

20 mph Speed Limit – Discussion Document

1. Introduction

The proposal for the introduction of a 20mph speed limit in the village roads of Chearsley was mooted at the May AGM. The reason for this was that there have been reports of vehicles driving at ‘unsafe’ speeds down the narrow lanes.

The aim of this document is to outline the arguments for and against the introduction of such a speed limit and to make recommendations accordingly.

2. Safety

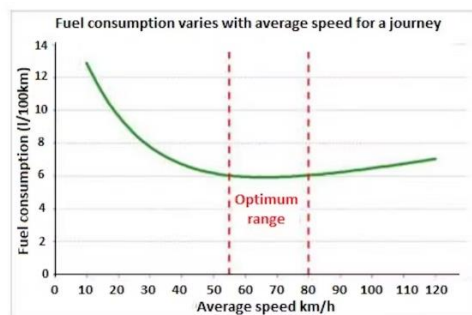
The lanes of Chearsley are narrow, include blind bends (e.g. Dark Lane) and have no pavements wherein pedestrians can only get out of the way of vehicles by seeking refuge in residential driveways. Whilst there has been anecdotal reporting of near misses with (usually) delivery vans, this author is not aware of any actual injury arising. Further information on this matter is sought.

The confined nature of the lanes is such that driving at speeds of even 20mph feels risky; there is often very little time to take any evasive action.

That said, the observations of this author would suggest that the great majority of road users in the lanes of Chearsley drive cautiously and considerately due to the confined nature of the lanes.

3. Environmental Concerns

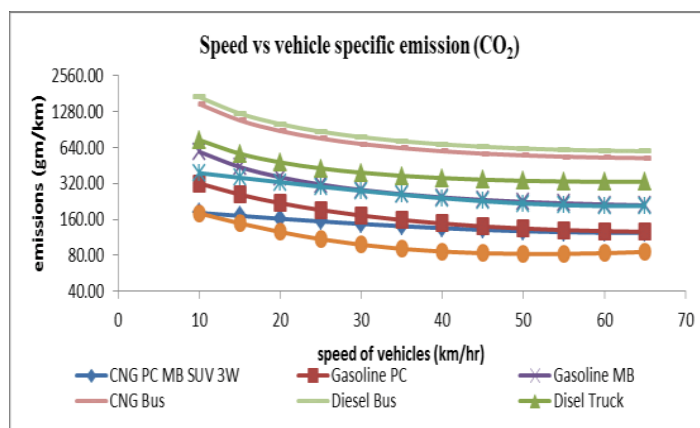
This issue is often cited as a reason for limiting speed. However, at low speeds emissions and particulates are, if anything, higher. Below are the results of two studies in New Zealand¹ and Dhaka² which provide corroboration.



Source: New Zealand Science Media Centre

¹ <https://theconversation.com/climate-explained-does-your-driving-speed-make-any-difference-to-your-cars-emissions-140246>

² https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Fig-A1-Relationships-between-average-speed-of-vehicles-and-emissions-CO-NOx-PM10_fig7_280234981



Relationships between average speed of vehicles and emissions (CO, NOx, PM10, Toxics [total emissions of Pb, NMVOC, PAHs, POPs, dioxins and furans] and CO2) from different vehicle categories of Dhaka City in 2012; calculated as per the methodology stated in EEA (2009) corrected according to Dhaka City characteristics.

One may conclude therefore that there is little, if any, environmental dividend from a reduction in speed limit.

4. Signage

The lanes include a number of 30mph 'repeaters' which are there to remind drivers that, despite there being no street lighting – the statutory indication of a 30mph zone – they should still observe the residential national speed limit.

The introduction of a 20mph zone would entail the introduction of new signage and also road markings. Leaving aside the visual disruption, this would entail some significant expense in which the Parish Council would need to undertake a process of speed surveys and speed limit assessments, all of which would need to be paid for by the Parish Council.

Bucks Council estimate the total cost for changing a speed limit is 'in excess of £10,000'.³

A suggestion has been voiced in the Parish Council and by parishioners that an interim measure would be for residents to put "20's plenty" stickers on their waste bins should they be left on the verge of the lanes. However, this measure is probably unlikely to deter the less considerate driver in the village.

5. Enforcement

Were a 20mph zone to be introduced there would need to be visible signs of enforcement. The setting up of Speedwatch points along the lanes, in consultation with Thames Valley Police, would go some way to enforcing the new limit.

However, the low density of traffic along the lanes means that the probability of a Speedwatch team catching a speeder is likely to be remote and would divert the team from the more immediate need to monitor and report speeding on the main roads through the village green.

³ <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/parking-roads-and-transport/road-safety/managing-speed/change-a-speed-limit/>

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

The conclusions of this document are those of the author and are offered for wider debate among the Parish Council. The introduction of a 20mph zone in Chearsley would have the following outcomes:

- Safety: marginal benefit if any. Most drivers are considerate given the confined nature of the lanes
- Environmental concerns: there is little environmental benefit. In published studies, the reduction in speed limits is accompanied by an environmental deficit
- Signage and expense: new signage would have to be applied for by the Parish Council from Bucks CC and then paid for out of PC funds
- Enforcement: given the infrequent traffic through the lanes, enforcement by means of the Speedwatch team is not expected to be effective

Recommendation:

- It is recommended that the adoption of a 20mph zone in the lanes of Chearsley be rejected
- Instead, it is recommended that the PC apply to the '20's Plenty' campaign <https://www.20splenty.org/> for bin stickers to be applied by those residents who are willing.