

DRAFT SPEED LIMIT POLICY

Policy Aims

To ensure that appropriate speed limits are used effectively alongside other speed management measures **to increase the safety of all road users** and to suit the function of the road.

To provide guidance and information to Officers, Elected Members and others with an interest in safety and speed limits.

This draft policy has been developed with Local Highways Officers, Surrey Police and a consultation will be carried out with all Local Committees in 2010.

Responsibilities

1. In Surrey, the County Council is responsible for the management and maintenance of public roads (excluding motorways and trunk roads, which are the responsibility of the Highways Agency). Surrey Highways (SH) are responsible for most local highway matters. SH works closely with a Local Committee, usually consisting of a combination of County Council and District or Borough Council Elected Members.
2. National speed limits are set out in the Highway Code¹. The national speed limit of 30 mph applies to urban areas (defined where there is a system of street lighting not more than 200 yards (183m) apart); 60 mph applies to single carriageways; and 70 mph applies to dual carriageways and motorways, (though lower speed limits can apply to certain vehicles).
3. **Local Committees have the discretion to decide the final speed limit that is to be implemented taking into account public views presented to them resulting from the statutory consultation process. Speeds, the casualty record, and safety concern will be reviewed after 12 months and in the event of the speed limit being ineffective, remedial action will be considered. This review may be earlier if there are extenuating circumstances that warrant prompt action.**

Speed management and speed limits

4. Lowering a speed limit alone might not be effective at reducing actual speeds without other measures. [Surrey's Speed Management Policy](#) describes a process for identifying and dealing with locations where speed is a problem using a range of the possible measures.
5. The County Council's Road Safety Strategy sets out the roles and targets of all the partners in improving safety.

¹ Available from www.highwaycode.gov.uk
Determining and Applying Speed Limits.doc

National guidance

6. In 1993 the Department of Transport (DfT) provided advice on setting speed limits on trunk roads in Circular 1/93 and suggested that Local Traffic Authorities use it for their local roads. Since Circular 1/93 there have been a number of developments in national speed management policy and good practice for urban and rural areas. Average speeds rather than the traditional 85th percentile are now promoted in the latest guidance as it is now considered that average speed measurement is more straightforward and better reflects the actual speeds on the road.
7. The latest guidance DfT circular 01/2006 Setting Local Speed Limits was published in August 2006 and SCC has updated its guidance accordingly. **Further guidance from the DfT is expected in 2010 and is likely to have implication for this policy.**

Process to assess a speed limit

Step 1: Determine the length of road to be considered

8. The length of road over which a speed limit change is being considered should be at least 600m. This should ensure against too many speed limit changes that could be confusing to the motorist.
9. It is generally recommended that 20 mph speed limits (including 20 mph zones) should be introduced over an area consisting of several roads and not just an individual road. It is doubtful that a 20 mph speed limit on a single road would have any significant effect on speeds or collisions unless it was at least 500 metres in length.
10. SCC gives careful consideration to the start and end points of a limit as existing features of the road may provide natural thresholds illustrating a change in its character. Consequently in some cases a slightly shorter length may be suitable.

Step 2: Determine preferred speed limit

11. For the purposes of setting speed limits, urban areas are defined in national legislation as those with a system of street lighting columns not more than 200 yards (183m) apart. Rural areas are defined as those areas without street lighting.

Speed Limits in Urban Areas

12. Table 1 shows a “hierarchy” to help in assessing urban speed limits in Surrey. In order to determine the appropriate urban speed limit across a whole area, the function that particular roads perform is considered. Some roads may have a mix of functions, or there may be discrepancies between the function of a road and its design or layout. Compromises may have to be made according to local conditions, and in consultation with Surrey Police. However it is hoped that the hierarchy will be useful in solving problems.

