



Department
for Transport

Guidance

Setting local speed limits

Updated 17 March 2024

Applies to England

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Introduction

This Department for Transport Circular 01/2013 was revised in March 2024.

Main points

Speed limits should be evidence-led and self-explaining and seek to reinforce people's assessment of what is a safe speed to travel. They should encourage self-compliance. Speed limits should be seen by drivers as the maximum rather than a target speed.

Traffic authorities set local speed limits in situations where local needs and conditions suggest a speed limit that is lower than the national speed limit.

This guidance is to be used for setting all local speed limits on single and dual carriageway roads in both urban and rural areas.

This guidance should also be used as the basis for assessments of local speed limits, for developing route management strategies and for developing the speed management strategies that can be included in [local transport plans \(https://www.gov.uk/find-local-transport-plans\)](https://www.gov.uk/find-local-transport-plans).

Traffic authorities should use the right speed limits in the right places. They should keep their speed limits under review and only introduce 20mph limits and zones in the right places, over time and with local support in urban areas and built-up village streets that are primarily residential, using the criteria in [Urban speed limits](#).

The legislative power for setting local speed limits lies with the traffic authority. This guidance is not binding on them. Traffic authorities do, however, have an obligation to conform to relevant legislation.

Details

1. The Department for Transport (DfT) has a vision for a transport system that is an engine for economic growth, but one that is also more sustainable, safer and improves the quality of life in our communities.
2. Setting appropriate speed limits with the aim of achieving safe and appropriate driving speeds can play an important role in supporting this vision. This guidance sets out the framework that traffic authorities should follow when setting and reviewing local speed limits.

3. Roads should be designed so that mistakes made by road users do not result in death or serious injury. Effective speed management is part of creating a safe road environment that is fit for purpose. It involves many components designed to work together to require, encourage and help road users to adopt appropriate and safe speeds below the speed limit.

As well as being the legal limit, speed limits are an important source of information to road users, particularly as an indicator of the nature and risks posed by that road both to themselves and to all other road users. Speed limits should, therefore, 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. They should be seen by drivers as the maximum speed rather than as a target speed at which to drive irrespective of conditions. It is often not appropriate or safe to drive at the maximum speed limit.

4. The overall speed limit framework, including the setting of national limits for different road types, and which exceptions to these general limits can be applied, is the responsibility of the government. The 3 national speed limits in England are:

- the 30mph speed limit on roads with street lighting (sometimes referred to as restricted roads)
- the national speed limit of 60mph on single carriageway roads
- the national speed limit of 70mph on dual carriageways and motorways

These national limits are not, however, appropriate for all roads. The speed limit regime enables traffic authorities to set local speed limits in situations where local needs and conditions suggest a speed limit that is different from the respective national speed limit.

5. Local speed limits are determined by traffic authorities having regard to guidance issued by DfT. This guidance applies to England and supersedes that previously contained in DfT Circular 01/2006.

6. The guidance retains and builds upon many of the underlying principles of DfT Circular 01/2006, but provides additional evidence of the safety and wider benefits of setting appropriate speed limits. It builds on the responses received to the [consultation held by DfT in 2012](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-of-revision-of-dfts-speed-limit-circular) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-of-revision-of-dfts-speed-limit-circular>), as well as to an earlier consultation held in 2009.

7. It is aimed primarily at traffic authorities responsible for setting local speed limits but is also designed to help improve the wider understanding of why and how local speed limits are determined.

8. The guidance is to be used for setting all local speed limits on single and dual carriageway roads in both urban and rural areas. It brings together

some of the main features of other published guidance on speed limit-related issues, including speed-related road traffic regulation and signing, street lighting, traffic calming, speed limits in villages and 20mph speed limits and zones.

9. The guidance should not be used in isolation but read in conjunction with the more comprehensive advice on these matters set out in the appropriate [Traffic Advisory Leaflets \(https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/traffic-advisory-leaflets\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/traffic-advisory-leaflets) and with the relevant legislation, including [The Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016 as amended \(TSRGD 2016\) \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/traffic-signs-regulations-and-general-directions-2016-an-overview\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/traffic-signs-regulations-and-general-directions-2016-an-overview).

10. This guidance introduces the [Speed limit appraisal tool](#). It has been designed to help local authorities assess the full costs and benefits of any proposed schemes and make robust, evidence-based decisions about which limits they put in place.

Priorities for action

11. The guidance in this Circular should be used as the basis for:

- assessments of local speed limits
- developing route management strategies
- developing speed management strategies

12. Traffic authorities should:

- use the right speed limits in the right places
- keep their speed limits under review
- only introduce 20mph limits and zones, in the right places, over time and with local support in urban areas and built-up village streets that are primarily residential, using the criteria in [Urban speed limits](#)
- ensure any such measures are targeted and not introduced as a blanket measure

Background and objectives of the Circular

Main points

Traffic authorities continue to have the flexibility to set local speed limits that are appropriate for the individual road, reflecting local needs and taking account of all local considerations.

Local speed limits should not be set in isolation, but as part of a package with other measures to manage vehicle speeds and improve road safety.

Background

13. Setting speed limits at the appropriate level for the road and ensuring compliance with these limits play a vital part in ensuring greater safety for all road users. The relationship between speed and likelihood of collision, as well as severity of injury, is complex, but there is a strong correlation. As a general rule, for every 1mph reduction in average speed, collision frequency decreases by around 5% (Taylor, Lynam and Baruya, 2000). For typical types of road traffic collisions, the risk of death for drivers and pedestrians involved reduces with reduced vehicle speeds and it is particularly important to consider those speeds where the balance tips in favour of survival.

14. Reported road casualty statistics also show the role of 'exceeding the speed limit' and 'travelling too fast' for the conditions as contributory factors in road traffic collisions. In 2022, in England, at least 1 of these factors was reported in 12% of all collisions and 25% of all fatal collisions that had a contributory factor assigned to them (in 2022, 67% of the collisions reported to the police had a contributory factor).

Other reported contributory factors, such as 'loss of control' or 'careless, reckless or in a hurry' can often be related to excess or inappropriate speed. Even where the contributory factors are unrelated to the vehicle speed, higher speeds will often aggravate the outcome of the collision and injuries. It should be noted that contributory factors are factors that the attending police officer thought contributed to the collision, based on their professional judgement about what they can see at the scene. This is not in place of a more extensive collision investigation.

