



Village Speed Limits



INTRODUCTION

The Government's road safety strategy 'Tomorrow's roads: safer for everyone' (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, 2000) stated that a standard speed limit of 30 mph in villages should be the norm. This guidance seeks to give examples of the measures available to encourage compliance with the limit. This guidance may be suitable for those villages situated on primary routes. But where there is concern, an assessment framework currently under development will help identify the strategic significance of such roads, thereby helping to define the most appropriate speed limit.



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Traffic Advisory Unit

CURRENT SPEED LIMIT GUIDANCE

The current guidance for the setting of speed limits, Circular Roads 1/93 (CR1/93, Department of Transport, 1993), sets out procedures for determining appropriate speed limits. In Scotland, the equivalent guidance is SOID Circular 1/93 (Scottish Office, 1993). Both contain information on flexibility for the treatment of villages in respect of lower limits is contained in the guidance.

VILLAGE DEFINITION

To assist local authorities by providing them with an understanding of which speed limit should apply on particular roads, there is a need to provide a definition of a village which may be applied consistently when determining speed limits. It is recognised that there is a variety of widely different circumstances regarding the characteristics of villages across the country, which makes the task of village definition difficult. Essentially, however, a national definition of a village for applying a 30mph speed limit is only concerned with setting some reasonable minimum criteria. At the same time, the intention is to make this village definition as simple and straightforward as possible.

A survey of local authorities has established that only a small number have a formal definition for villages, and that these definitions cover a range of different circumstances and complexity. Most of the definitions are based on various levels of frontage development, a few are based on population, and others use the presence of a key building (e.g. school, retail outlet, church or village hall) or the presence of a village nameplate.

It is therefore suggested that the definition of a village should be based on simple criteria relating to frontage development and distance, as shown below: -

- 20 or more houses; and
- a minimum length of 600 metres;

Where the character of a village falls outside this definition, local authorities are encouraged to use their discretion in deciding whether a lower speed limit is appropriate.

FRONTAGE DEVELOPMENT

It is recommended that a village should be defined by a minimum number of 20 houses, irrespective of whether these are on one or both sides of the road. If there are just fewer than 20 houses, extra allowance

should be made for any other key buildings, such as a church, shop or school. Such allowance is left to the discretion of local authorities to take account of the particular circumstances.

MINIMUM LENGTH FOR SPEED LIMIT

It is not considered practicable to have a 30mph speed limit extending over a very short stretch of road. Many drivers would be unlikely to slow down to the new speed limit, particularly if the end of the 30mph limit can be seen at the entry point. Short sections of speed limits may also result in enforcement difficulties. The current minimum length as set out in CR 1/93 is approximately 800 metres, but a number of local authorities are successfully using a minimum length less than 800 metres. Given this, it is suggested that the minimum recommended length might be 400m, with at least 600m where possible to avoid too many changes of speed limit along the route.



IMAGE 3 ON COVER: WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

MEASURE OF DENSITY

As a visual message to drivers that they are in a village, a measure of density is needed to give some minimum standard as to the frequency of the houses over the extent of the speed limit. On the basis of the minimum number of houses and length of speed limit, an average density of at least 3 houses per 100 metres over the extent of the 30mph speed limit is recommended. This minimum density should generally also apply for each 100m section, but particularly for the first 100 metres of the speed limit at each end of the village, to reinforce the visual message for drivers. This recommended measure of density, over which the speed limit should apply, should be reserved to cover the main body of the village only. The limit should therefore not extend beyond these minimum requirements except in exceptional circumstances (e.g.

where the main focal point of the village such as a community hall or church is situated outside the main density area of the village).

OTHER ISSUES

In situations where the above criteria for a village is not met, and there is a lesser degree of development, there may still be a need for a limit lower than the national limit (e.g. 40 or 50mph).

In some circumstances there might be a need to consider an intermediate speed limit prior to the 30mph speed limit signs at the entrance to a village. The intermediate limit would normally be 40mph. The instances where this approach might be appropriate would include outlying houses beyond the village boundary or roads with high approach speeds. If the latter, local authorities might also need to consider other speed management measures to encourage compliance with the intermediate limit and to avoid enforcement difficulties for the police. Such measures might include centre hatchings, a vehicle activated sign and/or some form of road narrowing to change the nature and appearance of the road.

If the distance between adjacent villages is less than 600 metres, it is recommended that the 30mph speed limit should apply throughout, to avoid frequent changes in speed limit.

