



# Speed Limit Policy

Working together to make our roads safer for all users,  
improve quality of life in our communities, and promote  
economic growth

Approved 2022

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## Introduction

This policy is an update from the previous policy approved by Cabinet in 2018.

The current proposal reiterates the principles already adopted but takes into account both the findings from East Lothian Council's (ELC's) 20mph speed limit trials, and further good practice from across the country. The policy also incorporates additional sections on Quiet Roads, how ELC will deal with speed limit change requests, and potential mitigation measures.

This policy will be reviewed as and when national policy and guidance is released.

## Background

It is the responsibility of the UK Government to set national speed limits for different road types, and identify which exceptions to the general limits can be applied. The three national speed limits for cars, motorcycles and light vans are:

- The 30mph speed limit on restricted roads (in Scotland Class A, B, C, or unclassified roads with street lighting);
- The speed limit of 60mph on single carriageway roads;
- The 70mph limit on dual carriageways and motorways.

These national limits are not, however, appropriate to all roads. The responsibility for determining local speed limits lies with the Roads Authorities having regard to guidance issued by the Transport Scotland together with relevant advice from the Department for Transport (DfT).

Transport Scotland is currently reviewing its approach to speed limits as the most recent specific directive dates from August 2006, when the Scottish Executive published *ETLLD Circular No.1/2006: Setting Local Speed Limits*. This laid out recommendations on the setting of local speed limits, other than 20mph speed limits, on single or dual carriageway roads in both urban and rural areas.

## Legislation and Regulations

Speed limits are covered by the legislation set out in *Part VI* of the *Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984* (the Act). Local speed limits are made by Roads Authorities, by order, under section 84 of the Act. Local Authorities must ensure speed limits meet the legislative process and the requirements.

In order to ensure compliance with a new limit, it is important that it is signed correctly and consistently in accordance with section 85 of the Act and must comply with *The Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016 (TSRGD 16)*.

The current guidance, to which this policy makes reference, is as follows:

- [DfT 1/2013 - Setting Local Speed Limits](#)
- [ETLLD Circular No 1/2006 – Setting Local Speed Limits](#)
- [DfT Traffic Advisory Leaflet 1/04 – Village Speed Limits](#)
- [Good Practice Guide on 20mph Speed Restrictions 2016](#)
- [The Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016 \(TSRGD\)](#)
- [DfT Traffic Signs Manual](#)
- [Designing Streets: A Policy Statement for Scotland](#)
- [Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2030](#)

The Scottish Government is responsible for determining speed limits on the trunk road and motorway network. ELC, as Roads Authority for East Lothian, is responsible for determining local speed limits on the local road network.

## Policy Objectives

The East Lothian public road network needs to support a local transport system that is safe for all road users, improves the quality of life in our communities, and promotes economic growth.

Effective vehicle speed management involves many components designed to encourage, help and require drivers to adopt appropriate and safe speeds. Speed limits are a key source of information and play a fundamental role in indicating the nature of, and risks posed by, a road to both motorised and non-motorised road users.

The Scottish Government's *Designing Streets* policy emphasises that active travel options can enhance the character of a place, improve public health and social interaction and help to tackle climate change by reduced carbon emissions. It stresses that roads are often part of a community, as well as being thoroughfares, and considerations of both 'place' and 'movement' are important in determining appropriate speed limits.

Speed limits should also encourage compliance and should not be seen by drivers as being a target speed at which to drive in all circumstances.

## Underlying Principles

The underlying principles of ELC's speed limit policy are as follows:

- ELC and Police Scotland will work in partnership in considering and determining any changes to speed limits;
- The needs of vulnerable road users will be fully taken into account;
- The setting of the road, and whether it is part of a 'place' or is a key 'movement' corridor, is an important factor when setting a speed limit;
- Mean (average) speeds will be referenced when determining local speed limits;
- The minimum length of a speed limit will generally not be less than 600m to avoid too many changes of speed limit along the route;
- There is a need to strike the right balance between the needs of communities and the needs of drivers passing through, particularly on those roads that are the main traffic routes in the county;
- New speed limits should not be introduced on roads where there is no realistic expectation that drivers will comply with the reduced speed limit;
- Alternative speed management options will be considered before a new speed limit is introduced.

