

TITLE OF REPORT: **Gateshead Speed Management Plan**

REPORT OF: **Peter Udall, Strategic Director, Economy, Innovation and Growth**

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet of the outcomes of the consultation with residents and other stakeholders regarding the Gateshead Council Speed Management Plan, and to seek approval for the final revised version of the Plan to be referred to full Council.

Background

2. The effective management of traffic speed is an important element in improving road safety and in managing the impact of traffic on local communities. The Council's previous Speed Management Plan was approved in 2007. It was informed by the Department for Transport (DfT) circular 1/06 'Setting Local Speed Limits'. In January 2013 the DfT revised its guidance and DfT circular 01/13 'Setting Local Speed Limits' was published. Whilst the principles contained within DfT circular 01/13 have informed the Council's speed management considerations since 2013, the SMP has not been formally reviewed and updated during this time.
3. Circular 01/13 retains and builds upon many of the underlying principles of DfT Circular 01/06 whilst providing additional evidence of the safety and wider benefits of setting appropriate speed limits.

It is also important to update the plan for the following reasons:

- To reflect changes in other local and national policy and guidance
 - To reflect the speed management works that have taken place or are planned
 - To review and reflect on more up to date trends and statistics
 - To reflect changes in technology
4. The updated SMP sets out how the Council will develop and implement its approach to speed management, helping to minimise the number and severity of accidents. It demonstrates the importance of speed management in terms of road safety and in assisting the Council in achieving its aims in relation to the Thrive Agenda. It also identifies the importance of speed management in relation to wider benefits both locally and nationally.

Proposal

5. In December 2020, a consultation was launched on the Council website and directly with stakeholders to seek comments and feedback on the new Speed Management Plan. This consultation closed on 28th February 2021. In total there were 124 responses from the public, and responses from the bus operators Go North East and Stagecoach as well as the North East Ambulance Service. Appendix 1 contains a summary of the responses, and how it is proposed to amend the Plan as a result.
6. In light of the points raised during the consultation period, the Speed Management Plan has been revised and a finalised version produced. This is attached as Appendix 2.

Recommendations

7. It is recommended that Cabinet:
 - (i) Notes the feedback from the consultation that has been taken into account when producing the revised version of the Speed Management Plan.
 - (ii) Refers the final version of the Speed Management Plan and the measures contained within it to full Council for approval. This is in order

For the following reason:

To assist the Council in achieving its Thrive Agenda targets and to improve road safety in the borough.

Policy Context

1. The Gateshead Council Speed Management Plan is in line with the vision for transport as outlined in the Gateshead Health and Wellbeing Strategy – create and develop healthy and sustainable communities and places, and supports the pledges within our strategic approach, Making Gateshead a Place Where Everyone Thrives. It also supports the aims and objectives of the North East Transport Plan.

Background

2. Gateshead's transport network provides an essential service to the community, underpinning social and economic activity of all kinds. Investment in the network is important both in ensuring that the travel needs of local business and communities can continue to be met, and also that the adverse impacts of travel can be managed and, wherever possible, mitigated. The effective management of traffic speed is an important element within this, supporting improved road safety and helping to manage the impact of traffic on local communities.
3. The Council's previous Speed Management Plan (SMP) was published in 2007. It was informed by the Department for Transport (DfT) circular 1/06 'Setting Local Speed Limits'. In January 2013 the DfT revised its guidance and DfT circular 01/13 'Setting Local Speed Limits' was published. Whilst the principles contained within DfT circular 01/13 have informed the Council's speed management considerations since 2013, the SMP has not been formally reviewed and updated during this time.
4. It is also important to update the plan for the following reasons:
 - To reflect changes in other local and national policy and guidance
 - To reflect the speed management works that have taken place or are planned
 - To review and reflect on more up to date trends and statistics
 - To reflect changes in technology.
5. The Speed Management vision is: 'Safe and efficient speeds for all'.
6. The Plan also sets out the Council's Speed Management Policy as: 'Speed limits shall be introduced in a manner consistent with current government guidance and exceptions to usual practice will be recorded and justified as a departure from standard'.
7. The introduction of speed management measures whether based on speed limits, engineering, education or enforcement will only be considered where it can be demonstrated that they meet and contribute to the:
 - Speed Management Plan vision and core aims;
 - North East Transport Plan objectives – specifically those relating to a safe, secure network, and carbon neutral North East;
 - Gateshead Council's Thrive Agenda;
 - Take into account relevant regulations, best practice, all highway users and local experience;

- Are consistent with Gateshead Council's Network Management Plan.
8. The core aims of the SMP are to:
- Reduce the incidence of inappropriate speed on Gateshead's roads;
 - Achieve significant reductions in the number of personal injury accidents occurring on the highway as a result of excessive or inappropriate speed;
 - Reduce the severity of road accidents that do occur;
 - Increase levels of speed limit compliance;
 - Reduce community severance;
 - Contribute towards creating more attractive environments in which to live and work;
 - Encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport; and
 - Adapt to changes in technology.
9. The draft Speed Management Plan was presented to Cabinet in October 2020 and approved for consultation.

