

Road Safety – Further information

20mph speed limits

What is a 20mph speed limit?

There are two different types of 20mph limits, the first is called a 'zone' which is designed to be 'self-enforcing' due to any traffic calming features (where necessary) that are introduced at the time of implementation. Any motorist, when driving off from being parked in the area, should know that they are within a 20mph zone as they cannot enter the area without passing the 20mph zone signs.

The second type of 20 is called a 'limit' and consists of just a 20mph speed limit change indicated by the speed limit (and repeater) signs.

The County Council receives many requests for 20mph speed limits. Every County interprets the use of 20mph speed limits differently. In Warwickshire 20mph speed limits have been used in town centres as part of larger schemes and have also been trialled in 5 villages in Warwickshire.

What is Warwickshire County Council's policy on 20mph speed limits?

It is not current Council priority to routinely seek to introduce 20mph speed limits. However there are special circumstances in which they could be considered. The Council's Speed Management Strategy is based upon the Department for Transport's (Circular 01/2006) guidance on setting local speed limits. It recognises that in certain circumstances 20mph limits can be considered. The DfT Circular 1/06 (para. 82) states that:

"Research into 20mph speed limits carried out by TRL (Mackie, 1998) showed that, where speed limits alone were introduced, reductions of only 2mph in 'before' speeds were achieved. 20mph speed limits are, therefore only suitable in areas where vehicle speeds are already low (the Department would suggest where mean vehicle speeds are 24mph or below), or where additional traffic calming measures are planned as part of the strategy"

Vehicle speeds in built up areas tend to be far higher than 24mph and 20mph limits are very difficult for the Police to enforce. As 20mph speed limits need to be self-enforcing, there is normally a need for additional traffic calming, which can be physically intrusive to communities and can have a negative environmental impacts such as an increase in noise pollution. Therefore, such schemes can be very costly and attract a great deal of complaints, especially from people living nearby.

What about existing 20mph speed limits in Warwickshire?

A trial scheme for 20mph speed limits was introduced in five villages in Warwickshire - Baddesley Ensor, Fenny Compton, Monks Kirby, Ryton-on-Dunsmore and Tanworth-in-Arden. The trials were to see if low speeds are sustainable in the villages over a period of time. They were not established in response to complaints about excessive speeds or the number of personal injury accidents in the five villages. The trials were also intended to establish whether 20mph speed limits can be effective merely by changing the speed limit signs (all five villages already had a 30 mph speed limit).

The traffic survey results for the five villages together with feedback from residents etc. supports national research and guidance from the Department of Transport (DfT), which indicates that not all places are suitable for very low speed limits. 20mph speed limits are also more likely to be observed in villages than on rural roads with few or no frontages.

Where can 20mph speed limits be considered?

A 20mph speed limit may only be considered when one or more of the following apply:

- where there is funding available to research and implement a scheme.
- where there is a benefit to vulnerable road users.
- where there is a justification in terms of safety.
- where existing low traffic speeds of 24mph or lower or where traffic calming can be installed.

Further information

Speed Management Strategy:

www.warwickshire.gov.uk/roadsafetyinfo

Circular 1/06 – setting local speed limits:

www2.dft.gov.uk/pgr/roadsafety/speedmanagement/dftcircular106/dftcircular106.pdf