13. Although the default national speed limit on single carriageway roads in urban areas is 30 mph, there may be a strong safety and social case for 20mph speed limits on some roads (for example in residential areas and in the vicinity of shops and schools).
14. In some cases it may be possible to create specially designated Home Zones where streets are redesigned to encourage vehicle speeds no greater than 10 mph. This enables safe, shared use by vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists.
15. Regulations allow for two methods of introducing a 20 mph limit:
 - a) A 20 mph zone approach using speed limit (terminal) signs together with suitable traffic calming measures to provide a self-enforcing environment.
 - b) Use of speed limits only, indicated by terminal and repeater signs.
16. DfT's Traffic Advisory Leaflet 09/99 advises that 20 mph zones would be particularly appropriate where there is a poor child safety record over an area, or where high concentrations of pedestrians and/or cyclists exist, or are anticipated. 20mph zones can help children walking and cycling to and from school, and may encourage children to walk or cycle.
17. 20 mph zones should be implemented where there are excessive speeds, and where traffic calming measures would be needed to ensure average speeds are at, or below 20 mph.
18. 20 mph speed limits by signs alone would be appropriate only where speeds are already low (average 20mph or less, 85%ile 24mph or less) and further traffic calming measures are not needed. (Refer to Surrey's Traffic Calming Policy and DfT's Traffic Advisory Leaflet 09/99 for more detail and design advice.)
19. Local Distributor roads where the movement of traffic is important should have a 30 mph limit. Other, more strategically important roads such as dual carriageways may safely sustain a 40 mph limit. However it will be important to provide adequate facilities for pedestrians and cyclists at the same time as providing for faster, busier vehicle flows.
20. **In all cases the primary purpose of reducing speed limits will be to reduce the number and severity of casualties by reducing actual average speeds to that which is appropriate to the nature of the road.**

ANNEX 1

Table 1: Hierarchy of preferred speed limits in urban areas (with a system of street lighting columns not more than 200 yards (183m) apart)

Definition	Example	Preferred Max Speed Limit
Home zones are specially designated residential streets in which the road space is shared between drivers of vehicles and vulnerable road users (children and the elderly). Lower vehicle speeds are achieved through road layout and design rather than conventional speed limits.		10
Residential roads off main routes for where the needs of local residents will generally have priority over “through” traffic, especially the roads used by children to get to schools. Generally these are not busy through routes, and have infrequent bus services, if any.		20
Busy, town centre shopping streets are where pedestrians, cyclists, children and the elderly access public transport, shopping, business, schools and will have priority over “through” traffic.		20
Local Distributors are for towns where movement of traffic is important, though care is taken to ensure that adequate facilities for vulnerable road users are provided e.g. crossing places, cycle lanes.		30
Some roads are Strategic Routes such as Primary Roads and County Distributors within the Surrey Distributor Network* (including some urban dual carriageways). The movement of traffic will have priority, though care is taken to ensure that adequate facilities for vulnerable road users such as footways, segregated cycle lanes and crossing places are provided where necessary.		40

* Note: The Surrey Distributor Network is both a road map and road list that indicated the road classification and road length for all roads in Surrey. The Highways Information Team keeps the list up to date.