Consultation

10. Consultation was undertaken with the Leader and Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holders for Environment and Transport.
11. Consultation was undertaken between 7th December 2020 and 28th February 2021. Consultation was undertaken with the general public via the Council website. Direct emails and reminders were sent to the following list of stakeholders:
- North East local authorities
 - Nexus
 - Living Streets
 - Cycling UK
 - Sustrans North East
 - Go North East
 - Stagecoach Busways
 - Arriva Northumbria LTD
 - North East Ambulance Service
 - Tyne and Wear Fire & Rescue Service
 - Northumbria Police Collision Investigation Unit
 - Highways England
 - Road Haulage Association LTD
 - Freight Transport Association
 - Confederation of Passenger Transport
 - North East Freight Partnership
 - Sight Service.
12. The web consultation contained preliminary questions to gather information about respondents. This included whether the respondent was a resident, worked in, or travelled through Gateshead, whether they were responding on behalf of an organisation, their gender, and whether they had a disability or health condition.

13. Space was then provided where respondents were asked to contribute feedback and comments on the draft Speed Management Plan, which was available through a hyperlink.
14. Stakeholders were sent an email containing background information about the Plan as well as an attached copy, and were requested either to email their responses directly, or provide their comments through the web consultation page.

Consultation responses

15. In total, 124 responses were received from the public. All but one of the respondents stated that they either worked, lived or regularly travelled through Gateshead. Three responses from the list of specific stakeholders were received – from bus operators Go North East and Stagecoach as well as the North East Ambulance Service.
16. In general, comments either focused on specific recommendations made in the ‘engineering measures’ section of the Plan or referred to particular areas of the borough, which the respondent believed would benefit from a change in the approach to speed management.
17. Responses which have highlighted a certain locality as having problems with speed management have been noted and passed to the Engineering Services Manager and Network Manager, Highways and Waste, for consideration when implementing future speed management measures.
18. While individual responses varied, certain trends could be identified and have been acted upon in updating the Plan. These key points are summarised in the table below, along with any changes that have been made to the Speed Management Plan document as a result.

Consultation response – key theme	Response / change to SMP
Support for vehicle activated signs	The Plan states that the use of vehicle activated signs would be limited in future due to high levels of ongoing maintenance and concerns over their long-term effectiveness. A trial of the signs in the Leam Lane area found that no difference in speed was detected and further signs would not be recommended.
Negative perceptions of speed humps – e.g. some are excessively high and wide, they cause excessive wear and tear to vehicles, cause issues for people with back problems, cause congestion and pollution by making cars repeatedly slow down and speed up	Section 2.22 of the Plan states that interventions will conform to government guidance and legislation including the Road Hump/Traffic Calming Regulations (1999). This prescribes the acceptable size of speed humps. Section 4.21 of the SMP quotes research from Transport for London, which found that ‘20mph zones do not appear to worsen air quality and they dramatically reduce road danger’.

Use of speed humps should be appropriate to the limit of the road	Section 5.2 of the SMP clarifies that speed humps and other vertical traffic calming measures are only permitted on roads with a speed limit under 30mph.
Many factors aside from road speeds deter people from walking and cycling more	Section 1.22 of the SMP has been altered to acknowledge that other factors such as age and disability can affect the likelihood of walking and cycling, however, a benefit of effective speed management measures is to make the environment more conducive to safe walking and cycling for people of varying age and ability.
Support for enforcement measures like average speed cameras and mobile speed traps	Enforcement of speed limits is the responsibility of Police as stated in section 2.5.
Focus lower speed limits on roads which are popular with cyclists	Appendix C of the SMP sets out the criteria used to score and prioritise 20mph zones, including whether or not the road in question forms part of a cycle route.
Need to communicate the SMP effectively across the community using Covid-secure methods	Full online public consultation has been carried out on the Plan. Individual areas where speed management measures are to be implemented will be consulted prior to works commencing.
A map of the planned 20mph zones would make the SMP easier to understand	The exact locations of the interventions will be determined as the schemes develop through the design process. An indicative map has been included as an appendix to the Plan.
An executive summary would make the SMP easier to understand	An executive summary has been added at the start of the SMP.
Use of on-street parking to limit speeds should not be used close to junctions	Text was adjusted at section 5.11 of the SMP to clarify that this method of speed management will only be allowed where it is safe to do so. The restrictions set out in the Highway Code will still apply in these circumstances, that parking is not permitted: "opposite or within 10 metres (32 feet) of a junction, except in an authorised parking space".
20mph zones should be targeted, or variable speed limits should be used, rather than implementing them across whole towns, as this could frustrate drivers and encourage them to speed	Section 4.22 explains that variable speed limits are not considered effective, because they increase uncertainty, and suitably robust measures cannot be installed to ensure the lower speed limit is self-enforcing. This uncertainty would also be the case if individual streets in an area had different speed limits, hence