15. This updated guidance provides part of the framework for speed limits, where local authorities can set speed limits on their roads below the national limit, in response to local risk factors and conditions. It will help ensure appropriate and consistent speed limits, which will contribute to:

- reducing the number of road deaths, as well as casualties overall
- tackling pedestrian and cyclist casualties in towns and cities
- improving the safety on rural roads
- and reducing variations in safety from area to area and road to road

16. The objectives of this guidance also fit into the context of some wider transport and cross-government priorities, which those responsible for setting local speed limits should bear in mind:

- DfT's vision is for a transport system that is an engine for economic growth but one that is also greener and safer and improves the quality of life in our communities
- we want our roads to become safer, less congested and less polluted
- we want to encourage sustainable local travel and economic growth by making public transport and cycling and walking more attractive and effective, promoting lower carbon transport and tackling local road congestion
- we want to contribute to wider public health and safety outcomes by contributing to a reduction in road casualties

Objectives of the Circular

17. The main objectives of this guidance are:

- the provision of up-to-date and consistent advice to traffic authorities
- improved clarity, which will aid in greater consistency of speed limits across the country
- enabling the setting of more appropriate local speed limits, including lower or higher limits where conditions dictate
- achieving local speed limits that better reflect the needs of all road users, not just motorised vehicles
- ensuring improved quality of life for local communities and a better balance between road safety, accessibility and environmental objectives, especially in rural communities
- improved recognition and understanding by road users of the risks involved on different types of road, the speed limits that apply and the reasons why
- improved respect for speed limits and, in turn, improved compliance
- continued reductions in the number of road traffic collisions, injuries and deaths in which excessive or inappropriate speed is a contributory factor

18. Speed limits are only one element of speed management. Local speed limits should not be set in isolation. They should be part of a package with other speed management measures including:

- engineering and road geometry that respect the needs of all road users and raise the driver's awareness of their environment
- education
- driver information
- training and publicity

Within their overall network management responsibilities, these measures should enable traffic authorities to deliver speed limits and, as importantly, actual vehicle speeds that are safe and appropriate for the road and its surroundings. The measures should also help drivers to be more readily aware of the road environment and to drive at an appropriate speed at all times.

19. Schemes need to aim for compliance with the new speed limit.

20. 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 road's function and condition – it may be ineffective and drivers may not comply with the speed limit.

21. If many drivers continued to travel at unacceptable speeds, the risk of collisions and injuries would increase, and significant and avoidable enforcement activity would be needed.

The underlying principles of local speed limits

Main points

National Highways (NH) is responsible for determining speed limits on the strategic road network (SRN).

Local traffic authorities are responsible for determining speed limits on the local road network.

It is important that traffic authorities and police forces work closely together in determining, or considering, any changes to speed limits.

The full range of speed management measures should always be considered before a new speed limit is introduced.

The underlying aim should be to achieve a 'safe' distribution of speeds. The factors that should be taken into account in any decisions on local speed limits are:

- history of collisions
- road geometry and engineering
- road function
- composition of road users (including existing and potential levels of vulnerable road users)
- existing traffic speeds
- road environment

While these factors need to be considered for all road types, they may be weighted differently in urban or rural areas. The impact on community and environmental outcomes should also be considered.

The minimum length of a speed limit should generally be not less than 600m to avoid too many changes of speed limit along the route.

Speed limits should not be used to attempt to solve the problem of isolated hazards such as a single road junction or reduced forward visibility, for example, at a bend.

Responsibility for local speed limits

22. NH is responsible for determining speed limits on the SRN road network in England, and local traffic authorities are responsible for determining speed limits on the local road network. In this Circular, the term 'traffic authority' is used to denote both NH and local traffic authorities.

23. It is important that traffic authorities and police forces work together closely and from an early stage when considering or determining any changes to speed limits. This may be through the local road safety partnership arrangements. It is also important that neighbouring traffic authorities work closely together, especially where roads cross boundaries, to ensure speed limits remain consistent. As part of the process of making a speed limit order, consultation of those affected is of great importance and, together with good information about planned changes, this will improve

support for and compliance with new limits. The legislative requirements are summarised in [The legislative framework](#).

Considerations in setting local speed limits

24. A study of types of crashes, their severity, causes and frequency, together with a survey of traffic speeds, should indicate whether an existing speed limit is appropriate for the type of road and mix of use by different groups of road users, including the presence or potential presence of vulnerable road users (including people walking, cycling or riding horses or on motorbikes), or whether it needs to be changed. Residents may also express their concerns or desire for a lower speed limit and these comments should be considered.

25. Where limits for air quality are in danger of being exceeded, compliance with those air quality limits could be an important factor in the choice of speed limit. Depending on the individual circumstances, the imposition of a speed limit will not always be the solution. And the visible characteristics of a road affect the speed that a driver chooses –to be effective, the reasons for a limit need to be apparent.

26. It may well be that a speed limit need not be changed if the collision rate can be improved or wider quality of life objectives can be achieved through other speed management measures, or in other ways. These alternative measures should always be considered before proceeding with a new speed limit.

27. Where there is poor compliance with an existing speed limit on a road or stretch of road, the reasons for the non-compliance should be examined before a solution is sought. If the speed limit is set too low for no clear reason and the risk of collisions is low, then it may be appropriate to increase the limit. If the existing limit is in place for a good reason, solutions may include engineering measures or changes to the road environment to ensure it better matches the speed limit, or local education and publicity. Enforcement may also be appropriate but should be considered only after the other measures and jointly with the police force.

The underlying principles

28. The aim of speed management policies should be to achieve a safe distribution of speeds consistent with the speed limit that reflects the function of the road and the road environment. This should imply a mean speed appropriate to the prevailing road environment, and all vehicles

moving at speeds below or at the posted speed limit while having regard to the traffic conditions.

29. The estimated collision and injury savings should also be an important factor when considering changes to a local speed limit. Another significant factor when setting a speed limit is what the road looks like to the road users. Drivers are likely to expect and respect lower limits and be influenced when deciding on what is an appropriate speed where they can see there are potential hazards, for example, outside schools, in residential areas or villages and in shopping streets.

30. A principal aim in determining appropriate speed limits should be to provide a consistent message between the speed limit and what the road looks like, and for changes in speed limit to be reflective of changes in the road layout and characteristics.

31. The following will be important factors when considering what is an appropriate speed limit:

- history of collisions, including frequency, severity, types and causes
- road geometry and engineering including width, sightlines, bends, junctions, accesses and safety barriers
- road function (for example, strategic through traffic or local access)
- composition of road users including existing and potential levels of vulnerable road users
- existing traffic speeds
- road environment, including level of road-side development and possible impacts on residents (for example, severance, noise or air quality)

While these factors need to be considered for all road types, they may be weighted differently in urban or rural areas. The impact on community and environmental outcomes should also be considered.

32. Before introducing or changing a local speed limit, traffic authorities will wish to satisfy themselves that the expected benefits exceed the costs. Many of the costs and benefits do not have monetary values associated with them, but traffic authorities should include an assessment of the following factors:

- collision and casualty savings
- conditions and facilities for vulnerable road users
- impacts on walking and cycling and other mode shift
- congestion and journey time reliability
- environmental, community and quality of life impact, such as emissions, severance of local communities, visual impact, noise and vibration

- costs, including of engineering and other physical measures including signing, maintenance and cost of enforcement

33. Different road users perceive risks and appropriate speeds differently, and drivers and riders of motor vehicles often do not have the same perception of the hazards of speed as do people on foot, on bicycles or on horseback. Fear of traffic can affect people's quality of life and the needs of vulnerable road users must be fully taken into account to encourage these modes of travel and improve their safety. Speed management strategies should seek to protect local community life.

34. To ensure compliance with a new lower local limit, as well as make it legally enforceable, it is important that the limit is signed correctly and consistently. The introduction of a new speed limit order must coincide with the signing of the new limit. Traffic authorities must ensure that speed limits meet the legislative process and the requirements of the Traffic Signs Regulations and Directions (TSRGD). Any new limit should also be accompanied by publicity and, where appropriate, effective engineering changes to the road itself. Without these measures, the new limit is unlikely to be fully complied with.

