

APPENDIX 1 - Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council

A policy for 20MPH Speed Limits outside Schools

Background

Safer Routes to School

The benefits of encouraging pupils to walk and cycle to school (Smarter Travel) are well documented in terms of health and physical fitness within the Safer Routes to Schools initiative, whilst road safety professionals seek to improve safety through working with schools on education and training.

One of the main issues is the environment along the route to school and in particular immediately outside the school gates. This is where, for a short time period particularly in the morning, there can be a combination of indiscriminate on-street parking and peak hour traffic conflicting with large numbers of children crossing the road. These conditions exist at many schools but will vary from case to case but in some circumstances safety can be improved by reducing traffic speeds.

Government guidance

Local authorities are now empowered to introduce 20mph speed limits and zones. The Department for Transport (DfT) publication 'Travelling to School: A Good Practice Guide' advises... *"we would like all transport authorities to consider the case for 20mph zones around schools, although we recognise that whether or not to introduce such zones must remain a local decision"*.

Current legislation provides two different means of implementing 20mph speed limits, broadly these are;

- Use of speed limits, indicated by terminal and repeater signs alone;
- A zonal approach using traffic terminal signs together with suitable traffic calming measures to provide a self enforcing element.

According to design advice issued by the **Department for Transport (DfT) – Traffic Advisory leaflet 9/99 '20mph speed limits and zones'** 20 mph speed limits by signs alone would be most appropriate where 85th percentile speeds are already low and further traffic calming measures are not needed. 20mph zones should be used where excessive speeds occur, and where traffic calming measures would be needed to ensure speeds are at or below 20mph.

This was subsequently superseded in part by **DfT Circular 01/06 Setting Local Speed Limits** that states *"the aim should be to align the local speed limit so that the original mean speed driven on the road is at or below the new posted speed limit for that road."* The guidelines suggest that 20mph speed limits are only suitable where mean vehicle speeds are 24mph or below, or where additional traffic calming measures are planned.

Good Practice

In some cases excessive vehicle speed may not be the main problem. Indiscriminate parking often reduces the possibility of speeding and solutions to improve safety are

more likely to involve improved visibility and crossing facilities and so each case must be carefully considered.

Where average speeds during school peaks are not greater than 20mph then introducing a 20mph zone (or limit) is unlikely to provide a significant safety benefit. If it is found that this is the case then further engagement with the school and the community about more appropriate solutions is recommended.

Where there is an identified speeding problem, average speeds greater than 24mph, outside a school during the school peaks a 20mph limit (signing only) will have little speed reduction effect and is not recommended. In this case the merits of physical traffic calming measures should be considered, possibly incorporating a 20mph zone.

As is the practice with other Council safety programmes any proposals forthcoming from this policy will be included in a priority programme for implementation as funding permits.

Implementation of 20MPH Speed Limits outside Schools

20mph limits or zones shall only be introduced in particular circumstances, where specific criteria are met. (see flowchart attached)

- a) The proposal is appropriate to the area;
- b) It would be beneficial in road safety and environmental terms; and
- c) Would not be dependent on an unreasonable level of enforcement by the Police which means that the Police should not then be expected to enforce them as a matter of course.

Criteria

In addition, the following more detailed criteria will be followed:-

20mph speed limits by signs alone would be most appropriate where the average speeds are already low and further traffic calming measures are not needed. If the average speed is above 24mph, then it is unlikely a 20mph speed limit by signs alone would be appropriate.

20mph zones should be used where the site is suitable for a 20mph in respect of all other criteria yet vehicle speeds are in excess of 24mph and where traffic calming measures will be needed to ensure speeds are at, or below, 20mph.

20mph zones would be particularly appropriate where there is an existing record of accidents to children occurring over an area, or where concentrations of pedestrians and/or cyclists exist or are anticipated. They can help to protect children walking and cycling to and from school and may encourage other children to walk or cycle.

In applying this advice, 20mph speed limits/zones might typically be expected to be introduced in residential areas, on roads fronting schools, and in the main shopping streets of town centres where a high concentration of pedestrian traffic is generated.

The Flowchart in Appendix 1 outlines the process for dealing with requests for 20mph speed limits outside schools.

Once a request is received, the pedestrian and vehicle conflict points will be identified. If these conflict points have already been mitigated against and addressed, possibly through the implementation of previous Local Safety or Safer Routes to School schemes, then no further action will be required.

20mph zones will require vertical traffic calming to assist in reducing vehicle speeds below 24mph. However not all roads are suitable for vertical traffic calming, particularly routes that are important for the emergency services.

The Fire Service categorise all roads in the borough on the basis of their importance relating to responding to emergency situations. Roads fall into three main categories;

- 1) Primary routes – Vertical traffic calming on these routes would not be considered given their strategic importance to the emergency services.

- 2) End of route roads – roads which have little strategic value, generally 20mph zones incorporating vertical traffic calming would be appropriate on these roads.
- 3) Roads of varying importance – this relates to the remainder of the network which includes;
 - Roads which link primary routes with end of route destinations.
 - Roads which form a valuable alternative to primary routes.
 - Roads which afford access to premises of notable risk.Vertical traffic calming proposals on roads within this category would require formal consultation with the emergency services.

Any proposals for vertical traffic calming would also be subject to a statutory consultation process also involving local residents and frontagers and is required by the relevant legislation.

Prioritising Schemes

The Local Safety Scheme Programme scoring system as approved by the Council has provided a reliable and successful way of site prioritisation directly related to the number and severity of personal injury accidents (PIA) that occur in the Borough each year.