Circular 1/2006 states quite clearly that "Speed limits should not be used to attempt to solve the problem of isolated hazards, such as a single road junction or reduced visibility such as a bend".

## Enforcement

Police Scotland is responsible for the enforcement of speed limits.

Enforcement can be carried out at specific locations by Police officers using hand-held equipment, or along routes using in-vehicle detection equipment.

Before any new or altered speed limits are introduced, Police Scotland will be formally consulted to ensure they are supportive and agree that the proposals are valid and appropriate.

It seems inevitable that there will remain a type of driver that will continue to disregard the speed limits suggested by the surrounding environment or imposed through regulation. It is expected that Police Scotland will target this group of drivers as part of its enforcement effort.

Any changes to limits should be monitored, and where compliance levels are not at an acceptable level, consideration should be given to the installation of traffic calming measures.

## Speed Limits on our Roads

Unless otherwise signed, the national speed limit in areas with street-lighting is 30mph, and on single carriageways is 60mph for all cars, motorcycles and light vans.

Roads with high approach speeds to an area with a 20mph speed limit, will have a 40mph 'buffer' or other visual marker to alert drivers to the upcoming settlement.

A minimum length of 600m for any speed limit is recommended so as to avoid too many changes of speed limit along a given road, and because many drivers are unlikely to reduce their speed if it is over a very short distance, particularly if the end of the limit can be seen from the entry point. However, shorter lengths will be considered if they are 'buffered' by intermediate limits on approaches, giving a total restricted length of 600m.

## Towns

Roads within towns will have speed limits in accordance with the characteristics below.

### 40mph limits in towns

Roads within towns that are suitable for a speed limit of 40mph are generally on the outskirts of urban areas where there is little frontage development.

Where such roads, with little or no frontage development, pass through predominantly residential areas and there is significant vulnerable road user activity then a lower speed limit should be considered.

### 30mph limits in towns

Typically, 30mph roads in towns demonstrate similar characteristics to 20mph roads and can be considered where motor vehicle movement is given a higher priority than the place function of the street.

### 20mph limits in towns

20mph streets within towns are mostly residential, or see high pedestrian and cyclist movements such as around town centres and schools. They tend to be roads where motor vehicle movement is not deemed the primary function.

## Villages and smaller settlements

### 40mph limits in villages or smaller settlements

A road in a small settlement will be considered for a 40mph speed limit if:

- there are more than 10 houses directly fronting the road (on one or both sides); and
- there is a minimum density of 3 houses every 100m; and
- there is a community facility such as a school, shop or village hall within the settlement.

### 30mph limits in villages or smaller settlements

A road in a small settlement will be considered for a 30mph speed limit if, in addition to the criteria for a 40mph limit above:

- there are more than 15 houses directly fronting the road (on one or both sides).

Road classification (A, B, C or unclassified) and number/density of junctions will also be considered as significant factors.

### 20mph limits in villages or smaller settlements

A road in a small settlement will be considered for a 20mph speed limit if, in addition to the criteria for a 30mph limit above:

- there are more than 20 houses directly fronting the road (on one or both sides); and
- there is street lighting no more than 185m apart; and
- there is a continuous footway along at least one side.

## Rural Roads

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

### Roads between settlements

Where the primary function of a road is for motor vehicle travel between settlements, any accident history will be taken into account when setting speed limits.

In accordance with the guidelines, remedial measures and alternative speed management options will always be considered in detail before the introduction of a lower speed limit.

### Quiet Roads

Quiet Roads are increasingly being implemented on rural roads across Scotland where there may be high levels of use by pedestrians, cyclists or equestrians. The presence of vulnerable road users in the carriageway is highlighted to drivers through the use of signage to promote a shared environment. Where appropriate, ELC will consider the introduction of Quiet Roads to develop safer networks for vulnerable road users.

Based on good practice from around the country, ELC have adopted the following characteristics for suitable Quiet Roads:

- the route has daily traffic volumes of less than 800 vehicles per day (two-way); and
- the carriageway is no greater than 5.5 metres wide; and
- the route is already used by pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians; and
- the route provides a link to existing infrastructure; and
- the designation has the support of the community, emergency services and elected members

## ELC Speed Management

### Strategy

It is necessary to set appropriate and effective speed limits, which support the underlying principles, and achieve a reasonable level of driver compliance within those limits.

