
Meeting: Traffic Management Meeting
Date: 25th April 2013
Subject: North-east Dunstable - Consider Objections to Proposed 20mph Speed Limit Zones

Report of: Jane Moakes, Assistant Director Community Safety and Public Protection

Summary: This report seeks the approval of the Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Services for the introduction of 20mph speed limit zones in the North-East areas of Dunstable following the publication of proposals and a receipt of objections.

Contact Officer: Steve Hall
steve.hall@amey.co.uk

Public/Exempt: Public

Wards Affected: Dunstable Central, Manshead, Northfields and Icknield

Function of: Council

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

The proposal will improve road safety and promote cycling and walking.

Financial:

The cost of implementing this scheme in total will be approximately £30,000

Legal:

None from this report

Risk Management:

None from this report

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

None from this report

Equalities/Human Rights:

None from this report

Community Safety:

The proposal will reduce speed and improve safety for cyclists and pedestrians as well as amenity for all residents in the area.

Sustainability:

Implementation of this scheme may encourage people to walk or cycle instead of using less sustainable forms of transport.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the proposal to introduce 20mph Speed Limit Zones in the North-East areas of Dunstable be implemented as advertised.

Background and Information

1. Central Bedfordshire Council wishes to introduce 20mph speed limit in all of Dunstable's residential areas. The current scheme represents phases 3 and 4 in this process and would complete the project.
2. It is to be stressed that the creation of 20mph speed limited areas or zones within the residential areas of Dunstable was highlighted by elected members at the Local Area Transport Plan 3 consultation meetings as the highest priority alongside measures to tackle the rat running traffic through the area. These were thus included within the plan for Dunstable and adopted by the Council following the Local Area Transport Plan consultation process.
The Local Area Transport Plan for Dunstable is to be delivered over three years and covering the areas to the west of the A5 and then be implemented in the next few months as part of the 20mph zone is being brought forward together with proposals for the Lowther Road, Langdale Road, Meadway route scheme.
This action is considered to be a key component of tackling speeding and rat running through the residential areas of Dunstable in the interim period until the M1-A5 link road can be constructed to relieve the pressure of through traffic. This is still some years away.
3. In proposing to introduce 20mph speed limits into these two areas it is accepted that compliance will vary from the minor residential streets where speeds will already be low to the main routes through where driver behaviour is less likely to be sufficiently modified for full compliance.
4. In densely populated areas there is an increasing view that 30mph is too high a limit and there are now an increasing number of local authorities that are implementing residential area 20mph zones and limits. The introduction of a 20mph speed limit across the entire area will send a clear message to drivers that this is a residential area and whilst they are welcome there they should reduce their speed for the benefit of residents.

5. In general the posting of reduced speed limits on its own has been shown to only have a limited effect on driver behaviour with typically only a one or two mph reduction in speeds. In the case of western Dunstable however the main routes through the area will also receive some targeted traffic calming and traffic management features that will further reduce speeds at the more sensitive locations such as junctions, near schools and key crossing points.
It is considered that this through route is likely to be the one where excess speed will be an issue with speeds in the smaller residential streets already close to or at acceptable limits.
6. Whilst this is not a guarantee that the overall route speed will be reduced to 20mph it will reinforce the message. Revised DfT guidance on 20mph zones has also recently reduced the requirement for the number and type of physical features required to reinforce 20mph zones allowing instead the greater use of road markings and less invasive features to support the lower speed limit.
7. The proposed 20mph speed limit zones were formally advertised by public notice in February 2013. Consultations were carried out with the emergency services and other statutory bodies, Dunstable Town Council and Elected Members. Public notices were also posted on-street.
8. A total of 7 representations have been received, 5 of which are opposed to the advertised proposals. Copies of all representations are included in Appendix E and the comments are summarised below. In addition, Bedfordshire Police have not provided a formal response.
9. The main points raised by those objecting to the proposed 20mph speed limit are as follows:-
 - a) It is questionable whether they will reduce actual vehicle speeds, so it is doubtful whether the 20mph speed limits would promote road safety.
 - b) Speeds in many of the side streets are already below 20mph, so it will not achieve anything.
 - c) There is little prospect of any Police enforcement.
 - d) Some respondents would prefer 20mph speed limits to be confined to the areas outside schools, possibly only in force at the start and end of the school day.
 - e) Funding could be better spent on other Council services, notably on highways maintenance work, rather than new schemes.
 - f) There was insufficient publicity of the proposals.