35. On rural roads there is often a difference of opinion as to what constitutes a reasonable balance between the risk of a collision, journey efficiency and environmental impact. Higher speed is often perceived to bring benefits in terms of shorter travel times for people and goods. However, evidence suggests that when traffic is travelling at constant speeds, even at a lower level, it may result in shorter and more reliable overall journey times, and that journey time savings from higher speed are often overestimated (Stradling et al., 2008). The objective should be to seek an acceptable balance between costs and benefits, so that speed management policies take account of environmental, economic and social effects as well as the reduction in casualties they are aiming to achieve.

36. Mean speed and 85th percentile speed (the speed at or below which 85% of vehicles are travelling) are the most commonly used measures of actual traffic speed. Traffic authorities should continue to routinely collect and assess both, but mean speeds should be used as the basis for determining local speed limits.

37. For most roads, there is a consistent relationship between mean speed and 85th percentile speed. Where this is not the case, it will usually indicate that drivers have difficulty in deciding the appropriate speed for the road, suggesting that a better match between road design and speed limit is required. It may be necessary to consider additional measures to reduce the larger-than-normal difference between mean and 85th percentile speeds or to bring the speed distribution more in line with typical distributions. The aim of local speed limits should be to align the speed limit to the conditions of the road and road environment.

38. The minimum length of a speed limit should generally be not less than 600m to avoid too many changes of speed limit along the route. In exceptional circumstances, this can be reduced to 400m for lower speed limits, or even 300m on roads with a purely local access function, or where a variable 20mph limit is introduced, for example, outside a school. Anything shorter is not recommended.

The length adopted for a limit will depend on the limit applied and also on the conditions at or beyond the endpoints. The terminal points of speed limits need to take account of the local circumstances, such as steep gradients, sharp bends, junctions, access roads, humpbacked bridges or other hazards, and also good visibility of the signs, and an extension of the speed limit may be needed to ensure this.

39. For consistency within routes, separate assessments should be made for each length of road of 600m or more for which a different speed limit might be considered appropriate. When this is completed, the final choice of appropriate speed limit for individual sections might need to be adjusted to provide reasonable consistency over the route as a whole.

40. Occasionally, it may be appropriate to use a short length of 40mph or 50mph speed limit as a transition between a length of road subject to a national limit and another length on which a lower limit is in force, for example, on the outskirts of villages or urban areas with adjoining intermittent development. However, the use of such transitional limits should be restricted to sections of road where immediate speed reduction would cause risks or is likely to be less effective.

41. Speed limits should not be used to attempt to solve the problem of isolated hazards, for example, a single road junction or reduced forward visibility, such as at a bend, since speed limits are difficult to enforce over such a short length. Other measures, such as warning signs including vehicle-activated signs, carriageway markings, junction improvements, superelevation of bends and new or improved street lighting, are likely to be more effective in addressing such hazards. Similarly, crossings or, in rural areas, the provision of adequate footways, can be a more effective means of improving pedestrian safety than lowering a speed limit over a short distance.

42. Where several roads with different speed limits enter a roundabout, the roundabout should be restricted at the same level as the majority of the approach roads. If there is an equal division, for example, where a 30mph road crosses one with a limit of 40mph, the roundabout itself should take the lower limit.

The legislative framework

Main points

All speed limits apart from the national limits and those on special roads as defined in [section 16 of the Highways Act 1980](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/66/section/16) (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/66/section/16>) should be made by speed limit order under [Section 84 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1984/27/section/84) (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1984/27/section/84>).

Any speed limits below 30mph, other than 20mph limits or 20mph zones, require individual consent from the Secretary of State for Transport.

Unless an order has been made and the road is signed to the contrary, a 30mph speed limit applies where there is a system of street lighting furnished by means of lamps placed not more than 200 yards apart.

Traffic authorities have a duty to erect and maintain prescribed speed limit signs on their roads in accordance with The Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016 as amended.

If traffic authorities wish to deviate from what is prescribed in signing regulations, they must first gain the authorisation of the Secretary of State for Transport.

Traffic authorities are not permitted to erect different speed limit signs relating to different classes of vehicle.

Vehicle-activated signs must not be used as an alternative to standard static signing but may be used as an additional measure to warn drivers of a potential hazard or to remind them of the speed limit in force.

Main speed limit legislation

43. Most road traffic law pertaining to speed limits (except limits on special roads as defined in section 16 of the Highways Act 1980) is contained in the [Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 \(RTRA 1984\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1984/27/contents) (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1984/27/contents>). Other relevant legislation includes the Highways Act 1980, in particular Sections 90 A to F

concerning the construction and maintenance of road humps and Sections 90 G to I on other traffic-calming works.

44. Part VI of the RTRA 1984 deals specifically with speed limits. Sections 81 to 84 deal with different speed limits and the speed limit order-making process. Section 82(1)(a) defines a restricted road in England and Wales as a road on which there is provided “a system of street lighting furnished by means of lamps placed not more than 200 yards apart”.

45. Section 81 makes it an offence for a person to drive a motor vehicle at a speed of more than 30mph on a restricted road in England. An amendment to Section 81 in 2023 made it an offence to drive a motor vehicle at a speed of more than 20mph on a restricted road in Wales.

46. The establishment of speed limits is also a method through which legal sanctions can be brought to bear on those who exceed the limit set on a particular road. It is, therefore, important to preserve carefully all records relating to the making and validity of a speed limit and speed limit signs.

47. All speed limits, other than the national limits or limits on special roads, should be made by speed limit order under Section 84 of the RTRA 1984. This includes the making of a 30mph speed limit on an unlit road.

48. Traffic authorities should comply with their own consultation procedures and must, as a minimum, follow the full consultation procedure set out in legislation before any new speed limit is introduced. More detail about these requirements is in [Speed limit, signage and related legislation](#).

Restricted roads

49. Section 82(2) RTRA 1984 (as amended) gives traffic authorities powers to remove restricted road status and give restricted road status to roads that are not restricted. However, DfT’s policy on the use of this power is that it should be used only to reinstate restricted road status in those cases where a road that has a system of street lighting has previously had its restricted road status removed.

50. If a road with street lighting has a 40mph limit and this is to be reduced to 30mph, the 40mph speed limit order should be revoked. If there is a system of street lighting the road will be a restricted road by virtue of section 82(1)(a) RTRA. Similarly, where a speed limit of 30mph is imposed by a section 84 speed limit order because there is no street lighting, that order should be revoked if street lighting is subsequently provided. DfT considers that it is best practice for traffic authorities to make an order under section 84 RTRA to create a 30mph speed limit on an unlit stretch of road.

51. Any speed limits below 30mph, other than 20mph limits or 20mph zones, require individual consent from the Secretary of State for Transport.

Street lighting

52. Schedule 10, Part 4, General Direction 2 of TSRGD 2016 defines the requirements for the placing of speed-limit repeater signs. This states that speed-limit repeater signs must not be placed along a road that is subject to a maximum speed limit of 30mph and has a system of carriageway lighting. This direction applies regardless of how the speed limit has been imposed.

53. DfT will not make exceptions to this rule. This means it should be assumed that unless an order has been made and the road is signed to the contrary, a 30mph speed limit applies where there are 3 or more lamps throwing light on the carriageway and placed not more than 200 yards apart.

Speed limit signing

54. While increased understanding and acceptance of why a speed limit applies on a certain road will help compliance, drivers are aided by clear, visible and regular signing which enables them unhesitatingly to know what speed limit is in force.

