

ESSEX SPEED MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks views on Essex County Council's draft Speed Management Strategy.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The draft strategy outlines the County Council's overall objectives for speed management and details the actions that will be taken to deliver these objectives. Comments on the draft are required by 31 January 2003 and it is anticipated that the final strategy will be put before full Council on 6 May 2003.
- 2.2 The draft strategy is a relatively short document and therefore a full version of the text is appended to this report.

3 SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 3.1 The key elements of the proposals included in the draft strategy are:
- To develop further the safety camera partnership with Essex Police as part of an effective enforcement regime
 - To increase vehicle speeds during peak periods on key radial and inter-urban roads to reduce congestion
 - To improve safety for all road users by increasing the proportion of vehicles adhering to the speed limits
 - To introduce measures to reduce speeds outside schools
 - To use new technology to increase driver awareness of speed
 - To introduce home zones, reduced local speed limits, quiet lanes, etc.
 - To review the speed limits in all towns and villages

4 DISCUSSION

- 4.1 Overall, it is considered that there is little to disagree with in the proposed strategy document. There is no doubt though that the full sum of the actions proposed will require significant investment of resources. For example, the document admits that while Home Zones can be very effective, they are expensive and time consuming to develop.
- 4.2 The strategy does concentrate on key areas where speed puts pedestrians and cyclists at most risk, including schools frontages, village centres and so on. Efforts to reduce speed in these locations should be positively supported.
- 4.3 On the other hand, it is considered that there should be an element of caution in spending significant sums of money on new technology to raise awareness and warn drivers they are speeding. There is no doubt that a balance must be struck between the range and types of measures introduced to control speeding, particularly in sensitive areas, but cash spent on 'warnings' might be better spent on specific measures to control speeds more effectively in the first place.

5 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Speed is an issue of great concern for many residents, particularly in sensitive areas such as town and village centres, close to schools, etc.

6 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Controls over speed in urban locations can reduce the impact of air pollution. In broad terms people feel safer in an environment away from speeding traffic.

7 RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES:**

That, subject to comments from Members, the County be advised of this Council's support for the key principles outlined in the draft Speed Management Strategy for Essex. (HPS)

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Background Papers: None

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APPENDIX

DRAFT SPEED MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Objectives

1 To facilitate the efficient and safe movement of people and goods whilst protecting or enhancing the quality of life within communities

To achieve this we will:

- Continue to work closely with Essex Police and magistrates courts to provide a strong and effective enforcement regime via the Safety Camera Partnership at sites meeting the agreed national criteria
- Aim to increase average vehicle speeds during peak periods on key radial and interurban routes (i.e. reduce congestion)
- Aim to improve safety for all travellers
- Investigate the use of appropriate measures to reduce speeds outside school frontages and on well used routes to school
- Actively support the use of new technology to increase driver awareness or compliance within speed limits
- Support the objectives of the Road Safety Strategy

2 To encourage traffic to use roads appropriately

To achieve this we will:

- Lobby Central Government to expedite the production of the Guidance detailing the criteria for the introduction of a rural road hierarchy and covering rural speed limits, as indicated in the Transport Act 2000
- Invite the Chief Constable of Essex Police to discuss the need for, and priorities given to, speed enforcement outside the Essex Safety Camera Partnership
- Continue to work with other departments and organisations to support the introduction of Home Zones in urban communities where there is a high level of community support, in streets or areas where there is no need for non-community through traffic

- Facilitate the development of a policy governing the introduction of Quiet Lanes on appropriate roads to extend and link individual lengths of public rights of way to form a cohesive leisure network
- Develop and positively sign HGV routes in accordance with the Freight Distribution Strategy with the aim of keeping lorries on key radial and inter-urban routes for the majority of their journey.