Responses and Conclusion

10. Bedfordshire Highways' response to the specific points listed above are as follows :-
- a) Research suggests that 20mph limits are successful in reducing actual vehicle speeds, albeit with varying degrees of success. If a reasonable proportion of drivers adhere to the 20mph limit, then it should improve road safety. We would expect lower vehicle speeds to reduce the number of collisions and should reduce the severity of any collisions that do occur.
 - b) It is true that vehicle speeds in some streets are already below 20mph. However, speeds in other roads are higher and it is hoped that a statutory limit will help reduce those to acceptable levels. In many respects it is desirable if speeds are already in the region of 20-25mph as that suggests that any new limit will be seen by drivers as reasonable and would be relatively self-enforcing.
 - c) It is accepted that the Police are unlikely to carry out regular enforcement because Government advice is that 20mph limits should be self-enforcing and not place a heavy burden on the Police.
 - d) There are a number of examples across Central Bedfordshire where 20mph limits have been introduced outside schools and these work reasonably well. However, there is a trend towards using 20mph zones on a more widespread basis, particularly in larger urban areas, and this is being positively encouraged by central Government.
 - e) The Council allocates significant funding to maintaining its roads, but it also has a legal and moral responsibility to promote road safety. The introduction of 20mph speed limits is relatively inexpensive compared to physical traffic restraint measures and is seen as a cost-effective way of making roads safer.
 - f) The proposed speed limits were advertised in the Luton and Dunstable Express and also on street notices in the area. Elected Members and the Town Council were also consulted. Letters were not sent to individual households, primarily due to the very high numbers of properties involved. A large number of street notices were displayed in the area.
11. In conclusion, it is considered that the proposed 20mph speed limit zones together with some targeted traffic calming features will reduce speeds and bring road safety benefits. Lower speeds will improve the local environment and promote walking and cycling. Therefore, it is recommended that the scheme be approved for implementation as advertised.

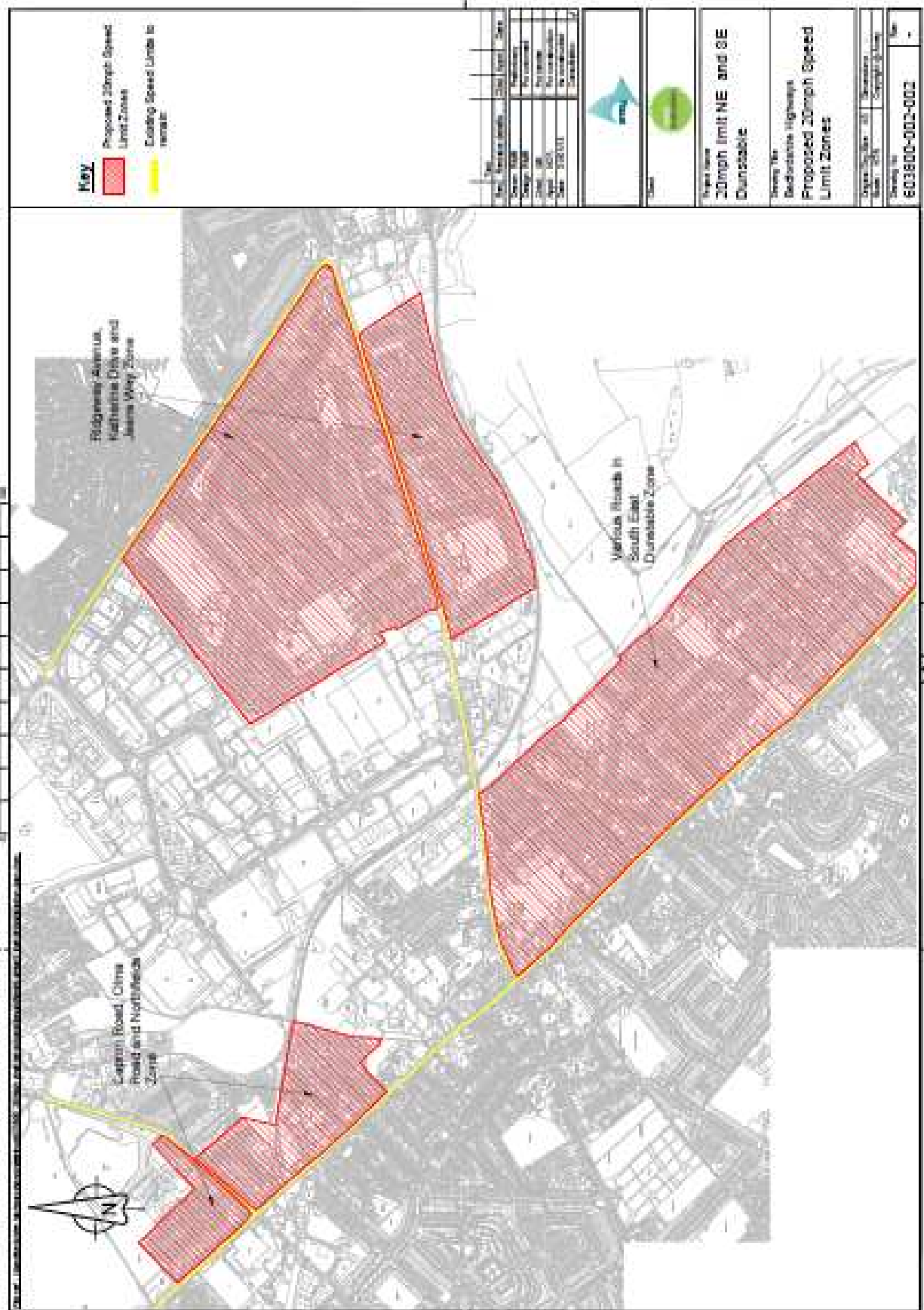
Appendices:

