

Divisions Affected - All

CABINET - 19 OCTOBER 2021

20MPH POLICY AND NEW APPROACH

Report by Corporate Director of Environment & Place

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Cabinet is **RECOMMENDED** to endorse the proposed approach to implementing 20mph speed restrictions across Oxfordshire which better reflects local requirements and aspirations.
 - (a) Approve the update of the County Council's Speed Limit Policy statement as attached at ANNEX A.
 - (b) Support the criteria for consideration of 20mph at ANNEX B and the Funding Prioritisation Framework at ANNEX C to manage funding requests and the overall programme.

Executive Summary

2. This paper requests cabinet approval of a new countywide 20mph speed restriction approach in areas that have traditionally mainly been 30mph limits. To accommodate this change there is a requirement for a new 20mph speed policy and the development of a new procedure to aid their implementation.

Background

3. The County Council resolved to support the motion on 20mph put to Cabinet on 8th December 2020 and this report sets out how this will start to be delivered and come into fruition.
4. Oxfordshire already has several roads that are 20mph, however, the current policy and approach means that progress is slow, ad-hoc, and can be costly or cost prohibitive for some communities.
5. About 10% of Oxfordshire's previously 30mph limits have been converted to 20mph over the years. If the proposed policy and new approach is adopted then, subject to funding and local opinion, it is considered that about 85% could be have a 20mph speed restriction implemented.
6. The UK government committed and signed up to the Stockholm declaration (Feb 2020), but as yet, the Department for Transport has not updated the guidance to reflect this. The declaration essentially commits to explore an approach where adoption of 20mph limits is the default on urban and village

streets where people live, work, play and shop. Wales is already committed to this.

7. There is huge local interest and desire to deliver 20mph within Oxfordshire's communities and the proposed policy and approach should make it easier and more cost effective to implement.

Reason for 20mph

8. The main reason for promoting 20mph is to help enhance and create an environment that is more appropriate for our active neighbourhoods: promoting lower vehicle speeds, encouraging more walking and cycling, and supporting a sense of a community place. 20mph would directly support and complement other Council initiatives and programmes, for example the development and roll-out of Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plans.
9. There is an opportunity and need to help address a culture of car dominance in our local communities. It is hoped that by implementing more 20mph, it becomes more familiar and will, over time, become socially unacceptable to break the 20mph speed restrictions. To achieve this will require a reliance on drivers adhering to the limit, as without proactive enforcement by the Police and a lack of physical traffic calming / traffic management measures as part of the strategy, we only have people's conscience.

Proposed Approach

10. Officers have identified criteria that sets out where 20mph will and will not be acceptable on Oxfordshire's road network. This is shown within the 20mph Criteria Document at **ANNEX B**. This will be used to help guide a decision on whether or not to work with the Parish Council to promote any 20mph project they wish to see delivered.
11. Roads that are clearly part of a residential setting, or in areas where people are moving around for leisure, business, or services are likely to be appropriate to implement 20mph, inter-urban roads between settlements are not. Essentially 20mph will be the new 30mph.
12. A key part of the new approach is to promote implementation of 20 mph orders using signage only. This will enable the restrictions to be introduced more quickly and at a much lower cost, but there is a big risk that speeds may not be compliant with the new limit implemented. Should the local area wish to implement more than the legal minimum signage provided by the County Council, or some kind of physical changes to help adherence, then whilst this could be supported it would need to be funded locally / by third parties.
13. All new residential and urban roads will be designed and implemented as 20mph roads where possible. It should be noted that not all new roads will necessarily be suitable.