55. Under Section 85 of the RTRA 1984, it is the duty of the traffic authority to erect and maintain prescribed speed limit signs on their roads in accordance with the Secretary of State for Transport's directions. TSRGD 2016, as amended, prescribes the designs and conditions of use for traffic signs, including speed limit signing, in England and Wales.

56. Traffic authorities should generally follow these regulations when signing speed limits. If a traffic authority wishes to deviate from what is prescribed, it must first obtain the Secretary of State for Transport's authorisation, and signing that is not in line with the regulations must not be installed without such authorisation. Authorisation applications for roads in England should be sent to DfT.

57. Speed limit signs that do not comply with the regulations or which have not been authorised by the Secretary of State for Transport are not lawfully placed. Where the sign is not lawfully placed, no offence is committed by a person exceeding the signed speed limit and any prosecutions are likely to fail accordingly. Traffic authorities should, therefore, remove any unlawful

signs, bring them into compliance with the regulations or obtain authorisation to make them lawful.

58. Lower maximum speed limits apply on certain roads to certain classes of vehicles. These are set out in Schedule 6 of the RTRA 1984 and in The Highway Code. Drivers of these vehicles are expected to be aware of this and follow these special limitations without having to be reminded by specific speed limit signs for particular vehicles. Traffic authorities are not permitted to erect different speed limit signs relating to different classes of vehicle.

59. Vehicle-activated signs (VAS), triggered by an approaching vehicle, have been developed to help address the problem of inappropriate speed. They must not be used as an alternative to standard static signing, but as an additional measure to warn drivers of a potential hazard or to remind them of the speed limit in force. VAS has proved particularly effective in rural areas, including at the approaches to junctions and bends. DfT has provided guidance in [Traffic Advisory Leaflet 1/03 Vehicle Activated Signs \(DfT, 2003\)](https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20120606202850/http://assets.dft.gov.uk/publications/tal-1-03/tal-1-03.pdf) (<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20120606202850/http://assets.dft.gov.uk/publications/tal-1-03/tal-1-03.pdf>).

60/. The legislation does not prescribe the use of countdown markers on the approach to speed limit terminal signs and research has shown that they generally have little or no effect on vehicle speeds and can add to sign clutter.

61/. Chapter 3 of the [Traffic signs manual \(DfT 2019\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/traffic-signs-manual) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/traffic-signs-manual>) provides guidance to local traffic authorities on best practice when signing speed limits. It includes tables and pictures to illustrate where speed limit signs should be placed. This complements TSRGD 2016, which sets out the mandatory requirements for signing.

Speed limit orders

62. If speed limits are to be legally implemented and enforceable, speed limit orders must be made. Part VI of RTRA 1984 deals specifically with speed limits and includes the powers under which traffic authorities may make speed limit orders.

63. The [Local Authorities' Traffic Orders \(Procedure\) \(England and Wales\) Regulations 1996 \(as amended\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1996/2489/contents/made) (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1996/2489/contents/made>) sets out the procedure to be followed when making these (and other) orders. Traffic authorities will need to comply with the consultation and publicity

requirements before making an order, and with the publicity and traffic signing requirements once an order has been made.

64. Traffic authorities may find it more efficient to produce speed limit orders for 20mph zones or limits, or to introduce speed limit changes as a result of rural speed limit reviews, where these cover several roads, through one order covering all those roads covered by the new speed limit. If they decide to proceed in this manner, it is particularly important to ensure that the order is comprehensive and correct and that the consultation and publicity are directed at those likely to be affected.

65. Authorities should be mindful that while 20mph limits and zones are an important tool in improving road safety in residential areas, over-use risks undermining public acceptance and they should only be used in the right places. 20mph schemes should be considered on a road-by-road basis to ensure local support, not as blanket measures.

66. Further key pieces of legislation and regulations relating to speed limit and related signing are referred to in [Speed limit, signage and related legislation](#).

The speed limit appraisal tool

67. In the [Strategic Framework for Road Safety \(May 2011\)](#) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategic-framework-for-road-safety>), DfT announced that it would provide a new [speed limit appraisal tool](#) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/speed-limit-appraisal-tool>) to help local authorities assess the full costs and benefits of any proposed schemes and help make evidence-based decisions to introduce local speeds that reflect the needs of all road users.

68. Local authorities are invited, though not required, to use the tool. Its use is free of charge and is not restricted to local authorities.

69. The tool has been designed to enable local highway authority officers and other professionals to:

- forecast mean and 85th percentile speeds for speed limit changes
- forecast changes to journey times separately for business and personal users, vehicle operating costs including fuel, collisions by severity, carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions and nitrogen oxide emissions
- appraise changes in speed limits to 20mph, 30mph, 40mph, 50mph, 60mph and, on dual carriageways, 70mph

70. In addition to enabling a local authority to decide whether to introduce a new speed limit scheme, the tool introduces transparency in the decision-making process. It also provides a facility that encourages local authorities to adopt a more consistent appraisal process while still allowing the flexibility to take into account local road conditions and the surrounding environment.

71. Full user guidance is provided with the tool covering instructions on how to run the appraisal tool, as well as a practical guide to the assessment of a range of aspects that local authorities should consider when planning to introduce a change in speed limits. The guidance should, therefore, be read in conjunction with this Circular.

72. The tool has been developed to be economical to apply and straightforward to operate, and to provide informative outputs that can be flexibly interpreted in the context of the local authority's requirements. At its basic level, it does not call for specialist skills such as demand modelling and environmental analysis.

73. The guidance describes how the tool deals with those aspects of speed limit changes that can be quantified, such as collisions, journey time savings and CO2 emissions, and those that presently cannot be quantified because of a lack of evidence, such as journey time reliability, model shift and impacts on public anxiety.

74. Reference is made throughout the document to current DfT guidance and relevant WebTAG (DfT web-based [Transport Analysis Guidance \(https://www.gov.uk/guidance/transport-analysis-guidance-tag\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/transport-analysis-guidance-tag)) units to help the user compile the data that is required to run the tool and to guide the reader to more detailed information should this be required.

75. The tool outputs are presented in Excel table formats that show economic impacts and other quantifiable impacts. They make provision for non-quantified information to also be presented in both the data entry tables and the output reporting tables.

76. The output spreadsheets should be considered as a starting point for developing the appraisal into a case that can be readily understood and appreciated by a range of people, and which reflects wider considerations than the quantitative values that the tool provides.

77. Details on how the relationships that are used in the tool were developed are set out in an annex to the user guidance, enabling the reader to gain an understanding of the background calculations that the tool is performing.

Urban speed limits

Main points

Speed limits in urban areas influence not only safety: they can influence the quality of life, the environment and the local economy.

Traffic authorities should ensure road hierarchies reflect a road's function and the mix of traffic that it carries.

The national speed limit on street-lit roads in England is 30mph.

Traffic authorities should only consider 20mph limits:

- over time
- with consideration of the safety case; and
- with local support on:
 - major streets where there are – or are likely to be – significant numbers of journeys on foot, and/or where pedal cycle movements are an important consideration, and this outweighs the disadvantage of longer journey times for motorised traffic
 - residential streets in cities, towns and villages, particularly where the streets are being used by people on foot and on bicycles, there is community support and the characteristics of the street are suitable

Where new speed limits are introduced, they should be in places where the majority of drivers will comply with them. General compliance needs to be achievable without an excessive reliance on enforcement.

