

Vehicle Speed Policy

Version 1: August 2022

Introduction and Background

1. Ashford is a caring council, where the needs of residents come first, and this is a key pillar of our corporate plan. Road safety, and ensuring effective speed management, is an important part of creating a safe environment for us all. The relationship between speed and likelihood of collision as well as severity of injury is complex, but there is clearly a strong correlation.
2. The setting of speed limits is primarily a government responsibility and in the case of residential streets in both urban and rural areas the national 30mph speed limit is normally applied. This national limit is not, however, appropriate for all roads. Traffic authorities, in our case Kent County Council (KCC), are able to set local speed limits in situations where local needs and conditions suggest a speed limit which is different from the national speed limit. It is believed, however, that the Borough Council has a part to play in supporting the application of lower speed limits and generally promoting road safety.
3. Lower speed limits are supported by many bodies including the World Health Organisation. The UN General Assembly recently mandated 20mph as the right speed limit where people and motor vehicles mix. By travelling at 20mph, instead of 30mph, pedestrians and cyclists are five times more likely to survive being hit by a motorised vehicle. Further reductions of just 1mph can each reduce casualties further by an average of 6%.
4. Latest data for killed or serious injured (KSI) collisions in Kent districts indicates that Ashford's rate per 10k people ranks mid-table for KSIs. It also shows that the percentage change in KSI rate has increased over the last 12 months by 15%, an increase that represents the second highest increase in the county.
5. Studies have shown that 20mph schemes help to encourage active travel by increasing walking and cycling levels. What is more, 20mph schemes are popular with the general public and we see schemes being implemented in many towns and villages across the country.
6. It is our belief that the national limit of 30mph in our residential streets in urban and rural areas is not always appropriate, and that in many situations a lower limit of 20mph would be beneficial. We note in particular the frequently raised concerns over speed limits within the vicinity of schools and when approaching our rural villages, where limits may be even higher.
7. We note and applaud KCC who have been successful in introducing many 20mph speed limits across Kent and note that there are more than 1500 roads in Kent with a 20mph zone or limit including some within Ashford.
8. There are on average just over 45 deaths on Kent's roads each year. KCC has set a target of zero (or as close as possible) fatalities and life changing injuries by 2050 with a 50% reduction by 2030 and a target of no more than 39 traffic fatalities by 2026. Vision Zero is not just about focussing on the date we achieve zero, but the recognition that deaths on the road are not an acceptable price to pay for mobility.

9. A key element of the Ashford Vehicle Speed Policy is to support KCC actions towards its Vision Zero.
10. KCC's Vision Zero Road Safety Strategy can be found at [Vision Zero Road Safety Strategy - Kent County Council](#).
11. It is hoped that further schemes will be introduced across the Borough and that this Ashford Vehicle Speed Policy will encourage this to happen.

The Policy

12. That

- Proposals from Town, Community and Parish Councils to introduce lower speed limits in urban areas and villages where there is an identified demand for safer and vulnerable road users, be supported.
- The introduction of 30mph speed limits through all our villages that meet the relevant Department for Transport and Kent Highways criteria, be supported.
- The introduction of lower 20mph speed limits on the approach to certain rural villages wherever appropriate and where it meets the necessary road safety criteria, be supported.
- The introduction of 20mph speed limits on the approaches to, or in the vicinity of, schools wherever appropriate and where the circumstances meet the necessary road safety criteria, be supported.
- The introduction of 20mph speed limits in areas where people and motorists meet or are in close proximity, e.g. the Ashford Shared Space arrangement, be supported.
- The KCC Vision Zero Road Safety Strategy be supported.
- The Council will work with partner organisations to publicise the changes in the Highway Code and promote new enhanced duty of care that road users owe to more vulnerable road users.
- Funds be made available from the Improvement Delivery Fund to assist supporting approved schemes. This to receive oversight from the Regeneration, Improvement and Infrastructure Co-ordination Board.

Additional information

13. Road safety is relevant to the council's Corporate Plan 2022-24 i.e. the Caring Ashford priority theme.
14. The corporate plan makes a commitment to work with KCC to use the safe systems approach (including safer speeds and behaviours) to improve the safety of all road users particularly near schools and in rural areas. This Vehicle Speed Policy builds on that commitment.
15. The policy is also relevant to the Green Pioneer priority theme.

Highway Code

16. Also relevant to this subject is the Hierarchy of Road Users that has been introduced to the Highway Code to ensure that those road users who can do the greatest harm have the greatest responsibility to reduce the danger or threat they may pose to other road users. This hierarchy is in the order of which road users are most likely to be harmed in the event of a collision as follows:-

- Pedestrians (including children, older adults and disabled people)
- Cyclists
- Horse riders
- Motorcyclists
- Cars/taxis
- Vans/minibuses
- Large passenger vehicles/heavy goods vehicles

17. The Hierarchy does not remove the requirement for all road users to behave responsibly. The new Highway Code will say that it is important that ALL road users are aware of The Highway Code, are considerate to other road users and understand their responsibility for the safety of others; however, in the context of this report the amendments shift the narrative away from focusing on speed to focusing on reducing harm. This is an acceptance by government that the issue of road safety is more complex than speed alone.

18. As part of the Vehicle Speed Policy the borough council will work with partner organisations to publicise the changes in the Highway Code and promote the new enhanced duty of care that road users have to more vulnerable road users.

Review of Policy

19. Next review 16 Dec 2022