Again, the development of a speed limit assessment framework, as already mentioned, will help authorities to assess the most appropriate speed limit to suit local circumstances.



SIGNING

Where the speed limit commences at the village boundary, the boundary sign and the speed limit roundel may be mounted together. The boundary sign must then be in the simple format prescribed in diagram 2402.1 and not of the type shown in diagram 2403.1.

Direction 11(4) in the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2002 prohibits the use of 30mph

repeater signs where there is a system of street lights. Elongated roundel road markings (diagram 1065) may be used but only in conjunction with speed limit terminal or repeater signs. TA Leaflet 1/95 provides guidance on the spacing of repeater signs for villages without street lighting, or where street lamps are more than 183 metres apart (185 metres in Scotland).

The combined village nameplate and 30 mph signs should be located as near as practicable to the start of the development so that drivers see housing at the same time as the signs, reinforcing the visual message for reduced speed. The position of the entrance signing will depend on various local factors, such as forward visibility, road layout, and vegetation. Maximum forward visibility of the speed limit entry terminal signs is of paramount importance. Speed limit terminal signs should not be placed where their visibility may be obscured. In such cases the new speed limit should commence a little earlier.

TRAFFIC CALMING AND SPEED REDUCING MEASURES

If there are high approach speeds to the village, or the start of the village is not obvious, village gateway treatments can be an effective way to slow drivers. There are a number of Traffic Advisory Leaflets on the subject of traffic calming relevant to villages, and these are listed at the back of this document.

When changing the speed limit (the new speed assessment framework will provide further guidance), local authorities must look at what supporting speed reducing measures are required, as reducing the speed limit alone is unlikely to have much effect on vehicle speeds unless these are already close to the new limit.

The following interventions are suitable in different situations, and are presented here as examples that local authorities may consider, depending on local circumstances.

Carriageway Roundels

Speed limit carriageway roundels can be used but they must be accompanied by upright repeater signs. They are also not allowed as repeaters on roads where there is a system of street lighting and a 30mph speed limit is in force. Carriageway roundels on their own will not be authorised as wear and tear and adverse weather conditions can render them difficult to see and therefore may cause enforcement difficulties for the police. Requests for carriageway roundels without upright speed limit signs in areas of natural beauty would require special authorisation.

Chicanes

Chicanes have the effect of narrowing the carriageway and encouraging drivers to reduce speed. These might be considered more appropriate in villages, especially where road humps are deemed inappropriate.



Countdown Signs

As a general rule the Department does not authorise the use of countdown signs. This is primarily because they have been shown to have little effect on vehicle speeds. Only in exceptional cases where both written and photographic evidence shows insurmountable visibility problems associated with speed limit terminal signs might consideration be given to their installation.

Dragons Teeth Markings

These are usually placed prior to speed limit terminal signs. They are rather unsightly and the Department believes their value to be limited as they can only be seen close to their location and only have a minor effect on vehicle speeds. However, they are not regarded as traffic signs and do not therefore require any special authorisation, their use is solely a matter for individual traffic authorities. Authorities should also be mindful of the impact of these markings on the visual amenity of the road and surrounding rural environment.



Gateways

A gateway feature, usually combined with other traffic calming features can be used to mark the entry point to a village and can act as a speed reducing measure if properly designed. A gateway usually includes vertical elements at the sides of the road and may also include horizontal elements such as build outs.



Hatch Markings

These have the effect of visually narrowing the width of the carriageway, and have in some circumstances been used in association with coloured surfacing.

Pedestrian Crossing Facilities

There are many forms of pedestrian crossings, including zebra and signed controlled crossings. On their own they can act as a speed reducing measure, or additionally these crossings can be raised (speed table).

Speed Enforcement Cameras

Cameras might be appropriate where there is already a history of accidents related to excessive speed. However, they should be used only after consideration of engineering and or other measures.



Traffic Islands

These also have the effect of reducing the width of the carriageway. Although they do not usually have the same speed reducing effect as chicanes they do have the effect of changing the nature and appearance of the road. Local authorities may wish to consider combining this measure with centre hatchings.

Vehicle Activated signs

These are appropriate to address the problems of inappropriate speed or reminding the driver of the speed limit in force. It should be noted that these signs must only be used as a final measure and in addition to and not instead of conventional static signing.

20mph Zones/Limits

The Department would not usually recommend the introduction of either a 20mph zone or 20mph limit on a through road in a village. To gain compliance with such a limit would usually require extensive speed reducing features which would be inappropriate in most villages. Some minor roads in the village may be suitable for 20mph zones or limits. (It should be noted that the Scottish Executive is promoting the implementation of 20mph speed limits around schools in Scotland, including schools on through roads. This also includes the use of variable 20mph speed limits and advisory 20mph speed limits).