Where there is strong community support to lower the speed limit, this request will be considered in line with the procedure outlined below.

If, at any time, measures are deemed necessary to improve the effectiveness of a speed limit, consideration will be given to using additional speed management measures appropriate to each individual location. Section C.9 highlights options to consider.

### Signing

The design of speed limits signs in East Lothian will be in accordance with the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016 and the Traffic Signs Manual. Where possible, speed limit signs and town/village nameplates will be brought together at a single location, and accompanied by appropriate carriageway markings, forming a 'gateway' feature.

### Requests for speed limit changes

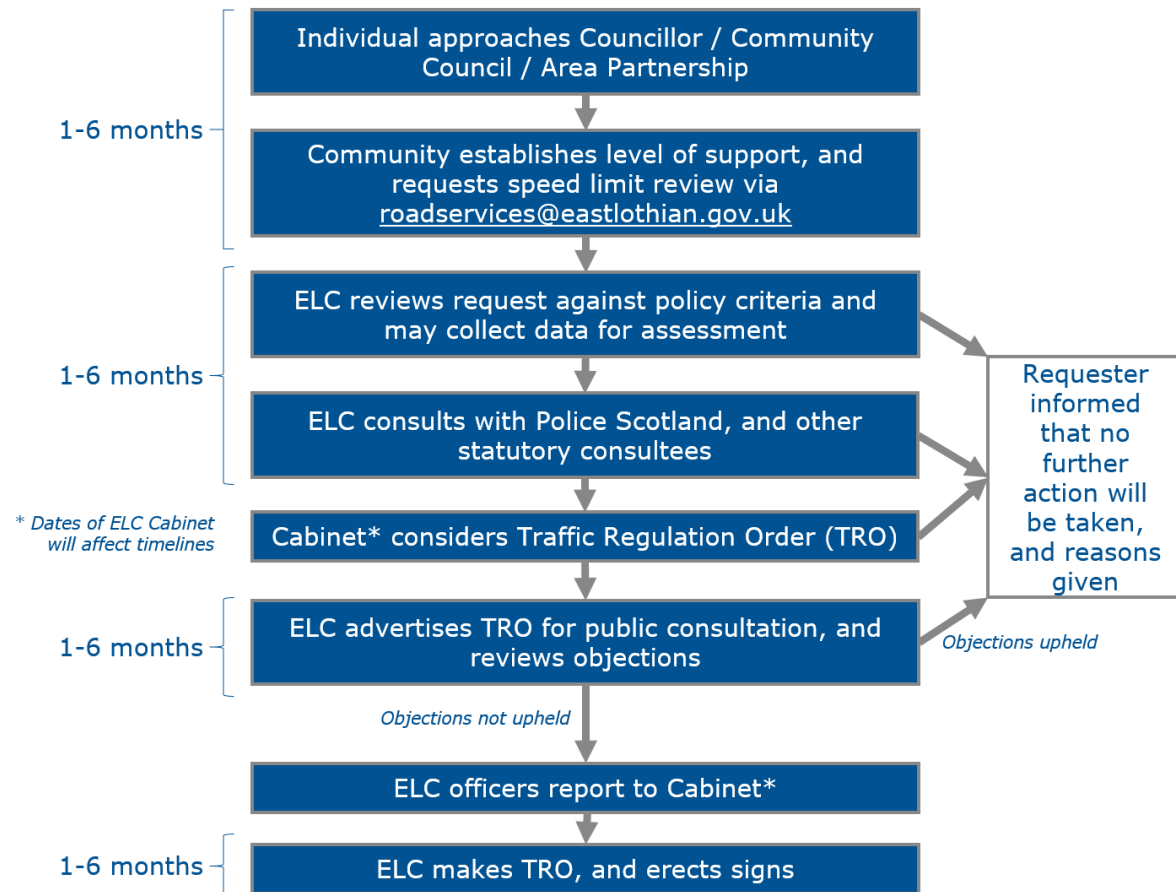
Reviews of existing speed limits across the network shall generally be undertaken every few years, or where circumstances have changed.