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14. Officers are in the process of developing an interactive colour coded map that will show an indicative interpretation of the criteria for 20mph (Red – no, Amber - possibly, Green - yes). This is being produced using data held and local knowledge.
15. The new approach will see sign-only schemes being delivered without the need for traffic surveys to be undertaken before a scheme is progressed. Traffic surveys funded by the county council will be carried out at a sample of implemented schemes only to assess average compliance. The signage will need to meet the minimum legal signage requirements. The expected cost of delivering such schemes will vary and be dependant, on location, but it is expected to be in the order of £5K for a small village, £20K for a large village and £35K for a town. It is estimated that the total cost of deliver across Oxfordshire will be in the region of £8M, hence the need for prioritisation of any funding the County Council commits to this programme.
16. If funding prioritisation is required, then areas that have a known / accepted safety concern will take priority. A 20mph prioritisation criteria has been developed and can be seen in **ANNEX C**.
17. Requests for 20mph must be supported by the County Councillor for the area and the Parish / Town Council, and also have a commitment of the County Councillor or the Town/Parish to undertake informal consultation along with a willingness to try and address any valid concerns ahead of the formal consultation, with any objections being heard in the relevant Cabinet Member Decisions meeting.
18. This programme of work is being delivered with close links to the Council's new Local Transport & Connectivity Plan (LTCP), School Streets and Active Travel programmes. Officers are ensuring that programmes of work will be combined where possible and lessons learnt will be taken on board.
19. When considering the proposal there are a couple of aspects that should be taken into account:
 - The first is the impact of using just signage to enforce the 20mph limit: whilst in some areas, compliance with the new speed limit may be well observed due to the existing environment, in others, without physical changes to the road, speed compliance may be poor. This may mean limited benefits to the community are delivered and potentially put the credibility of strategy in question.
 - The second is the fact the DfT guidance clearly states that 20mph must be self-enforcing and that the 85th percentile should be 24mph or below. Without physical changes to the environment many 20mph locations could be well above this.

Department for Transport Comments

20. Setting Local Speed Limits is only guidance, and it is for the traffic authority to determine where it is appropriate to implement 20 mph speed limits. The legislative power to set local limits rests with the traffic authority and not with the Department, and local authorities are accountable to their local electorates and not to the Department.
21. The Department for Transport's comprehensive three-year evaluation of the effect of 20mph signed-only limits was published on 22 November 2018. The research substantially strengthens the evidence base on perceptions, speeds and early outcomes associated with 20mph speed limits, and is the only major UK study to consider multiple case study areas and provide a national view.
22. The DfT's 20mph research may be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/20-mph-speed-limits-on-roads> and its headline findings are:
 - 20mph limits are supported by the majority of residents and drivers
 - There has been a small reduction in median speed (less than 1mph).
 - Vehicles travelling at higher speeds before the introduction of the 20mph limit have reduced their speed more than those already travelling at lower speeds.
 - There is insufficient evidence to conclude that there has been a significant change in collisions and casualties following the introduction of 20mph limits in residential areas.
 - In one city centre case study there has been a significant reduction in collisions and casualties.
23. The Department's guidance Setting Local Speed Limits advises that when considering implementing 20mph speed limits general compliance needs to be achievable without an excessive reliance on enforcement, and evidence suggests that average speeds tend to fall to compliant levels only on roads where previous average speeds were already low, i.e., around 24 mph.
24. We also caution that unless a speed limit is set with support from the local community, the police and other local services, with supporting education, and with consideration of whether engineering measures are necessary to reduce speeds; or if it is set unrealistically low for the particular road function and condition, it may be ineffective, drivers may not comply with the speed limit.

Thames Valley Police Comments

25. Thames Valley Police is supportive of 20mph but in order for it to be effective it must be in the right location and have a suitable physical environment to ensure 20mph is adhered to as laid out in the current DfT guidance

26. Thames Valley Police will not currently be pro-actively enforcing revised limits unless there is a specific issue that needs addressing (and they have the available resources).

Corporate Policies and Priorities

27. The new administration has set out its policy objectives and areas of priority and as presented to Cabinet on 20th July, a commitment to “accelerate our support for communities in implementing 20mph zones” is made to help to deliver the policy objective of “increased investment in an inclusive, integrated, county-wide active and sustainable travel network fit for the 21st century to improve choice and reduce car journeys across the county”.
28. Measuring the success of the new policy will be subjective due to the nature of what is trying to be achieved. The best quantitative measure will be the actual speed and speed reduction of vehicles. This will be closely monitored and assessed at the trial sites, with the actual speed from a sample of locations for any wider programme. Qualitative information from local communities will be used to see if they believe it is working and has made a difference to their local community.

Financial Implications

29. There are no funding implications in respect of adopting this policy and proposed new approach for delivery of 20mph speed restrictions.

There is currently £200k (revenue) within this year's budget (2021/22) for the development of 20mph speed limit orders. This is and will be used to develop the new approach to 20mph, undertake consultation / survey exercise with the Parish Councils, and fund some trials looking at alternative traffic management approaches.