Authorities should be aware that the reduction of a speed limit will lead to longer journey times for drivers and bus users and could affect air pollution. They should take these effects carefully into account.

Roads suitable for a 40mph limit are generally higher quality suburban roads or those on the outskirts of urban areas where there is little development. Usually, the movement of motor vehicles is the primary function.

In exceptional circumstances, 50mph limits can be implemented on special roads and dual carriageways, radial routes or bypasses where

the road environment and characteristics allow this speed to be achieved safely.

78. Urban roads, by their nature, are complex, as they need to provide for safe travel on foot, bicycle and by motorised traffic. Appropriate speeds can improve safety for all urban road users and setting appropriate speed limits is, therefore, an important factor in improving urban safety. Traffic authorities should ensure road hierarchies reflect a road's function and the mix of traffic that it carries. Within this approach, the principle should be to ensure that the appropriate traffic travels on the appropriate roads and at an appropriate speed. This can help balance what can be competing demands for higher or lower speed limits. Authorities should bear in mind any disadvantage, including economic disadvantage, that may arise from longer journey times.

79. Research has shown that the risk of a pedestrian dying in a collision with a car increases slowly up to an impact speed of around 30mph, but at speeds above 30mph, the risk of death increases rapidly (Rosén and Sander, 2009). The safety of car occupants can also be improved by lower speeds, and research in London showed that the largest casualty reductions associated with 20mph zones (that is, with traffic calming) were in the numbers of children and car occupants killed and seriously injured (Grundy et al, 2008).

80. The standard speed limit in urban areas in England is 30mph, which represents a balance between mobility and safety factors. For residential streets and other town and city streets with high pedestrian and cyclist movement, local traffic authorities may consider the use of 20mph schemes. In doing this, they should have due regard for the safety case and local support. On dual carriageways, where the road environment and characteristics allow, traffic authorities can also implement 40mph and, in exceptional circumstances, 50mph limits. Generally, efforts should be made to promote the use of suitable routes for urban through traffic and to manage the speed of traffic requiring access to residential streets.

Authorities should remember that the reduction of a speed limit leads to longer journey times, which, in turn, can lead to increased air pollution and climate impacts and could also damage local businesses. They should take this into account in their considerations.

81. In many urban centres, main traffic routes often have a mixture of shopping, commercial and/or residential functions. These mixed priority routes are complex and difficult to treat, but the most successful measures have included speed management to keep speed at appropriate levels in the context of both 20mph and 30mph limits and a reassignment of space to the different functions, taking into account the needs of people on foot or on bikes. Sometimes a decision about a road's primary or most important function needs to be taken.

20mph speed limits and zones

82. 20mph zones and limits are now widespread. But that does not mean they should be introduced to every road. There should be careful consideration of the safety case and local support, to ensure their use is appropriate.

83. 20mph zones require traffic calming measures such as speed humps or chicanes or at least one calming feature and repeater speed limit signing and/or roundel road markings at regular intervals, so that no point within a zone is more than 50m from such a feature, sign or marking. In addition, the beginning and end of a zone is indicated by a terminal sign. Zones usually cover several roads.

84. 20mph limits are signed with terminal and repeater signs and do not require traffic calming. 20mph limits are similar to other local speed limits and normally apply to individual or small numbers of roads but are increasingly being applied to larger areas.

85. There is clear evidence of the effect of reducing traffic speeds on the reduction of collisions and casualties, as collision frequency is lower at lower speeds, and where collisions do occur, there is a lower risk of fatal injury at lower speeds. Research shows that on urban roads with low average traffic speeds, any 1mph reduction in average speed can reduce the collision frequency by around 6% (Taylor, Lynam and Baruya, 2000). There is also clear evidence confirming the greater chance of survival of pedestrians in collisions at lower speeds.

86. Benefits of 20mph may include encouragement of healthier modes of travel, such as walking and cycling, and with potential environmental benefits – although research here paints a mixed picture. Authorities should, however, take into account the disadvantages that slower speeds can bring in terms of delays to drivers and bus users, congestion, potential impacts on air pollution and impacts on local businesses.

87. Based on this positive effect on road safety, and with positive support from residents, traffic authorities can consider introducing 20mph speed limits or zones on:

- major streets where there are – or are likely to be – significant numbers of journeys on foot, and/or where pedal cycle movements are an important consideration, and this outweighs the disadvantage of longer journey times for motorised traffic
- residential streets in cities, towns and villages, particularly where the streets are being used by people on foot and on bicycles, there is

community support and the characteristics of the street are suitable

88. Schemes need to aim for compliance with the new speed limit. Where new limits are put in, they should be in places where most drivers are likely to comply. We know that compliance is better on smaller, narrower roads than on wider roads where the layout gives drivers a clear run.

89. Successful 20mph zones and 20mph speed limits are generally self-enforcing: that is, the existing conditions of the road together with measures such as traffic calming or signing, publicity and information as part of the scheme, lead to a mean traffic speed compliant with the speed limit. To achieve compliance, there should be no expectation on the police to provide additional enforcement beyond their routine activity unless this has been explicitly agreed.

90. Evidence from successful 20mph schemes shows that the introduction of 20mph zones generally reduces mean traffic speed by more than is the case when a signed-only 20mph limit is introduced.

91. While 20mph limits and zones can be an important tool in improving road safety in residential areas, over-use risks undermining public acceptance, as well as burdening car and bus users with slower journeys, potentially with increased pollution. 20mph schemes should be considered on a road-by-road basis based on the safety case to ensure local support, not as blanket measures. Particular consideration should be given to maintaining through routes for motorists.

92. A comprehensive and early consultation of all those who may be affected by the introduction of a 20mph scheme is an essential part of the implementation process. This needs to include residents, all tiers of local government, the police and emergency services, public transport providers and any other relevant local groups (including, for example, groups representing pedestrians, cyclists, drivers or equestrians). Further details about consultations are set out in [Speed limit, signage and related legislation](#).

93. It is important to consider the full range of options and their benefits and disbenefits, both road safety and wider community and environmental benefits and costs, including the cost to the economy of increased journey times, before deciding on the most appropriate method of introducing a 20mph scheme to meet the local objectives and the road conditions.

20mph zones with traffic calming features

94. 20mph zones, which have traffic calming features, are very effective at reducing collisions and injuries. Research in 1996 showed that overall average annual collision frequency could fall by around 60%, and the number of collisions involving injury to children could be reduced by up to two-thirds. There is no evidence of migration of collisions and casualties to streets outside the zone (Grundy et al, 2008; Grundy et al, 2009).

95. 20mph zones are predominantly used in urban areas, both town centres and residential areas, and in the vicinity of schools. They should also be used around shops, markets, playgrounds and other areas with high pedestrian or cyclist traffic. They should not include roads where motor vehicle movement is the primary function.

96. A 20mph zone is indicated by 20mph zone entry and end signs (TSRGD, diagrams 674 and 675A). The statutory provisions (Schedule 10, Part 4, General Direction 1 TSRGD) require that no point within the zone must be further than 50m from a traffic calming feature (unless in a cul-de-sac less than 80m long).