3 To achieve a consistent approach to signing speed limits based on the function of the route

To achieve this:

- We will undertake a comprehensive review of all urban and village speed limits based on the intended function of the route.
- We will implement all speed limits in accordance with agreed policies so as to protect the integrity of the speed limit sign as a speed reducing feature.

THE STRATEGY

OBJECTIVE 1 - To facilitate the efficient and safe movement of people and goods whilst protecting or enhancing the quality of life within communities.

POLICY

- 1 We will continue to work closely with Essex Police and magistrates courts to provide a strong and effective enforcement regime via the Safety Camera Partnership at sites meeting the agreed national criteria.**

ACTIONS

- 1.1 We will review the enforcement strategy of the partnership on an annual basis to facilitate the optimum deployment of cameras.
- 1.2 We will monitor the effect of camera enforcement on speed related injury accidents on an annual basis to determine the contribution played by camera enforcement in achieving the overall accident reduction target as outlined in "Tomorrow's Roads Safer for Everyone"

POLICY

2 We will increase average vehicle speeds during peak periods on identified key radial and inter-urban routes (i.e. reduce congestion)

The purpose of increasing average vehicle speeds on key radial and interurban routes during peak hours is to attract drivers to stay on these routes rather than to seek alternative routes through residential areas. This will improve air quality and improve quality of life in the residential area as well as contributing to a reduction in vehicle emissions on the key routes if vehicles maintain a constant speed. This will also reduce volumes on unsuitable routes thereby encouraging cycling and walking as an alternative mode of transport in the urban area. A summary of the congestion relief plan is contained in Appendix 2

ACTIONS

- 2.1 We will identify through liaison with District/Borough councils a traffic distribution network, which will comprise routes identified as having a traffic distribution function and which will include key radial and inter-urban routes.
- 2.2 We will keep the identified traffic distribution network, including emergency service 'Green Wave' routes, free from physical speed reducing measures. Once identified these routes will be plotted on a digital mapping system to facilitate the management of the County network.
- 2.3 Where choices need to be made on roads forming the traffic distribution network, the efficient movement of motorised vehicles will be maintained.
- 2.4 Roads forming the identified traffic distribution network will be given priority for maintenance and accident reduction funding.

POLICY

3 To improve safety for all travellers

The current A and B classification roads provide the main distribution function in Essex. These roads comprise approximately 20% of the entire road network but approximately 60% of injury accidents occur on them. Where it is identified that accidents could be reduced by improving the surface, alignment or signing or by redirecting certain classes of vehicle, funding is made available to ensure improvements such that the desired function of the route can be fulfilled in safety. On

local roads in the urban area and in villages, the safety of all road users must be protected. Appropriate speed limits should be supported by engineering measures and the enforcement of the legal limit.

ACTIONS

- 3.1 We will monitor the effect of this strategy to determine whether it is contributing proportionally to the national targets set for road accident and casualty reductions as stated in the Local Transport Plan.
- 3.2 We will increase the proportion of vehicles adhering to local and national speed limits to reduce risks to non motorised road users.

POLICY

- 4 To investigate the use of appropriate measures to reduce speeds outside school frontages.**

ACTIONS

- 4.1 We will encourage Central Government to produce national guidelines for the treatment of areas outside schools.
- 4.2 We will investigate the use of cost effective engineering measures designed to increase driver awareness and improve compliance.
- 4.3 We will monitor the effect of decriminalised parking enforcement on the road environment outside schools.
- 4.4 We will continue to support the implementation of Safer Journeys to School projects.

POLICY

- 5 To investigate the appropriateness of new technology to increase driver awareness or compliance within speed limits.**

ACTIONS

- 5.1 We will actively support appropriate research into new technology to reduce vehicle speeds, focussing towards rigorous enforcement of speed limits with total information to the driver to encourage compliance. A current project, known as 'Probe It' aims to develop a position related dynamic in-car information system that will provide drivers with information including speed restrictions, warning signs and advice on approach speeds to certain hazards. The County Council is providing test data to this project.