Under the scoring system, individual roads or areas are searched through SPECTRUM, the West Midlands accident database, under three basic categories. Firstly the severity of injury to the casualty, secondly the conditions under which the incident took place, and thirdly, the proximity to the area of concern. These factors are then scored and weighted to prioritise the severity, age of casualty and whether the injured parties are classed within a vulnerable user group i.e. pedestrians or cyclists, and a total is then calculated.

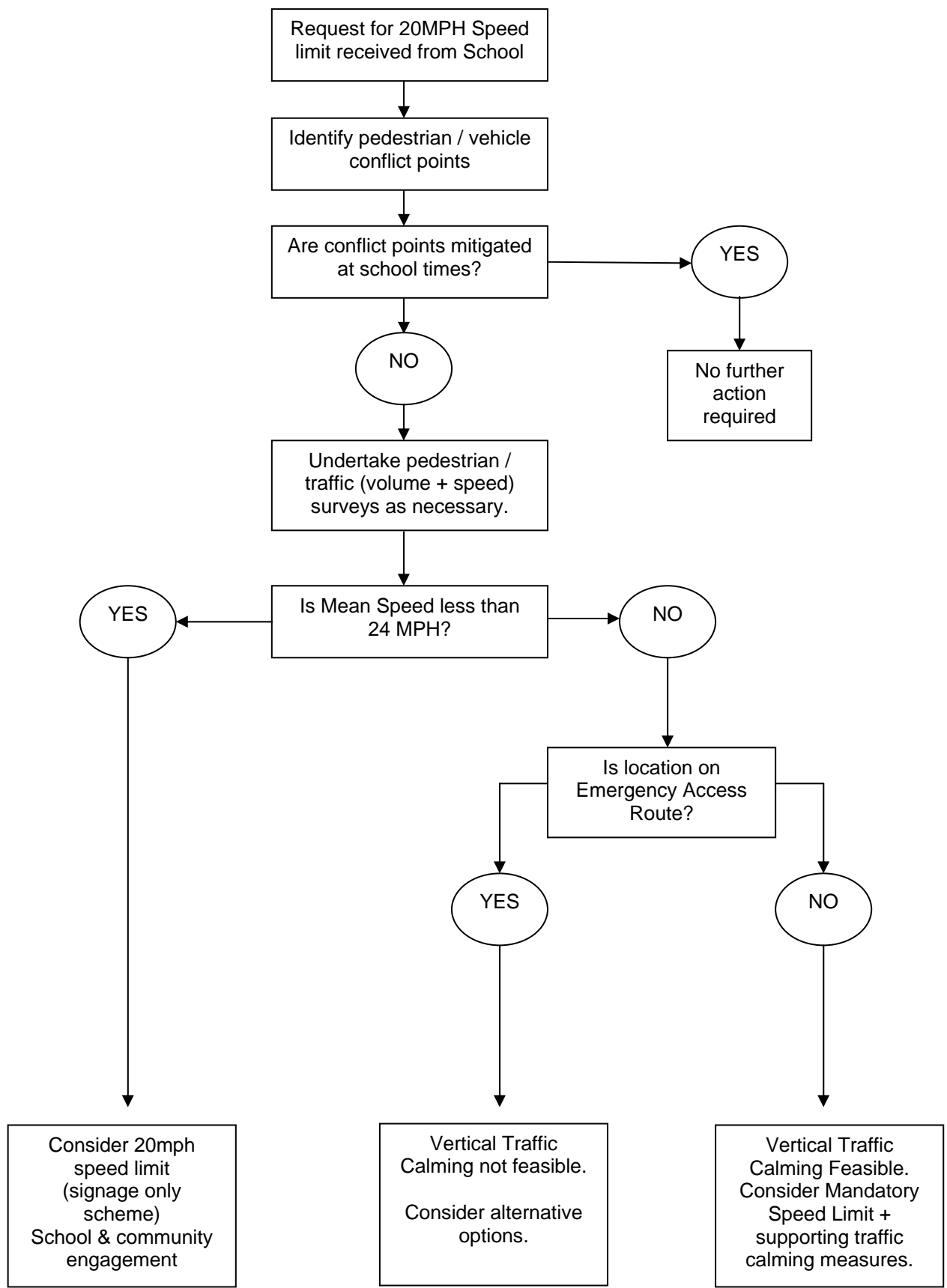
All sites, of which typically 200 per year are reviewed, can then be ranked with those receiving the highest score investigated in detail to see what measures could be introduced to either remove, reduce or mitigate the various circumstances of the recorded accidents. Overall this method has contributed towards a 50% reduction in Personal Injury Accident's (PIA's) and casualties between 2000 and 2010.

The Local Safety Scheme score along with the weighting of existing facilities within close proximity to the conflict locations identified for a school will be used to prioritise sites that maybe suitable for a 20mph speed limit or zone.

References

- The Department for Transport (DfT) publication 'Travelling to School: A Good Practice Guide'
- 20mph speed limits and zones (Traffic Advisory Leaflet 9/99 DfT)
- TA22/82 Vehicle speed measurement on all-purpose roads (1981, Highways Agency)
- Setting Local Speed Limits (DfT) Circular 1/06

20 MPH Speed Limits outside Schools
Process for dealing with requests



NB. Schemes would be prioritised on the level of injury accidents & the availability of existing mitigating facilities i.e. pedestrian crossing facilities, school crossing patrols, speed reducing features.