Speed Limits in Rural Areas

21. Table 2 describes the preferred hierarchy for rural speed limits in Surrey. When applying the hierarchy there may be examples where a stretch of road does not fit easily into a category. Perhaps the preferred limit is not possible in practice without other extensive measures, whilst particular attention may be needed for vulnerable road users to cope with fast, busy vehicle flows. In such cases a compromise may be required based on consultations with Surrey Police. However, the final decision on the speed limit to be implemented will be taken by **Local Committees** taking into account of all the evidence presented to them.
22. The default national speed limit on single carriageway roads in rural areas is 60 mph (though lower speeds can apply to certain vehicles). However there is a strong safety and social case for lower limits in certain circumstances (for example through villages, along country lanes, or along stretches with a poor safety record).
23. In some cases it may be possible to create specially designated Quiet Lanes, which are “minor”, “single-track” lanes where lower speeds are achieved through the road design or layout, rather than through a speed limit. The aim is to slow drivers down to enable safe, shared use with cyclists, walkers and horse-riders.
24. In villages with extensive roadside development it is national policy that the speed limit should be the same as the standard limit in an urban area (30 mph), and this should be regarded as the norm.³ In order to be classified as a village for 30mph speed limit assessment purposes, SCC guidance is that a settlement should have: -
 - at least 20 houses within 600m along its main road.
 - a clear limit to its extent, characterised by a change in roadside frontage.
 - Community facilities at its core e.g. shops, pub, church, green.
25. If the distance between adjacent villages is less than 600m, it is recommended that the 30 mph speed limit should apply throughout, to avoid too frequent changes in limit.
26. In some cases it may also be possible to implement a 20 mph zone in the centre of a village.
27. For areas with partial roadside development, similar but not great enough to be defined as a village, a 40mph limit would be preferable. Also, a 40 mph limit could be a “buffer” on the outskirts of a 30 mph village where housing is less dense.
28. Other rural roads without extensive or partial roadside development are divided into Tier 1 and Tier 2 roads depending upon their position within Surrey’s Distributor Road Network.
29. Tier 1 roads are primary roads consisting of trunk roads and main A-class roads plus some important B-class roads. These would usually have a preferred limit of 50 or 60 mph depending upon the rate of personal injury collisions per 100 million vehicle-km described within Table 2.
30. Tier 2 roads are district distributors, local distributor and access roads. There are some A-class but these are mainly B, C and unclassified D roads. These would have a preferred limit of 40 or 50 mph depending upon the personal injury collision rate per 100 million vehicle-km described within Table 2.

³ New Directions in Speed Management A review of Policy (2000) DETR

31. The collision rate per 100 million vehicle kilometres is calculated as follows:


Collision rate =

$$\frac{\text{number of collisions} \times 100,000,000}{\text{number of days in period} \times \text{annual average daily traffic} \times \text{length of route}}$$



32. The collision rate thresholds in Table 3 are a guide and will be kept under review until DfT provides further guidance, and while further experience around Surrey is gathered.
33. Rural dual carriageways have the national speed limit of 70 mph (though lower limits apply to certain classes of vehicle). However, lower speed limits may need to be applied where there is a high collision rate. Each case will need to be assessed based upon local conditions and in consultation with Surrey Police **and a final decision taken by the relevant Local Committee.**

Table 2: Hierarchy of preferred speed limits in rural areas

(areas that do not have a system of street lighting not more than 200 yards (183m) apart)

Description	Example	Preferred Maximum Speed Limit (mph)
<p>Quiet Lanes are specially designated minor single-track lanes where lower speeds are achieved through design rather than through imposition of a speed limit. The aim is to slow vehicles to enable safe, shared use with cyclists, walkers and horse-riders.</p>		<p>20 (design speed)</p>

Rural single carriageway roads with frontage development



Description	Example	Preferred Maximum Speed Limit (mph)
<p>Villages with extensive development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 or more houses • a minimum length of 600m, • a density of at least 3 dwellings per 100m. 		<p>30†</p>
<p>Roads with partial development similar, though not enough to be defined as a village. This speed limit may be applied as a “buffer” on the outskirts of villages where the roadside development is not as dense.</p>		<p>40</p>

† In some cases it may also be possible to implement a 20 mph zone in the centre of a village. An example is Thursley in the Waverley District of Surrey.

Table 3.



Tier 2: Surrey District Distributors, Local Distributor and Access Roads.

These are some A, but mainly B and C roads and unclassified D roads as defined by the Surrey Distributor Road Network.

Description	Example	Preferred Maximum Speed Limit
More than 60 personal injury collisions per 100 million vehicle kms.		40
Less than 60 personal injury collisions per 100 million vehicle kms.		50

Tier 1: Primary Roads and Surrey County Distributor Roads.

Trunk roads and main A-class roads plus some important B-class roads as defined by the Surrey Distributor Road Network.