It is essential that any changes to speed limits should have widespread community support and, as such, should there be any concerns between routine review periods, these should be highlighted through the Community Council, Area Partnership or a Local Councillor.

- List of local Community Councils: [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/directory/10048/community\\_councils](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/directory/10048/community_councils)
- List of local Area Partnerships: [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210567/your\\_community/12397/are\\_a\\_partnerships\\_in\\_east\\_lothian](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210567/your_community/12397/are_a_partnerships_in_east_lothian)
- List of local Councillors: <https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/councillors/name>



The following process will be followed. Note that timescales are approximate.






## Traffic Calming

There will be locations where drivers' speeds are too high for the prevailing local environment and further intervention is required to achieve good compliance with the existing or a lower speed limit. The table which follows, highlighting the performance of the various measures, has been produced utilising principles laid out in the Department for Transport's (DfT) *Local Transport Note 1/07: Traffic Calming*.

Definitions:







- Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) is a legal tool that allows permanent changes to restrict, regulate or prohibit use of a road. A TRO is also required to change speed limits.
- A Redetermination Order (RSO) legally alters or amends the way in which roads, footways and cycleways are used.

The table highlights indicative costs and effectiveness of various traffic calming measures. It is important to be aware that costs may be significantly impacted by local circumstances such as the presence of drainage features or services under the carriageway/footway. Also note that if physical changes to the road network are proposed then an independent Road Safety Audit (RSA) of the design will also be required at a cost of around £1000-£3000. This includes the introduction of speed cushions, chicanes, etc.

Intervention	Example	Cost range ££££ = most expensive	Impact on traffic speeds <sup>1</sup> *** = largest reduction	Impact on traffic flows <sup>1</sup> *** = largest reduction	Impact on injury accidents <sup>1</sup> *** = largest reduction	Delays to emergency services <sup>1</sup> *** = shortest delays	Requirements	Pros	Cons
Promotion	 <i>Example poster</i>	£ - ££	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence that existing speed limit is not being adhered to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes in driver behaviour may reach further than a single community</li> <li>• Can be community-led</li> </ul>	
Enforcement		Police Scotland	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Police will prioritise areas where there is a unique road safety issue</li> <li>• Otherwise communities can set local police priorities through the CAPP<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes in driver behaviour may reach further than a single community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reliant on Police resources</li> </ul>
Signage	 <i>Pencaitland (Google maps)</i>	££ - £££	*	*	*	***	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Available mounting height</li> <li>• Available forward visibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be retro-fitted to existing street furniture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be visually unattractive in rural areas</li> <li>• Their use alone may have minimal impact on reducing speeds</li> <li>• Can contribute to sign clutter</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Parameters based on scoring from Department for Transport "Local Transport Note 1/07: Traffic Calming"

<sup>2</sup> CAPP – Community and Police Partnership

Intervention	Example	Cost range ££££ = most expensive	Impact on traffic speeds <sup>1</sup> *** = largest reduction	Impact on traffic flows <sup>1</sup> *** = largest reduction	Impact on injury accidents <sup>1</sup> *** = largest reduction	Delays to emergency services <sup>1</sup> *** = shortest delays	Requirements	Pros	Cons
Lining/road markings	 <i>Pencaitland (Google maps)</i>	££ - £££	*	*	*	***		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can create advanced warnings of approaching hazards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Require regular maintenance</li> <li>Difficult to see in adverse weather</li> </ul>
Intermediate speed limits / 'buffers'	 <i>East Linton (Google maps)</i>	£	*	*	*	***	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TRO and subsequent consultation</li> <li>Adequate length to create intermediate limit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create advanced warning of approach to lower speed limit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited situations where they can be used</li> </ul>
Rumble strips/countdown markers	 <i>Stenton (Google maps)</i>	££	*	*	**	***	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should be located away from dwellings to avoid noise disturbance</li> <li>Consultation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can be used as a low-cost warning to alert drivers of changing environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creates noise/vibration</li> <li>Uncomfortable for cyclists and motorcyclists</li> <li>Can become slippery when wet</li> </ul>
Gateway entry treatment which highlights the change in speed limit to drivers	 <i>Pencaitland (Google maps)</i>	££ - £££	**	*	**	***	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Available width in verge/footway</li> <li>Suitable carriageway width to enable narrowing (where part of design)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Change in speed limit is made more obvious to drivers</li> <li>Can be combined with build-out to narrow carriageway</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May have limited impact where reduced impact when comprising solely signing and lining</li> </ul>
Vehicle Activated Signs	 <i>Wallyford (Google maps)</i>	££	**	*	**	***	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to power or in location where sign can be powered by solar energy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Non-illuminated until activated, creating less visual impact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>These signs become less effective with familiarity so should be moved around to maximise impact</li> </ul>
Road narrowing (build-outs)	 <i>Macmerry (Google maps)</i>	££ - £££	* to ***	* to **	* to **	***	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RSA</li> <li>Consultation</li> <li>Street lighting</li> <li>Carriageway space must be available to accommodate build out</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can incorporate active travel crossings</li> <li>Can span around junctions</li> <li>Opportunity for cycle bypass</li> <li>Emergency vehicles unlikely to be unaffected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where a cycle bypass isn't used, cyclists may feel unsafe</li> </ul>