Appendix A – Drawing of Proposed 20mph Speed Limit Zones

Appendix B – Public Notice for Proposed 20mph Speed Limit Zones

Appendix C – Objections and representations

Appendix A



PUBLIC NOTICE

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL PROPOSES TO INTRODUCE A 20MPH SPEED LIMIT ZONE IN VARIOUS ROADS IN DUNSTABLE

Reason for proposal: The proposed Order is considered necessary on the grounds of promoting road safety. The 20mph Zones are intended to reduce the speed of vehicles in residential areas and improve safety for all road users. This will also improve the quality of the environment and help promote walking and cycling.

Effect of the Order

To introduce a 20mph Speed Limit Zone on the following roads in Dunstable:-

CAPRON ROAD, OLMA ROAD AND NORTHFIELDS ZONE

- Ashton Road
- Capron Road
- Crabtree Way
- Falcon Close
- George Street
- Gilpin Street
- Northfields
- Olma Road
- Park Street
- Printers Way
- Readers Close
- Sheridan Close
- Tavistock Street

RIDGEWAY AVENUE, KATHERINE DRIVE AND JEANS WAY ZONE

- Allenby Avenue
- Bradreth Avenue
- Buckwood Avenue
- Calcutt Close
- Carterways
- Chalk Acres
- Cresta Close
- Dale Close

- Dale Road
- Duncombe Drive
- Evelyn Road
- Fairfield Close
- Fairfield Road
- Goldstone Crescent
- Gorham Way
- Hadrian Avenue
- Highfield Close
- Holliwick Road
- Holmwood Close
- Jeans Way
- Katherine Drive
- Kingsbury Avenue
- Kingsbury Gardens
- Lambs Close
- Linden Close
- Linden Road
- Liscombe Road
- Lockington Crescent
- Lundun Road
- Markham Crescent
- Millers Lay
- Monks Close
- Parrot Close
- Pyders Lane
- Ridgeway Avenue
- Ridgeway Drive

- St Christopher's Close
- The Crest
- The Retreat
- Thornbury
- Walgrave Road
- Western Way
- Wilbury Drive
- Wingate Road
- Woodford Road

- King Street
- Long Hedge
- Lovers' Walk
- Oak Close
- Park Road
- Priory Road
- Richard Street
- St Peter's Road
- Station Road
- Apollo Close
- Brive Road
- Chichester Close
- Graham Road
- Hillside Road
- Jardine Way
- Lincoln Close
- Mayfield Avenue
- Morcom Road
- Mountview Avenue
- New Woodfield Green
- Norcott Close
- Norfolk Road
- Oakwood Avenue
- Southwood Road
- Suffolk Road
- Sundown Avenue
- Woodfield Gate

VARIOUS ROADS IN SOUTH-EAST DUNSTABLE

- Albert Court
- Alfred Street
- Allen Close
- Ash Grove
- Barton Avenue
- Bigthan Road
- Blows Road
- Borough Road
- Britain Street
- Downs Road
- Englands Lane
- Great Northern Road
- Grove Road
- Half Moon Lane
- Howard Place

Further Details of the proposed Orders, a plan and a statement of reasons for proposing to make the Orders may be examined during normal opening hours at Dunstable Library, Vernon Place, Dunstable, LU5 4HA. These details will be placed on deposit until 6 weeks after the Order is made or until it is decided not to continue with the proposal. Please contact Steve Hall on 0845 3656124 or e-mail steve.hall@amey.co.uk for further advice on this proposal.