30. It is estimated that to replace the majority of 30mph limits with 20mph investing in signage only, in line with this new policy and approach, will require a capital programme in the region of £8M. The level of funding the county council wishes to put towards delivery of 20mph restrictions will be discussed and determined as part of the council's budget setting process.

Comments checked by:
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Legal Implications

31. These proposals have taken section 122 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic (including pedestrians) and the provision of suitable and adequate parking on and off the highway" into consideration when applying the proposed approach. This is evidenced within the programme's Equalities and Climate Impact Assessment.

32. The legal risks to this programme are mainly surrounding the enforcement of any speeding issues due to 20mph areas not being designed or developed in accordance with national guidance (whilst it meets the proposed criteria that this paper outlines). To mitigate this there is a strong working relationship with colleagues at Thames Valley Police to ensure areas meet any relevant criteria. Officers are exploring a number of alternative methods for managing speeds across the county.

Comments checked by:

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Staff Implications

33. The policy change is expected to increase the scale of 20mph speed restriction measures being delivered. If additional resource is required to deliver these funded schemes coming forward, then this will be mitigated by utilising a design and build option with a local framework agreement as required. This will minimise the impact on day-to-day staffing resources. All staffing costs will be funded by the project itself and included within any cost estimates provided
34. There may be an increase in enquiries following the adoption of this policy and if as implementation of sign only schemes are delivered regarding compliance. This monitored with Thames Valley Police and managed by the County Council.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

35. The proposed policy and new approach have been assessed and are not considered to bias or discriminate individuals or groups. As specific schemes are progressed as part of the programme these will be assessed in detail as they are brought forward.
36. It is proposed that funding currently assigned to the "Road Safety and Accessibility funding" should be re-prioritised specifically to 20mph. Whilst this will mean a reduced programme and ability to deliver projects such as new crossings, junction changes, other speed limit reviews, etc, this is not considered to have a significant impact or discriminate against particular individuals or groups.

Sustainability Implications

37. It is considered that the new approach and associated programme will provide sustainability benefits overall. It is expected that an increased level of 20mph will help to support a shift to walking and cycling. It is not expected that congestion or air pollution will increase as a result, indeed it may actually help reduce bunching in certain locations.

38. Levels of signage will be kept to a minimum as part of the programme and any traffic management measures will be a specific design with place and environment in mind, including use of sustainable materials.

Risk Management

39. The approach may mean greater reliance on adherence on signs only rather than physical features within the highway to reduce speeds. This may result in local expectations not being met in terms of speed reduction. To help manage this, communication and messaging will need to be clear about the approach and explain the position, this includes information on how communities could help any such challenges through funding cost-effective traffic management measures.
40. To support the new approach and development of a countywide programme as it is delivered, a steering group made up of a variety of officers, relevant cabinet members, Thames Valley Police, and 20's plenty, which has helped develop these proposals, will continue to meet to discuss and work through any challenges or concerns identified.

Consultations

41. No specific consultation has been undertaken or is planned on the new policy and approach itself. The policy that is within the draft Local Transport and Connectivity Plan is shortly proposed to be consulted upon though.
42. An Oxfordshire wide survey, through the local member and parish councils, is being considered to better understand the level of interest in having 20mph to feed into resource planning and budget setting discussions by the council.
43. If a 20mph scheme is promoted, then it is expected that Parish Councils and / or Local members would carry out informal consultation with the local community, which would be followed by the county council carrying out its normal process in respect of the formal consultation required for a new speed limit order.
44. Consultations will be undertaken in each location as there is a requirement to amend the Speed Regulation Orders on a parish-by-parish basis. This process will enable the public to comment on proposed schemes.
45. Objections will be considered and addressed by the Cabinet Member for Highway Management at Cabinet Member Decision meetings. Care will be taken to report and respond to all points of substance made by consultation respondents. They will be summarised either in the body of the report or (if extensive) in an annex.

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Corporate Director, Environment & Plane

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Annex: 1. ANNEX A - 20 MPH Speed Limit Policy Statement
 2. ANNEX B - 20 MPH Criteria
 3. ANNEX C - 20 MPH Prioritisation Framework

Background papers: [Agenda for County Council on 8Dec20](#) 82/20 Cllr Sudbury
 20mph Motion

Other Documents: N/A

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