97. Traffic authorities can place any of the following:

- repeater speed sign (TSRGD diagram 670)
- a speed roundel road marking (TSRGD diagram 1065)
- a combination of both signs
- traffic calming features

98. At least one traffic calming feature as defined in Schedule 10, Part 4, General Direction 1 TSRGD must be placed in a 20mph zone and the features and signing must still be placed at intervals not greater than 100m. It is not the intention to remove physical features, but to ensure that the most appropriate measure is used to ensure the continuity of the zone. Only where speeds are already constrained to near the limit should local authorities consider placing the speed limit sign or a roundel marking in addition to physical features within a zone.

99. Traffic authorities can incorporate wider areas within a 20mph zone by effectively signing 20mph speed limits on distributor roads where traffic calming features are not suitable, or for small individual roads or stretches of road, where mean speeds are already at or below 24mph. Where a 20mph zone leads into a 20mph limit, it is important to use the correct signing to indicate this. It is not appropriate to use the sign that indicates the end of a 20mph zone at the start of a 20mph limit or different, higher speed limit. Instead, a standard 20mph terminal sign (TSRGD 2016, diagram 670) must be used.

20mph limits without traffic calming

100. Research into signed-only 20mph limits shows that they generally lead to only small reductions in traffic speeds – less than 1mph on average. Signed-only 20mph limits are, therefore, most appropriate for areas where vehicle speeds are already low. This may, for example, be on roads that are very narrow, through engineering or on-road car parking. If the mean speed is already at or below 24mph on a road, introducing a 20mph limit through signing alone is likely to lead to general compliance with the new speed limit.

101. DfT's comprehensive [3-year evaluation of the effect of 20mph signed-only limits](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/20-mph-speed-limits-on-roads) (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/20-mph-speed-limits-on-roads) was published on 22 November 2018 (Atkins 2018). It substantially strengthened the evidence base on perceptions, speeds and early outcomes associated with 20mph speed limits. It is the only major UK study to consider multiple case study areas and provide a national view.

The headline findings are:

- 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
- there has been a small reduction in median speed (less than 1mph)
- compliance is better on smaller, narrower roads than on roads where the layout gives drivers a clear run
- vehicles travelling at higher speeds before the introduction of the 20mph limit have reduced their speed more than those already travelling at lower speeds

102. The implementation of 20mph limits over a larger number of roads should be considered where mean speeds at or below 24mph are already achieved over a number of roads. Traffic authorities are already free to use additional measures in 20mph limits to achieve compliance, such as some traffic calming measures and vehicle-activated signs.

103. A 20mph speed limit is indicated by terminal speed limit signs, and speed limit repeater signs. Traffic authorities should ensure sufficient repeater signs are placed to inform road users of the speed limit in force. Chapter 3 of the [Traffic signs manual](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/traffic-signs-manual) (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/traffic-signs-manual) provides guidance on the placing of repeater signs.

104. Amendments to TSRGD in 2012 provided thresholds below which speed repeater signs are no longer required by Direction 11 of TSRGD but may still be placed if considered necessary. These thresholds are determined by carriageway length and the applicable speed limit.

105. Where traffic calming measures are placed, they should be signed in line with regulations (TSRGD 2016, diagram 557.1 and 883).

Variable 20mph limits

106. Traffic authorities have powers to introduce 20mph speed limits that apply only at certain times of day. These variable limits may be particularly relevant where, for example, a school is located on a road that is not suitable for a full-time 20mph zone or limit, such as a major through road. To indicate these limits, variable message signs are available.

107. An advisory part-time 20mph limit sign (TSRGD, diagram 545.1) with flashing school warning lights can be a more cost-effective solution, where appropriate, and reduces the requirement for signing.

Traffic calming measures

108. Traffic calming involves the installation of specific physical measures to encourage lower traffic speeds. There are many measures available to traffic authorities to help reduce vehicle speeds and ensure compliance with the speed limit in force. These are required at regular intervals in 20mph zones and may be used in 20mph limits. As set out above, speed limit traffic signs and/or speed roundel markings can now also be used by traffic authorities in England.

109. The Highways (Road Humps) Regulations 1999, The Highways (Traffic Calming) Regulations 1999 and Schedule 10, Part 4, General Direction 1(3) of TSRGD 2016 give details of the traffic calming measures that meet the requirements for a 20mph zone.

110. These calming measures range from more substantive engineering measures to lighter touch road surface treatments and include, for example:

- road humps
- road narrowing measures, for example, chicanes, pinch-points or overrun areas
- gateways
- road markings
- rumble devices

111. The majority of traffic calming measures in use are speed humps, tables, cushions or rumble devices, termed vertical deflections, but traffic authorities will want to consider the full set of available measures.

40mph and 50mph speed limits

112. 30mph is the standard speed limit for urban areas, but a 40mph limit may be used where appropriate and, in exceptional circumstances, a 50mph limit may be considered.

113. Roads suitable for 40mph are generally higher-quality suburban roads or those on the outskirts of urban areas where there is little development. They should have good width and layout, parking and waiting restrictions in operation, and buildings set back from the road. These roads should, wherever possible, cater for the needs of non-motorised road users through segregation of road space, and have adequate footways and crossing places. Alternatively, traffic authorities should consider whether there are convenient alternative routes available.

114. In exceptional circumstances, a 50mph limit may also be used on higher-quality roads where there is little or no roadside development and such speeds can be achieved safely. The roads most suited to these higher urban limits are special roads or those with segregated junctions and pedestrian facilities, such as primary distributors. They are usually dual carriageway ring or radial routes or bypasses that have become partially built up. Traffic authorities should, however, always assess the potential impact on the local community and non-motorised road users before considering such a limit.

Table 1: Speed limits in urban areas – summary

Speed limit (mph)	Where limit should apply
20 (including 20mph zone)	These should not be introduced as a blanket measure, but in streets that are primarily residential and in other town or city streets where pedestrian and cyclist movements are high, such as around schools, shops, markets, playgrounds and other areas, where motor vehicle movement is not the primary function. There could be consideration of the safety case and local support to ensure their use is appropriate.
30	In other built-up areas (where motor vehicle movement is deemed more important), with development on both sides of the road.
40	On higher quality suburban roads or those on the outskirts of urban areas where there is little development, with few cyclists, pedestrians or equestrians.

Speed limit (mph)	Where limit should apply
	<p>On roads with good width and layout, parking and waiting restrictions in operation and buildings set back from the road.</p> <p>On roads that, wherever possible, cater for the needs of non-motorised users through segregation of road space, and have adequate footways and crossing places.</p>
50	On dual carriageway ring or radial routes or bypasses that have become partially built up, with little or no roadside development.

Rural speed management

Main points

The national speed limit on the rural road network is 60mph on single carriageway roads and 70mph on dual carriageways.

Rural dual carriageways with segregated junctions and facilities for vulnerable road users would generally be suitable for 70mph limits. However, a lower limit may be appropriate if, for example, a collision history indicates that this cannot be achieved safely.

In 2022, 57% of road deaths in England occurred on rural roads, and 27% of road deaths occurred on single rural carriageway roads subject to the National Speed Limit of 60mph limit.

The speed limit on single carriageway rural roads should take into account the history of collisions, the road's function, existing mean traffic speed, use by vulnerable road users, the road's geometry and engineering, and the road environment including the level of road-side development.