Objections should be sent in writing to the Transportation Manager, Bedfordshire Highways, Woodlands Annex, Manton Lane, Bedford MK41 7NU or by e-mail to centralbedsconsultation@amey.co.uk stating the grounds on which they are made by 8th March 2013.

Order Titles: If made will be "Central Bedfordshire Council (20mph Speed Limit Zone) (Capron Road, Olma Road and Northfields Area, Dunstable) Order 201*"; Central Bedfordshire Council (20mph Speed Limit Zone) (Ridgeway Avenue, Katherine Drive and Jeans Way Area, Dunstable) Order 201*"; and Central Bedfordshire Council (20mph Speed Limit Zone) (Various Roads in South-east Dunstable) Order 201*.

Technology House
239 Ampthill Road
Bedford MK42 9QQ

Gary Alderson
Director of Sustainable Communities

13th February 2013

Appendix C

I am a fellow Councillor for the Town Council Ward of Icknield, and a member of Central Beds Council for Linslade, coincidentally, AND I am a driving instructor by profession. Despite the latter, I would like to 100% support my colleague Terry's objection to the proposals. My reasoning is thus: if people don't obey 30mph limits, why are they *more* likely to obey 20mph limits? This will not change the behaviour of people who routinely race around in residential roads, speeding despite the fact that they are already saving time by rat-running, and who are the cause of the majority of accidents. Platforms are ineffective because such people are unconcerned about their suspension, and may drive all the faster inbetween them.

The people who will 'suffer' are the majority of people who drive reasonably well in residential roads. I don't see why they should be criminalised for doing, say, 25 mph in such roads. What causes accidents is driving too fast for the conditions, i.e, some 30mph roads are already self-enforcing 20mph zones, whereas on others 30mph is too slow, e.g. Boscombe Road. I agree wholeheartedly with Cllr Stock that better enforcement of the existing 30mph limits is better, and I think that spending tens of £1000s on this will be a waste of money, and better spent elsewhere, or on 30mph enforcement. I have it on good authority that the police cannot/will not enforce 20mph zones, and that they achieve on average a 1mph reduction in average speeds, and that is really what 20 zones are in aid of. Why should so much public money be spent on this scheme for so little benefit?

And what am I supposed to do as a muggins driving instructor? It will be more dangerous and unpleasant to drive around than it already is. Trying to get my pupils to stick to 20mph will increase the level of aggression from other road users, and make them more likely to attempt risky overtaking manoeuvres in their annoyance. It won't just be the boy racers, it'll be more of the otherwise law-abiding people too. How can I justify the 20mph limit, and engender a respect for speed limits in general, when even the police won't obey it? I get this problem all the time in similar areas like Farley Hill in Luton.

I recently heard that one of my pupils, when asked to perform an emergency stop during their test, and in a 20 zone at the time, was actually requested to speed up to approx 25mph by the examiner, to make it more realistic. That says it all. Modern cars have better brakes anyway, being universally fitted with ABS and sometimes with quite sophisticated brake force distribution systems. There are so many areas of Luton that have blanket 20mph limits, and increasingly in Leighton Buzzard too, that with Luton pupils in particular I often take them to Icknield Ward to practice emergency stops, e.g. Wilbury Drive. It's convenient because I have to teach them the Tesco roundabout already, as it's on some of the test routes. By the way, I have long wished to meet with someone at Amey/CBC to discuss the road markings there, which are still routinely ignored or misunderstood by many road users, making it dangerous for my pupils.

I have my doubts about the value of this consultation, as CBC's Traffic Management Committee is a Committee of 1 person - Cllr Spurr - and he had already officially decided to proceed with similar schemes in other 'quarters' of Dunstable, despite my making similar representations to him at said Committee. However, I hope you will at least see where I am coming from, and take the views of Ward members into account.

Thank you for your kind attention.

I am writing both as a resident and as a Dunstable Town Councillor representing the area described as Ridgeway Ave, Katherine Drive, and Jeansway Zone (also known as Icknield Ward)

I dislike 20mph blanket bans on principle, preferring enforcement of the existing speed limits which have served us for many years. However, that, in all probability, will not be the preferred option and the 20mph speed limit will be implemented.