Description	Example	Preferred Maximum Speed Limit
More than 35 personal injury collisions per 100 million vehicle kms.		50
Less than 35 personal injury collisions per 100 million vehicle kms.		60

Step 3: Compare new speed limit to existing speeds

34. After determining the preferred speed limit for a stretch of road, an assessment of existing speeds is required. Measurements of traffic in both directions, and several surveys may be necessary where speeds could vary over a long stretch of road. The preferred method of vehicle speed measurement is described in the Speed Management Policy. In cases where the preferred speed limit is the same as the existing speed limit, then the limit will not need to be changed. However measurements of speeds would reveal whether there is a speeding problem, and if so, the location could then be included within a District or Borough-wide Local Speed Management Plan.
35. In cases where the preferred new limit is lower than the existing limit, existing speeds will need to be compared to the proposed new limit to check if they are close enough for the new limit to be successfully introduced on its own, or whether other supporting speed reducing measures will be required.
36. **Experience has shown that lowering a speed limit on its own will not guarantee that average speeds will be reduced. If a speed limit is set much lower than the existing traffic speeds then some motorists may ignore the limit unless the character of the road or environment indicate otherwise. The police have limited resources to enforce speed limits.** (Previous: Experience has shown that lowering a speed limit on its own will not necessarily reduce speeds very much. If a speed limit is set much lower than the existing traffic speeds then motorists are likely to ignore the limit unless the character of the road or environment indicate otherwise. There are likely to be too few police resources to provide effective enforcement for locations where speed limits are being ignored.)
37. **A proposed new lower speed limit should only be introduced as an individual measure if it is likely to lead to lower speeds. Ideally, the new speed limit should bring average speeds down to a level approaching or below the proposed limit. A Local Committee may decide within approved budgets, exceptionally, to implement a speed limit which does not reduce speeds to a level approaching the new limit, although a new limit should always reduce average speeds. In such cases, the decision should be endorsed by the Transport Portfolio Holder and or the Community Safety Portfolio Holder, having taken advice from officers and the Police. The Local Committee may find it useful to have a site visit of the road in question, to which the portfolio holders should be invited.** (Previous: A proposed new lower speed limit should only be introduced as an individual measure if both the police and the Surrey Highways agree that this will bring average speeds down to a level approaching the proposed limit. There is no strict numerical criterion for this judgement, individual circumstances will differ. It is important to remember that a speed limit change is only one possible speed management measure. The application of any speed management measure must achieve the appropriate average speed to be effective. This is the underlying objective).

38. **If the Local Committee or portfolio holder considers that a proposed lower speed limit would not reduce average speeds sufficiently, then either:**

i) Retain the existing higher speed limit in order to manage speeds at a realistic level or:

ii) Implement other speed management measures to achieve speeds closer to the preferred limit, and then introduce the lower limit.

(Previous: If the average speeds are substantially above the proposed speed limit then either: i) Retain the existing higher speed limit in order to manage speeds at a realistic level or: ii) Implement other speed management measures to achieve speeds closer to the preferred limit, and then introduce the lower limit.)

39. In cases where the preferred new limit is higher than the existing limit then caution should be exercised before an existing speed limit is raised, as this could be detrimental to road safety. However there may be some rare cases where higher speed limits would help to manage vehicle speeds, to promote consistency on a long stretch of road for example.

40. Any proposed changes in speed limit should be undertaken in consultation with local Police, as they will have responsibility for the enforcement of any new speed limit. (Previous: Any proposed changes in speed limit should be undertaken in consultation with local Police, as they will have responsibility for the enforcement of any new speed limit. In some cases where average speeds are close to but not within the speed limit then it may still be possible to introduce a lower limit, but only with the agreement of Surrey Police.)

41. It is a statutory requirement that neighbouring local committee areas or other Local Authorities and police forces to be consulted if a proposed new limit borders their area.

Step 4: Monitoring

42. After implementation of any new speed management measures or speed limit, careful monitoring of speeds will be required to ensure that any such measures or limit are effective. The preferred method of vehicle speed measurement is described in the Speed Management Policy. It may be necessary to implement further speed management measures if sufficient reductions in speed have not been achieved. Monitoring of collisions and vehicle flows may also be necessary if the limit has been introduced as a result of a high collision rate.
43. Changes in speed limits and monitoring data are collated centrally, to inform future policies and guidance.

References

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