	the preference for 20mph zones.
As well as lowering speeds, pedestrian crossings should be considered in order to improve road safety	Provision of existing crossing facilities is taken into account in the setting of speed limits, as set out in Appendix A. A range of road safety schemes are included in the annual transport capital programme.
Consider larger vehicles such as buses and bin lorries before installing road narrowing measures or speed humps	Sections 5.3 and 5.8 have been amended to make it explicit that the movements of larger vehicles will be considered.
The Plan is too focused on reducing vehicle speeds and not enough focus is given to allowing vehicles to maintain higher speeds	The aims of the SMP revolve around road safety and creating attractive environments for people to live and work. Ensuring that the downward trend in injury accidents in Gateshead continues is an integral part of this. The benefits of reducing speeds are set out in section 1.22.
Need to introduce alternatives to the car in order to get people to change their habit of driving, such as cycle priority and improved bus services	A range of walking, cycling and public transport schemes are included in the annual transport capital programme which will sit alongside the 20mph schemes.
There should be future consultations in each individual area where speed management measures are to be introduced, to get feedback from local residents	Public consultation and discussion with local councillors will be carried out in each area prior to measures being implemented.

19. Stakeholder responses were received from Go North East, Stagecoach and the North East Ambulance Service. Whilst respondents expressed support for road safety and speed management in general, some specific points of concern were raised. These are summarised below along with the Council's response.

Stakeholder point of concern	Response / change to SMP
Interventions could reduce the speed of buses and increase journey times, making public transport less attractive and possibly forcing a reduction in service.	It will be noted where speed management measures intersect with bus routes, and in these areas discussions will take place with bus operators to ensure the impact on their vehicles and timetables can be kept to a minimum whilst still carrying a benefit in terms of road safety.
Certain types of intervention such as speed tables could be detrimental to the safety and comfort of bus passengers.	Section 5.3 of the plan states that on bus routes only flat top humps with a table top of 10m or more or speed cushions will be permitted in order to minimise the impact on buses.
Interventions could marginally slow down ambulances or cause discomfort to some patients being transport in	As stated in section 4.17 of the Plan, 20mph zones will be focused on residential areas, leaving main routes

ambulances.	with higher speed limits unaffected. Where a road experiences a high level of usage by emergency services then, similar to bus routes, the type of interventions proposed will take this into account. It is also worth noting that reduced pressure on emergency services and the NHS is one of the benefits of effective speed management.
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20. The Speed Management Plan has now been updated, taking into account the points summarised above. The amended version of the Plan is attached as Appendix 2. As set out above, no fundamental changes were made to the Plan and its vision and policy remain the same, however certain sections of the Plan have been clarified and some further information added.

Alternative Options

21. The alternative option is to continue with the previous version of the Plan from 2007. This is not recommended because the previous Plan is now outdated and does not reflect the changes that have occurred since 2007, in particular the DfT circular 01/13 'Setting Local Speed Limits'.

Implications of Recommended Options

22. Resources:

- a) **Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director, Resources and Digital confirms that speed management schemes will be contained within the capital programme for transport. This is largely funded by Local Transport Plan Integrated Transport funding, supplemented by specific bids to central government and developer contributions.
- b) **Human Resources Implications** – There are no human resources implications.
- c) **Property Implications** – No property implications have been identified.

23. **Risk Management Implications** – The main risk associated with the Speed Management Plan is that the Plan is not regularly reviewed and becomes outdated and not reflective of the current environment. This could risk the good progress made so far in reducing highway casualties in Gateshead. There is another risk around the ability to fund speed management measures. While this has been mitigated by including placeholders for the measures within the capital programme for the next three years, wider uncertainty remains over the scale of future Government funding for this kind of work post 2021/22.

24. **Equality and Diversity Implications** – One of the aims of the Plan is to reduce community severance (when traffic or infrastructure acts as a barrier

through an area, for example a busy road separating a residential area from local shops), which will assist in reducing social exclusion by improving access for the young, elderly, and people with disabilities.

25. Crime and Disorder Implications – The Plan aims to reduce speed exceedances and encourage safer driving, contributing towards creating safer and more attractive environments for all transport users and pedestrians, and a long term reduction in speeding-related traffic offences.

26. Health Implications – The Plan aims to reduce the number and severity of road accidents as a result of excessive or inappropriate speeds, leading to a reduction in injury and fatality on the roads. It should also reduce the perceived threat from speeding traffic to pedestrians and cyclists, thereby helping to encourage active and healthy travel.

27. Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications – The Plan encourages the use of sustainable modes of transport and aims to create a safer environment for such modes, for example cycling.

28. Human Rights Implications – No human rights implications have been identified.

29. Ward Implications – All wards will be affected.

Background Information

30. Further background information is contained in:

- Gateshead Council (GMBC) Speed Management Plan and Appendices
- Speed Management Plan (Cabinet report) – October 2020
- DfT circular 01/13 ‘Setting Local Speed Limits’