It is government policy that a 30mph speed limit should be the norm in villages. It may also be appropriate to consider 20mph zones and limits

in built-up village streets. But it is important to consider the safety case and to seek local support before doing so.

It is recommended that the minimum length of a village speed limit should be 600m. However, traffic authorities may lower this to 400m and, in exceptional circumstances, to 300m.

115. The vast majority of the rural road network is subject to the national speed limit of 60mph on single carriageway roads and 70mph on dual carriageways. On many of these roads, most drivers are travelling below – sometimes significantly below – the speed limit because of the characteristics of the roads. This is especially evident on the C and Unclassified roads, where the geometric characteristics include many narrow roads, bends, junctions and accesses.

116. In England, in 2022, rural roads accounted for 57% of all road deaths, and 68% of car occupant deaths, but only around 43% of vehicle traffic. Of all road deaths in England, in 2022, 27% occurred on national speed limit rural single carriageway roads. The reduction in road casualties and especially deaths on rural roads is one of the principal road safety challenges. Research has assessed the risk of death in collisions at various impact speeds for typical collision types on rural roads. This research suggests that the risk of a driver dying in a head-on collision involving 2 cars travelling at 60mph is around 90%, but that this drops rapidly with speed so that it is around 50% at 48mph (Richards and Cuerden, 2009).

117. Inappropriate speed at levels below the legal limit but above those appropriate for the road at the time (for example, because of the weather conditions or because vulnerable road users are present) is a particular problem for rural roads. In 2022, 'exceeding the speed limit' or 'travelling too fast for the conditions' were reported as contributory factors in 15% of collisions on rural roads in England. The percentage of cases in England where at least 1 of these 2 contributory factors was recorded was higher on rural minor roads (B, C and unclassified) than on rural A roads. The highest percentage, 19%, was on minor rural roads with a 60mph limit.

118. Speed limit changes are unlikely to fully address this problem and should, therefore, be considered only as one part of rural safety management. Where collision and casualty rates are high, traffic authorities should first seek to understand the particular types of crashes taking place and their causes to allow them to choose effective solutions to reduce the risk.

119. To help in this process the [Accident Analysis on Rural Roads: A Technical Guide \(TRL, 2004\)](https://trid.trb.org/view/745966) (<https://trid.trb.org/view/745966>) provides information on typical collision rates and typical proportions of different collision types on different types of rural road. This can be used to assess

where there are above-average collision rates and provides help to traffic authorities in identifying the types of site or route-specific intervention measures that might be appropriate to manage speeds and reduce collisions along the route.

120. Traffic authorities may wish to note the Road Safety Foundation (RSF)'s risk ratings for A roads in Britain. The RSF has assessed the safety of the strategic road network (SRN), appraising the protection levels that the design and engineering features of roadsides, medians and junctions on these roads offer in case of a crash. This assessment uses a star-based International Road Assessment Programme (iRAP) Road Protection Score. The risk, based on frequency of death and serious injury, together with its likelihood, in relation to the amount of traffic on the particular road, is rated into 5 categories. These range from low-risk, safe roads (5 stars) to high-risk roads (1 star). The latest results (2022) are in [The strategic road network star rating report \(https://nationalhighways.co.uk/media/3mya00pi/the-strategic-road-network-star-rating-report.pdf\)](https://nationalhighways.co.uk/media/3mya00pi/the-strategic-road-network-star-rating-report.pdf).

121. For single carriageway roads, which account for 6% of travel on the SRN, travel is predominantly on 1-star or 2-star roads. Even though this assessment has only been applied to the SRN roads, it suggests that engineering measures may often be appropriate to manage speed and reduce collisions on rural single carriageway roads.

122. If high collision rates persist despite these measures, then lower speed limits may also be considered. Again, to achieve a change in motorists' behaviour and compliance with the limit, supporting physical measures, driver information and publicity or other measures are likely to be required. Such measures could include, for example, the use of vehicle-activated signs (VAS), which has proved particularly effective at the approaches to isolated hazards, junctions and bends in rural areas (Winnett and Wheeler, 2003). There should be no expectation on the police to provide additional enforcement to ensure compliance with a new limit beyond their routine activity unless this has been explicitly agreed upon.

123. The aim of speed management actions is to deliver a balance between safety objectives for all road users and mobility objectives to ensure efficient travel, as well as environmental and community outcomes. Every effort should be made to achieve an appropriate balance between actual vehicle speeds, speed limits, road design and other measures. This balance may be delivered by introducing one or more speed management measures in conjunction with the new speed limits, and/or as part of an overall route safety strategy.

124. While routine enforcement should normally only be considered after other speed management measures have been considered, there may be occasions where the use of average speed cameras may offer a solution through calming traffic speed over a stretch of road.

Dual carriageway rural roads

125. Dual carriageway roads with segregated junctions and separate facilities for vulnerable road users are generally subject to and suitable for the national speed limit of 70mph. However, a lower limit may be appropriate if, for example, a collision history indicates that this speed cannot be achieved safely and this risk of collisions cannot be addressed through other engineering measures.

Single carriageway rural roads

126. In most instances, consideration of collision history, road function, mix of road users including presence of vulnerable road users, road geometry, engineering and environment and actual traffic speed should enable traffic authorities to determine the appropriate limit on single carriageway rural roads.

127. Roads may have primarily either a through traffic function or a local access function. Both need to be provided safely. Mobility benefits will be more important for roads with a through-traffic function, while environmental and community benefits are likely to be of greater importance for the local access roads.

128. There may be many roads below A and B classification that serve a mixed through-traffic and access function. Where that traffic function is currently being achieved without a high collision rate, these roads should be judged as through-traffic roads. If, however, for all or parts of these roads there is a substantial potential risk to vulnerable road users, these sections should be assessed as roads with a local access function.

129. Within routes, separate assessments should be made for each section of road of 600m or more for which a separate speed limit might be considered appropriate. When this is completed, the final choice of appropriate speed limit for individual sections might need to be adjusted to provide consistency over the route as a whole.

130. The choice of speed limits should take account of whether there is substantial roadside development and whether the road forms part of a recognised route for vulnerable road users, including whether there is a footway.

131. Table 2 sets out recommended speed limits for roads with a predominant motor traffic flow function. If walking, cycling, horse riding,

community or environmental factors are particularly important on any road section, consideration should be given to using the lower limit. For recommended speed limits in villages, see [Villages](#).

Table 2: speed limits for single carriageway roads with a predominant motor traffic flow function

Speed limit (mph)	Where limit should apply
60	Recommended for most high-quality strategic A and B roads with few bends, junctions or accesses.
50	Should be considered for lower quality A and B roads that may have a relatively high number of bends, junctions or accesses. Can also be considered where mean speeds are below 50mph, so lower limit does not interfere with traffic flow.
40	Should be considered where there are many bends, junctions or accesses, substantial development, a strong environmental or landscape reason, or where there are considerable numbers of vulnerable road users.

