

CMD Transport Management – Wallingford 20mph Speed Limits:

The Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak is expected to block councils from introducing new 20mph speed limits as part of a package of policies aimed at drivers.

Rishi Sunak said he is “slamming the brakes” on “hare-brained schemes” such as blanket 20mph speed limits that stem the “relentless attack on motorists”.

Alongside plans to curb the power of councils to introduce new 20mph zones on main roads, Mr Sunak is also expected to announce limits on councils' abilities to levy fines from traffic cameras and restrictions on enforcing box junction infringements.

There are several problems with reducing the speed limit to 20 mph.

- 1) Drivers have to change down a gear to maintain that sort of slow speed which means that the engine has to rev harder, emitting more pollutants.
- 2) The Transport and Road Research Laboratory has conducted a three-year study of the impacts of traffic calming on exhaust emissions. The results of the study clearly indicate that traffic calming measures increase the emissions of some pollutants from passenger cars. For the petrol non-catalyst, petrol catalyst, and diesel cars tested, the mean emissions of CO, HC, and CO₂ increased by between 20 and 60 percent.
- 3) Drivers get frustrated with this slow speed, especially on an empty road and can get angry. Mothers taking their children to school are very often in a hurry and may get fed up with the 20mph pedestrian speed limit.
- 4) It has been experienced that concentration can wane at these slow speeds, with people having more time to look around at sights outside the car and also within the vehicle.
- 5) We as drivers are not used to these slow speeds which will affect travel time and lengthen journeys.

As regards Wantage Road, it is evident in most cases that the ill-placed speed humps may deter most drivers from exceeding the current 30mph speed limit. There will always be the odd errant motorcyclist or speedster in a suped-up vehicle who will ignore any speed limit, be it 30 or 20 mph.

But speed humps also pose a long-term problem with car safety.

The RAC in 2018 reported that over a fifth of UK motorists claim their car has been damaged by so-called ‘sleeping policemen’.

Damage caused by speed bumps saw councils fork out around £35,000 in compensation claims over the two-year period between 2015 and 2017.

A study found that London councils alone paid out almost half of the total (£15,717), with a staggering 8,516 speed bump scrapes reported on the capital's roads – and it's not just local authorities being hit.

Motorists pay out an average of £141 to repair speed bump-related damage, but as they are classified as “traffic-calming measures”, and not “road defects”, it can be hard to make a successful claim.

The study found that almost half (48%) of the damaged cars sustained tyre issues, while a third (33%) experienced suspension problems.

The research is based on an online survey of 2,000 drivers and Freedom of Information requests sent to local councils.

It found that nearly three in 10 motorists (28%) believe speed bumps need to be marked more clearly, while over a quarter think they're ineffective at calming traffic.

Mounting opposition to the use of speed bumps - sleeping policemen as they were once known - has led to plans to replace a design increasingly blamed for damaging cars and slowing emergency vehicles.

One effective and safer method of controlling speed which has been introduced in several areas of Wallingford is the use of solar powered warning lights which act as a reminder and do deter the average motorist from excessive speed.

It is hoped these measures will help combat the noise and pollution associated with speed bumps, while also reducing the financial burden on motorists and councils.

After years of complaints from motorists, government officials have begun examining a system which would do away with the need for the bumps. Instead, a device would automatically reduce the speed of drivers as they enter a controlled zone.

Roadside transmitters would activate speed limiters installed in cars, preventing drivers from breaking limits as low as 30mph until they leave a neighbourhood or street. Emergency vehicles would be exempt from the automatically imposed restriction. The result would be that councils could rip out thousands of speed humps.

The plans, which have been discussed with advisers from the Institution of Highways and Transportation and the Department of Transport, are among proposals put forward to replace speed humps, seen by many experts as dated and crude. They also cause increased pollution as cars have to constantly slow down and speed as they cross them.

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