Other speed reducing measures that have also been used to some effect include a change in road surfacing, the use of rumble strips and the introduction of mini roundabouts. It should be noted though that a change in road surfacing will suffer

from wear and tear and may be less visible in adverse weather conditions which may therefore affect its effectiveness. Rumble strips can be effective but should not be placed near housing as this often results in complaints about noise.

It should be noted that all the measures listed above would have a visual impact on the village. Therefore the potential environmental intrusions and ways of ameliorating them should always be considered before any measures are introduced.

SECTIONS 81-85 OF THE ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984

Sections 81-85 give details of Speed Limit Order making, and Direction 11 of TSRGD 2002 gives details on the placing of speed limit repeater signs. It should be noted that no repeaters are allowed where the speed limit is 30mph and a system of street lights is present. Where villages are unlit, repeaters, including for a 30mph speed limit, should be placed in accordance with Traffic Advisory Leaflet 1/95.



REFERENCES AND ADDITIONAL READING

Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (2000). *Tomorrow's Roads: Safer for Everyone*. DETR: London.

Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (2001). *Road Safety Good Practice Guide for Highway Authorities* (1st Ed.). DETR: London.

National Assembly for Wales 2001. *The Rural Town and Village Trunk Road Initiative – Reducing Accidents and Making Life Better*.

REGULATIONS AND LEGISLATION

The Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2002. *The Stationery Office: London*. (S.I No 3113)

The Highways (Traffic Calming) Regulations 1999 (S.I. No: 1026 1999). *The Stationery Office: London*

The Roads (Traffic Calming) (Scotland) Regulations 1994 (S.I. 1994/2488) as amended by the Road Humps and Traffic Calming (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1999 (S.I. 1999/1000)

TRAFFIC ADVISORY LEAFLETS

TA Leaflet 11/93. *Rumble Devices*
TA Leaflet 13/93. *Gateways*
TA Leaflet 1/94. *VISP – A Summary*

TA Leaflet 1/95. *Speed Limit Signs: A Guide to Good Practice*

TA Leaflet 7/95. *Traffic Islands for Speed Control*

TA Leaflet 6/97. *Traffic Calming on Major Roads A47, Thorney, Cambridgeshire*

TA Leaflet 12/97. *Chicane schemes*
TA Leaflet 9/99. *20mph speed limits and zones*

TA Leaflet 14/99. *Traffic Calming on Major Roads: A Traffic Calming Scheme at Costessey, Norfolk*

TA Leaflet 1/00. *Traffic calming in villages on major Roads*

TA Leaflet 11/00. *Village Traffic Calming – Reducing accidents*

TA Leaflet 1/03. *Vehicle Activated Signs*

To obtain copies of any of the above contact:

Publications Centre
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CIRCULARS

Circular Roads 1/92, *Use of Technology For Traffic Enforcement: Guidance on Deployment*

Circular Roads 1/93, *Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 – Sections 81-85 Local Speed Limits*

SOID Circular 1/93, *Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 - Sections 81-85 SPEED LIMITS (Guidance for Local Authorities)*. (CR 1/93 Department of Transport/Welsh Office 1993)

Circular Roads 1/95, *Traffic Signal and Speed Camera Signing*

Circular Roads 02/03, *The Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions (TSRGD) 2002*

LOCAL TRANSPORT NOTES

Local Transport Note 1/95, *The assessment of pedestrian crossings*

Local Transport Note 2/95, *The design of pedestrian crossings*

ENQUIRIES

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Details of Traffic Advisory Leaflets available on the DfT website can be accessed as follows: www.dft.gov.uk
From the DfT homepage, click on Roads and Vehicles, then Traffic and Parking Management and then Traffic Advisory Leaflets.

The Department for Transport sponsors a wide range of research into traffic management issues. The results published in Traffic Advisory Leaflets are applicable to England, Wales and Scotland. Attention is drawn to variations in statutory provisions or administrative practices between the countries.

The Traffic Advisory Unit (TAU) is a multi-disciplinary group working within the Department for Transport. The TAU seeks to promote the most effective traffic management and parking techniques for the benefit, safety and convenience of all road users.

Department for Transport

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Intelligent Transport Systems

Scottish Executive

Within Scotland enquiries should be made to:
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Llywodrath Cynulliad Cymru Welsh Assembly Government

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