Intervention	Example	Cost range ££££ = most expensive	Impact on traffic speeds <sup>1</sup> *** = largest reduction	Impact on traffic flows <sup>1</sup> *** = largest reduction	Impact on injury accidents <sup>1</sup> *** = largest reduction	Delays to emergency services <sup>1</sup> *** = shortest delays	Requirements	Pros	Cons
Footway widening / introduction of cycle infrastructure	 <i>Musselburgh (Google maps)</i>	£££ - ££££ (depends on length)	* to ***	* to ***	* to **	***	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RSA required for some measures</li> <li>Consultation</li> <li>Street lighting</li> <li>Must be adequate room to widen footway/reduce carriageway width</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can incorporate active travel crossings</li> <li>Emergency vehicle speeds likely to remain unaffected</li> <li>If allowances made for cyclists, can negate need for cyclists on carriageway</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Could reduce resilience of street, where width is reduced over a longer distance</li> <li>May remove opportunities for informal parking</li> </ul>
Speed cushions	 <i>Dunbar (Google maps)</i>	££	**	***	***	**	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consultation</li> <li>Street lighting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Buses likely to remain unaffected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design dependent, some vehicles may be able to straddle the cushion to lessen impact</li> </ul>
Road hump (leaves spaces at the side for water run-off)	 <i>Tranent (Google maps)</i>	£££	**	***	***	**	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consultation</li> <li>Street lighting</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Less preferred for bus routes</li> <li>Cyclists are affected</li> <li>Can be obstructive to emergency service vehicles</li> <li>Creates noise/vibration</li> </ul>
Raised Table (runs from footway to footway and creates a crossing point)	 <i>Haddington (Google maps)</i>	£££ - ££££	***	***	***	*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consultation</li> <li>Street lighting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can incorporate active travel crossings</li> <li>Can span across junctions</li> <li>Makes road easier to cross for users with mobility impairments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drainage interventions may be required</li> <li>Where used on bus routes or in shared spaces, they have to be designed accordingly</li> <li>Cyclists are affected</li> <li>Can be obstructive to emergency service vehicles</li> <li>Creates noise/vibration</li> </ul>
'Give and go' chicane	 <i>Tynninghame (Google maps)</i>	£££	***	**	**	**	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RSO and subsequent consultation</li> <li>Street lighting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunity for cycle bypass to allow cyclist continuity</li> <li>Emergency vehicle speeds likely to remain unaffected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Speeds can remain the same if there is no oncoming traffic</li> <li>Vehicles may not slow down and may even increase speed to avoid having to give way</li> </ul>
Pedestrian Refuge	 <i>Haddington (Google maps)</i>	£££	*	*	*	***	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RSO and subsequent consultation</li> <li>Street lighting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can make it easier for pedestrians to cross the road, as they can cross one side at a time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Priority to motor vehicles</li> <li>Can make cyclists more vulnerable</li> <li>Carriageway space must be available to accommodate island</li> </ul>

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