132. For C and unclassified roads with important access and recreational function, the following speed limits are deemed appropriate and traffic authorities should use these as guidance when reviewing the speed limits on these roads:

- the national speed limit of 60mph is only appropriate for the best quality C and Unclassified roads with a mixed function with few bends, junctions or accesses. In the longer term, these roads should be assessed against through-traffic criteria. For lower quality C and unclassified roads with a mixed function and high numbers of bends, junctions or accesses 50mph may be appropriate
- a speed limit of 40mph may be considered for roads with a predominantly local, access or recreational function, for example, in national parks or areas of outstanding natural beauty (AONB), or across, or adjacent to, unenclosed common land – or if they form part of a recommended route for vulnerable road users. It may also be appropriate if there is a particular collision problem

133. It is important to note that the above does not imply that speed limits should automatically be reduced. Indeed, in some cases, the assessment may suggest that the existing speed limit may be too low and a higher speed limit should be considered as it is likely to be achievable safely.

134. An earlier invitation to authorities to apply for zonal rural speed limits is now obsolete since authorities now have power to use the relevant signage without reference to DfT.

Villages

135. Fear of traffic can affect people's quality of life in villages and it is self-evident that villages should have comparable speed limits to similar roads in urban areas. It is, therefore, government policy that a 30mph speed limit should be the norm through villages.

136. It may also be appropriate to consider 20mph limits or zones in built-up village streets that are primarily residential in nature, or where pedestrian and cyclist movements are high, where there is a safety case and local support. Such limits should not, however, be considered on roads with a strategic function or where the movement of motor vehicles is the primary function.

137. [Traffic Advisory Leaflet 01/04 \(DfT, 2004\)](https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20120606202850/http://assets.dft.gov.uk/publications/tal-1-04/tal-1-04.pdf) (<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20120606202850/http://assets.dft.gov.uk/publications/tal-1-04/tal-1-04.pdf>) sets out policy on achieving lower speed limits in villages. It suggests that reasonable minimum criteria for the definition of what constitutes a village, for the purpose of applying a village speed limit of 30mph, would be that there were both:

- 20 or more houses (on one or both sides of the road)
- a minimum length of 600m

138. If there are just fewer than 20 houses, traffic authorities should make extra allowance for any other important buildings, such as a church, shop or school. 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.

139. The criteria above should give adequate visual messages to drivers to reduce their speed. It is recommended that the minimum length for the new limit is at least 600m to avoid too many changes in speed limits along a route and to aid compliance. Traffic authorities may, however, lower this to 400m when the level of development density over this shorter length exceeds the 20 or more houses criterion and, in exceptional circumstances, to 300m.

140. In some circumstances, it might be appropriate to consider an intermediate speed limit of 40mph prior to the 30mph terminal speed limit signs at the entrance to a village, in particular, where there are outlying

houses beyond the village boundary or roads with high approach speeds. For the latter, traffic authorities might also need to consider other speed management measures to support the message of the speed limit and help encourage compliance, so that no enforcement difficulties are created for the local police force. Where appropriate, such measures might include a vehicle-activated sign, centre hatching or other measures that would have the effect of narrowing or changing the nature and appearance of the road.

141. Where the speed limit commences at the village boundary, the village nameplate sign (prescribed in diagram 2402.1 of TSRGD 2016) and speed limit roundel may be mounted together. The combined sign should be located at the point where the speed limit starts and it may be helpful if drivers can see housing at the same time as the signs, reinforcing the visual message for reduced speed.

142. If there are high approach speeds to a village, or the start of the village is not obvious, village gateway treatments can also be an effective way to slow drivers down. Advice can be found in [Local transport note 1/07 Traffic Calming \(DfT, 2007\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/traffic-calming-ltn-107) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/traffic-calming-ltn-107>) and [Traffic Advisory Leaflets 01/94 VISP – A Summary \(DoT, 1994a\)](https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20090505152230/http://www.dft.gov.uk/adobepdf/165240/244921/244924/TAL_1-94) (https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20090505152230/http://www.dft.gov.uk/adobepdf/165240/244921/244924/TAL_1-94) and [01/04 Village Speed Limits \(DfT, 2004\)](https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20120606202850/http://assets.dft.gov.uk/publications/tal-1-04/tal-1-04.pdf) (<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20120606202850/http://assets.dft.gov.uk/publications/tal-1-04/tal-1-04.pdf>).

143. In situations where the above criteria for a village are not met and there is a lesser degree of development, or where engineering measures are not practicable or cost-effective to achieve a 30mph limit, but a reduction from the national 60mph speed limit is considered appropriate, traffic authorities should consider alternative lower limits of 40mph or 50mph.

144. A recommendation to use the framework for the assessment of speed limit options on rural single carriageway roads, in place since the publication of the previous Speed Limit Circular (01/2006), is withdrawn.

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All legislation is available at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/>
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Speed limit, signage and related legislation

Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016

[Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016: an overview](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/traffic-signs-regulations-and-general-directions-2016-an-overview)
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/traffic-signs-regulations-and-general-directions-2016-an-overview>)

Important speed limit and safety camera signs diagrams in Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions, (TSRGD) 2016, as amended, include:

- diagram 670 – ‘maximum speed limit’ sign
- diagram 671 – ‘national speed limits apply’
- diagrams 672 and 673 – start and end of minimum speed limits respectively
- diagrams 674 and 675A – entrance and end of 20mph ‘speed limit zone’ signs respectively
- diagrams 878 and 880 – ‘camera warning’ signs
- diagram 1065 – Carriageway roundel road marking
- diagram 2402.1 and 2403.1 – town or village gateway sign (boundary sign) (may be combined on the same post or backing board with a speed limit sign)
- diagram 7032 – temporary ‘New 30mph speed limit’ sign

The main directions for the use and placing of speed limit restrictions in TSRDG 2016, as amended, are:

- Schedule 10, Part 4, General Directions 1, 4 and 5 – beginning of speed limit restrictions
- Schedule 10, Part 4, General Directions 2 and 3 – placement of speed limit repeater signs
- Schedule 10, Part 4, General Direction 1 – speed limits of 20mph

- Part 2, General Directions 8 and 9, and Schedule 10, Part 4, General Direction 6 – mounting and backing of signs

Further detailed advice on the form and siting of speed limit signs is given in [Traffic signs manual – Chapter 3 – regulatory signs](#) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/traffic-signs-manual>).

Speed limits and speed limit orders

The [Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984](#) ([legislation.gov.uk](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)) (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1984/27/part/VI>) Part VI deals with speed limits.

[The Local Authorities' Traffic Orders \(Procedure\) \(England and Wales\) Regulations 1996](#) (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1996/2489/contents/made>) sets out the process of making traffic orders, which includes speed limit orders. Traffic authorities will need to refer to these regulations in full. Section 6 sets out the persons and organisations to be consulted before traffic orders are made.

The regulations also set out the requirements for publication of the proposal before making an order through a notice and further adequate publicity.

The [Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984](#) (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1984/27/schedule/9>) Schedule 9 Part III section 20 contains a requirement also to consult the Chief Officer of Police.

Traffic calming measures

Full consultation must take place before any traffic calming measures are installed. For road humps, the process is outlined in Regulation 3 of The Highways (Road Humps) Regulations 1999.

“The Act” refers to [Highways Act 1980](#) (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/66/contents>).

For all other traffic calming, the consultation process is outlined in Regulation 4 of [The Highways \(Traffic Calming\) Regulations 1999](#) (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1999/1026/contents/made>) (as amended).

Although there is no requirement to consult all the emergency services for traffic calming measures other than road humps, it is strongly recommended that both the ambulance service and the Fire and Rescue Service are included in any consultation for all traffic calming as a matter of course.



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