- 5.2 We will investigate the appropriateness of Variable message signs designed to increase speed limit compliance and trial suitable signs at specific locations to evaluate their value.
- 5.3 We will continue to evaluate evolving technologies such as variable speed limits and speed activated signs to determine appropriate use, cost effectiveness and their effect on driver behaviour.

POLICY

6 To support the objectives of the Road Safety Strategy

ACTION

- 6.1 We will support appropriate national and local campaigns to increase awareness of speed related issues.
- 6.2 We will actively promote the regional 'Commitment' Campaign which asks individuals, parishes and other organisations to make a pledge to respect speed limits.
- 6.3 Working with other authorities in the region, we will promote the For my Girlfriend Campaign which targets young male drivers, who are still over represented in accidents where speed is a contributory factor.
- 6.4 We will continue to develop the theme of speed and its relationship with accidents in the educational work done with schools for young drivers and with those who influence them.

OBJECTIVE 2 - To promote the appropriate use of the different types of road and environment.

POLICY

- 7 Essex County Councillors will lobby Central Government to expedite the production of the guidance detailing the criteria for the introduction of a rural road hierarchy and covering rural speed limits, as indicated in the Transport Act 2000.**

ACTIONS

- 7.1 Essex County Council will encourage central government to introduce a 40mph default speed limit on all rural unclassified and classified unnumbered roads. Speed limits on A and B roads should be engineered to be safe at current signed speed limits.

- 7.2 The County Council will encourage Essex Police to give higher priority to speed enforcement outside the Essex Safety Camera Partnership.
- 7.3 We will continue to work with other departments and organisations to support the introduction of Home Zones in appropriate areas.

It must be recognised that a Home Zone is more than a speed limit or a traffic calmed area. It is not an 'anti-car' area but changes priority so that the motor vehicle no longer dominates the street environment. It is intended to 'give an area back' to the community/ to encourage the use of the streets as an extension of the living area. Any engineering work must be of a design standard and quality so as to enhance the environment thereby encouraging community ownership. To achieve this, Home Zones are necessarily expensive and time consuming to implement but have can have significant benefits for the residents of areas requiring regeneration including addressing some of the problems associated with social exclusion. In new developments the Home Zone ideal can be used to create close knit community relationships.

- 7.4 We will support the introduction of Home Zones in:
- urban communities where there is a high level of support and regeneration.
 - in streets or areas where there is no need for non-community through traffic.
 - In urban areas where there is a high incident of injury accidents particularly involving children.

POLICY

- 8 We will facilitate the development of a policy governing the introduction of Quiet Lanes on appropriate roads.**

ACTIONS

- 8.1 We will work in partnership with the parishes to identify those routes where the traffic volumes and road environment are such that the road would meet the criteria to achieve designation as a Quiet Lane.
- 8.2 We will examine the possibilities of using Quiet Lanes to extend and link individual lengths of public rights of way to form a cohesive leisure network.

POLICY

- 9 We will develop and positively sign HGV routes in accordance with the Freight Distribution Strategy with the aim of keeping lorries on key radial and inter-urban routes for the majority of their journey.**

The intention of a signed HGV route network is to provide a good, clear network for the distribution of goods and to encourage lorries to use the roads designated as distributor routes as these will be maintained to a higher standard than local routes. If HGV drivers are provided with informative, accurate and consistent signing to their destination along routes which are intended to accommodate higher volumes and speeds than local roads, it is more likely that they will use these routes rather than seek alternatives through urban or rural communities.

ACTION

- 9.1 We will develop a network of HGV routes that we will link with the traffic distribution network to enable freight to travel at appropriate speeds . We will sign the routes and produce maps for HGV drivers and operatives.
- 9.2 Essex County Council will support the removal of differential speed limits for HGVs subject to the implementation of action 7.1.