The 20mph limit will require enforcement and I presume that this might be done by the use of "platforms" or "cushions" such as have been installed in Linslade. Now to these I have a real objection in that, due to the angle of the ramps they give a very uncomfortable ride at whatever approach speed is used (remembering that residents will have to drive over them several times a day) and I shudder to think of the long term effect on vehicle suspensions. It would, I think, be preferable to consider the use of vehicle actuated signs displaying speed which do seem to be effective.

As the speed limit is being imposed to "improve safety" I would be pleased to receive the statistics for road accidents etc. that the proposed measures are designed to improve.

I look forward to your reply

I hope Poynters road is included in the proposed 20 MPH speed reduction in the area surrounding Poynters road .

A 20 MPH speed limit may encourage traffic to travel at 30 MPH as opposed to the 40+ MPH we have to contend with.

Poynters road is a none classified road as is the other road on the proposed list.

Safety is equally important on this road as we have no barriers and hardly any crossing points.

The centre bollards are frequently destroyed as road width is narrow.

It is not A or B road.

Thank you

I think this is pointless applying a 20 zone to any roads which are close's, especially ones like Allen Close where you can barely get to 20 anyway. Waste of money on signs. Plus you're not exactly going to be able to enforce all of the back streets in Dunstable.

We agree with the introduction of 20 mph. as we in Ridgeway Avenue have been campaigning for traffic calming for over 15 years. We have had the support of Dunstable Council but not the support of Beds. council. For a couple of years now we have had a post installed with a light that tells drivers to slow down and most ignore it. The police did a week check and over a third would have been prosecuted for going over 35mph. And some as fast as 70mph. It begs the question how 20mph will be enforced.???

I understand that you will be imposing speed restrictions on roads in my local area. I oppose these measures as it appears you are using a scatter gun approach to public safety. Can I ask how many road traffic accidents have occurred on Walgrave Road, last year, last decade, or ever? Your imposing of speed restrictions should be evidence based and for certain should be around schools etc. and what about the main roads, such as Dunstable road and Poynters road, these carry significant HGV traffic and I would highly recommend that these are reduced to 20 or even 15 mph.

Your speed restrictions should be evidence / data driven not the lazy scatter gun approach you seem to have taken

Dear Sir,

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL PROPOSAL TO INTRODUCE
A 20MPH SPEED LIMIT ZONE IN VARIOUS ROADS IN DUNSTABLE

I wish to register my objection to the above named Order. My reason for objecting is that the proposed speed limit is unrealistic and unjustified for the roads in question. I also intend to show that the proposed limit contravenes the advice given by central Government on the setting of speed limits. I note the Council's statement of reasons for proposing the Order to be as follows:

"The proposed Order is considered necessary on the grounds of promoting road safety. The 20mph Zones are intended to reduce the speed of vehicles in residential areas and improve safety for all road users. This will also improve the quality of the environment and help promote walking and cycling."

It is a fallacy to believe that reducing a speed limit will automatically result in lower speeds. The Department of Transport Circular Roads 1/93, on the use of local speed limits, contains the following statements and advice:

Paragraph 5 — *"Specific speed limits cannot, on their own, be expected to reduce vehicle speed if they are set at a level substantially below that at which drivers would choose to drive in the absence of a limit."*

Paragraph 6.4 — *"Speed limits should be lowered only when a consequent reduction in vehicle speed can reasonably be expected. A survey of traffic speeds should indicate whether a lower limit will, in the absence of regular enforcement, be likely to result in lower actual speed."*

These statements reflect the results of experience and research on the effectiveness of speed limits, gathered over many years in the UK and abroad. It has been found repeatedly that when unrealistic speed limits are raised to sensible levels, not only do speeds not rise but they may actually fall, as may accidents. The previous guidance on the setting of local speed limits, Circular Roads 1/80, contains information on UK experience of the effects of altering speed limits, as Annex E to that Circular. I attach a copy for information. Although the Circular itself has now been superseded, the experience on the effects of speed limits remains valid. There is a real possibility, therefore, that if an existing speed limit is lowered to a level which is unrealistic for the environment of the road in question, speeds and accidents could actually rise.

Annex A to the Circular Roads 1/93 contains descriptions of the types of roads for which different speed limits are appropriate. Whilst I accept that a 20 mph may be appropriate near the schools in