least 51% support (households who responded to the consultation) from the locals. A local community consultation form will be used to provide this evidence with one signature per household being used to demonstrate level of support. Consultation with a range of interest groups, including the emergency services and bus operators is a statutory requirement and this will be undertaken by the Council.

The Council will provide the local community with any information it has on vehicle speeds along with details of collision history to support a consultation process. In addition to this, Officers are able to provide a copy of the speed limit assessment undertaken. Where speed data is not available, the Council will commission a speed survey. Alternatively, the local community are able to commission its own speed survey should they wish to do so. The local community and the Council should work together in considering the response to consultation before deciding to commit to the formal advertisement of a Speed Limit Order.

If objections are raised to any advertised Speed Limit Order, the Council has to consider the grounds for objection and determine whether to uphold or dismiss the objection. Local communities will be expected to consider any objections from their own local community consultation before proceeding with a speed limit change. The Council will delegate the final decision of a speed limit change to the appropriate level of the Council's management structure to satisfy the requirements of the Order making statutory process.

What are the likely costs involved?

The costs involved relate to the publication of a draft Speed Limit Order in the local press, which is a legal requirement and the changes to the road signs. The cost of changing road signs will depend on individual site circumstances but the following indicative prices give some idea of cost scale. These costs are based on prices in June 2013 and will increase over time in line with construction inflation.

Terminal signs at the start/end of the speed limit:

- £120 per sign assembly (sign faces and post)
- £520 per sign assembly (sign faces and post) with illumination
- £40 per sign to replace an existing sign with a new sign on the same post

Where erected within a street lit section of road, speed limit signs do not generally have to be illuminated other than on 'A' class roads. Generally, terminal sign assemblies are required on both sides of the road at each terminal point.

Repeater sign:

- £100 per sign assembly (sign faces and post)
- £20 per sign (lighting column mounted)

Indicative prices are exclusive of VAT

Where street lighting is provided within 30mph speed limits, repeater signs are not required. Repeater signs can be fixed to street lighting columns to reduce costs. The table below gives details of the spacing of repeater signs.

Speed limit and type of road	Size of Sign (mm)	Maximum distance (m) between	
		Signs on alternative sides of the road	Signs on the same side of the road
20 mph	300	200	300
30 mph with street lighting	-	-	-
30 mph without street lighting	300	250	400
40 mph	300	350	500
50 mph	450	450	700

Where communities wish to pursue a lower speed limit than what is considered the most appropriate speed limit determined through the assessment, then the community must fund additional engineering measures to achieve self explaining environment and self compliance from drivers.

Ownership and maintenance

Local communities are expected to be accountable for the outcomes when funding in full or partially funding any speed limit changes, with the Council acting as a facilitator rather than a promoter. Local ownership of the outcomes is considered key to the success of this flexible approach and any feedback that the Council receives will be passed onto the local community for a response to demonstrate local ownership.

The maintenance and up-keep of the speed limit changes will be provided by the Council regardless whether the cost of the speed limit change is paid in full by the local community or where a contribution has been made.

Who do I contact for information?

If you wish to discuss a speed limit issue please contact the Area Highways Office for the area specific to your request:

Chester, Ellesmere Port and Rural West
Area Highways Office
Guilden Sutton Lane
Guilden Sutton
Chester
CH3 7EX
Email: engch@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk
Tel: 0300 123 7036

Northwich, Winsford and Rural East
Area Highways Office
Phoenix House
Clough Road
Winsford
CW7 4BD
Email: engvr@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk
Tel: 0300 123 7036

For general information on the Council's position on setting speed limits and a copy of the community consultation can be accessed on the Council's website this at www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/roadsafety

For information relating to the Department for Transport Circular 01/13, this can be found at www.gov.uk/government/publications/setting-local-speed-limits

Speed limit table summary

20mph Limits/Zones

Method of Assessment	Action
Locations that do not meet anything in DfT Circular 01/13 (no real benefits can be determined)	<p>Officers will provide an explanation and the reasons why a 20 mph speed limit or zone is not justified and recommend no further action. The Council will liaise with the community and explore alternative measures if appropriate.</p> <p>Police will not provide any support for enforcement.</p>
Locations that do meet some parts of DfT Circular 01/13 (there are some benefits that can be determined). These are considered as 'borderline'	<p>The Council will provide advice to the community that the request for a 20 mph limit or zone meets some sections of the guidance.</p> <p>The community will be allowed a 20 mph limit/zone providing the following conditions are met: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Demonstrate the need for a 20 mph limit and provide evidence of community support (minimum 51%) - Fully fund the speed limit change through Members budget, Parish Council's, etc - Provide self-enforcement through PCSO's (Police will look to provide training for community) and undertake Community Speed Management
Locations that fully meet DfT Circular 01/13	<p>The Council will facilitate the Implementation of a 20mph limit/zone. The Police have indicated they will fully support 20 mph limits if the guidance is fully met and there is a demonstrable need.</p> <p>The community will be required to part-fund (minimum 50%) these speed limit changes through Members budget, Parish Council's, S106 agreements, etc. The Council's will fund the remaining costs and provide any maintenance.</p>

Other Speed Limit Changes

Speed Limit	Action
30mph	<p>The Council will provide advice on whether the requirements for a village '30' is met as defined in DfT Circular 01/13. If the 'Village 30' criterion is not met, the Officers will provide an explanation why a 30 mph limit is not justified.</p> <p>If the request does meet the requirements for a 30 mph speed limit then the Council will provide advice on whether it is considered 'borderline' or fully meets the criteria and will follow a similar process as for 20 mph speed limits.</p>
40mph	<p>The Council will provide advice on whether the requirements for a 40 mph speed limit is met as defined in DfT Circular 01/13. If a 40 mph limit is not met, the Council will provide an explanation why a 40 mph limit is not justified.</p> <p>If the request does meet the requirements for a 40 mph speed limit then the Council will provide advice on whether it is considered 'borderline' or fully meets the criteria and will follow a similar process as for 20 mph speed limits.</p>
50mph	<p>The Council will provide advice on whether the requirements for a 50 mph speed limit is met as defined in DfT Circular 01/13. If a 50 mph limit is not met, the Council will provide an explanation why a 50 mph limit is not justified.</p> <p>If the request fully meets the requirements for a 50 mph speed limit then the Council will facilitate the speed limit change and the community will be required to part-fund the scheme. There are no 'borderline' cases in this instance as Community Speed Management cannot be undertaken on 50 mph roads.</p>

Setting local speed limits Process flow chart