POLICY

- 10 We will implement 20mph zones in appropriate areas in accordance with our policies**
- 10.1 The existing policy on the implementation of 20 mph Zones will be updated and re-issued as part of the good practice guide for speed management measures.

OBJECTIVE 3 - To achieve a consistent approach to signing speed limits based on the function of the route.

POLICY

- 11 We will undertake a comprehensive review of all urban and village speed limits based on the intended function of the route.**

ACTION

- 11.1 We will identify and record existing speed limits on a digital map based system that will be used as the basis for the review. This system will be used to draft future network hierarchies, to supply data to the next

generation of in car guidance systems and to facilitate interaction between other networks such as the winter maintenance programme.

POLICY

- 12. We will implement all speed limits in accordance with agreed policies so as to protect the integrity of the speed limit sign as a speed reducing feature.**

The hard engineering features such as red surfacing, road roundels, dragon's teeth are very visually intrusive in the rural environment. We wish to enable villages to create an identifiable boundary but without resorting to measures that are more at home in an urban environment. Parish councils have increasingly requested the ability to design their own "soft" gateway features. The practise of regulating the gateway signing may have stifled the ability for Essex villages to develop an identifiable local boundary. The change in policy is hoped to enable the development of different styles and distinctive local features.

4 ACTIONS

- 12.1 We will introduce engineering measures on an incremental basis to support appropriate speed limits. Any new limit will therefore normally be implemented using only the speed limit signs in the first instance. Additional recognised measures will only be implemented if monitoring shows that the required level of compliance is not being achieved. The effect of each individual measure will require monitoring to determine what measures are effective.
- 12.2 We will use yellow backing boards only where necessary to highlight entry to a lower speed limit or a hazard at an accident location. Their usefulness has been eroded by inappropriate use. An audit of existing boards will be undertaken to ensure that the criteria for placement is met. Boards not meeting the criteria will be removed from signs when they need to be replaced.
- 12.3 We will sign the speed limit within urban areas at a maximum of 30mph except for identified key radial routes having no frontage access to property and suitable alternative facilities for cyclists and pedestrians.
- 12.4 We will restrict the speed limit to 20mph within recognised urban communities where there is a high level of pedestrian or cyclist movement or potential for increasing such movements and there is significant support from that community.
- 12.5 We will implement a 30mph speed limit in every village that requests one providing that it meets the definition detailed below.

In villages, residents' perception of the danger posed by vehicle speeds appears to be the driving force behind calls for lower speed limits. The County Council accepts that some residents do not want the national speed limit applied to their village. However, it is also recognised that some residents dislike the types of engineering measures required to slow traffic including the signs required to inform drivers of the speed limit itself. It is accepted that in many instances the use of speed limit signs alone is unlikely to achieve any significant reduction in speeds, however, in order to protect the unique rural identity of the village, speed limit signs will be used as the first single measure to determine whether driver compliance can be achieved.

- 12.6 We will define a "Village" as the extent of continuous development on both sides of the road or continued development extended on one side of the road which appears obvious to the driver as being a community and where they may be likely to encounter some movement of walkers, cyclists or horse riders.

There will be situations where a speed limit is requested but the above definition of a village is not met. In order to offer an improved quality of life for all, certain identified exceptions to the agreed definition may be authorised by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Highways and Transportation Services. (appendix 1)

- 12.7 We will follow agreed procedures for considering the implementation of 30mph speed limits in rural areas not fulfilling the definition of a village (see appendix 1).
- 12.8 We will encourage parish communities, in consultation with the appropriate area office or district council, to design, implement and maintain entry treatments that are individual and allow a local distinctiveness of style in order to increase drivers' awareness of the community.
- 12.9 We will support parishes with existing "standard" gateway treatments who wish to finance more individual features.
- 12.10 We will produce clear guidance to Borough/District/Parish Councils on the types of measures permitted as gateway features and the legislation under which they may be installed this will form part of the good practice guide on the introduction of speed management measures.