



SPEED MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

September 2025

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this strategy is to provide the framework within which North Yorkshire Council will review and implement all speed limits on its highway network. The aim is to achieve safe speeds consistent with the posted speed limit, reflecting the road function and environment and where appropriate, to encourage active modes.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 North Yorkshire Council is one of the largest local authority areas in the UK by geography, with a surfaced road network length of over 8,500 kilometres, a substantial proportion of which, 74%, is rural. Historically, speed limits in the main have been implemented and managed by seven local area highways teams with policy support and variable amounts of direct delivery, carried out by the Traffic Engineering Team.
- 2.2 Given the number of teams involved in assessing and managing speed limits across the County, variations exist in how the guidelines (for local highway authorities) set out in the Department for Transport (DfT) Circular 01/2013 Setting local speed Limits (as amended) is interpreted and applied.
- 2.3 The Council recognises the critical role that appropriate speed limit setting has on road safety. Further, given speed limits across the county have evolved over time, leading to a variable approach in their application, the case for adopting a consistently applied, countywide and planned process for the assessment, setting and review of speed limits, is considered appropriate.

3.0 Speed Management – Wider Local and National Policy Framework

- 3.1 There are demonstrable benefits in adopting a strategy for general speed management, with the aim of ensuring a greater level of coherence for the road user, reduced injury risk and safer roads across the urban and rural network, along with wider benefits for Place, active travel and carbon reduction. In so doing, it is important for the Strategy to align with the ambitions of the Council's Local Transport Plan, Climate Change Strategy and Public Health priorities and integrated with road safety partner agencies.
- 3.2 Whilst facts and figures will continue to form part of the evidence base for decision making along with the Department for Transport (DfT) Circular 01/2013 (Setting Local Speed Limits), an evolution of the more receptive approach towards the creation of lower speed limits, established with the introduction of the revised 20mph Speed Limit and Zone Policy in January 2022 [Review of 20mph Speed Limit Policy.pdf](#) and its subsequent review in July 2023, is an integral part of this Strategy ([Public Pack](#))[Agenda Document for Executive, 04/07/2023 11:00](#).

3.3 In development of a speed management strategy, the Council also recognises the importance of working in concert with its York and North Yorkshire road safety partners, including North Yorkshire Police, which has enforcement responsibility for speed limits and North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service, which also has a role in road safety education, training and publicity. Likewise, North Yorkshire Police adheres to the guidance set out in Circular 01/2013 Setting Local Speed Limits and without its support, the Council would not wish to make speed limit changes.

4.0 Speed Management Strategy – Principles

4.1 Speed limits should be evidence-led, self-explaining, encourage self-compliance and seek to reinforce people's assessment of what is a safe speed to travel. Speed limit regulatory signs are used as an indicator of the nature and risks posed by the road ahead. If there are potential hazards visible ahead, drivers are likely to respect a lower limit. There should be a consistent message between the speed limit and what the road looks like. A speed limit must look appropriate to the road user and should reflect the surrounding environment.

4.2 A signed speed limit is not the target speed, but under normal conditions, it should be seen as the maximum lawful and safe speed for that location. The choice of speed limit should take account of whether there is substantial roadside development and whether the road forms part of a recognised route for vulnerable road users, including whether there is a footway. If walking, cycling, horse riding, community or environmental factors are the primary function of the road section, consideration should be given to introducing a lower limit.

4.3 When drivers travel at unsafe and unacceptable speeds, the risk of collisions and injuries increases and significant and avoidable enforcement activity is needed. Setting speed limits that are safe, credible and compliant with drivers' expectations is the key challenge. If a speed limit is not reasonable and safe, it is likely to be ignored.

4.4 Any change to the existing speed limit must be reflective of changes in the road layout and characteristics. Where change is required following a review (Section 5 below), the desired intention for the most part is that speed limits will be lowered to achieve a safer road environment and where appropriate, to encourage active modes. There may though be the odd occasion when a speed limit should be raised to better reflect the road conditions and function. Whilst not the overarching aim of the Speed Management Strategy, where supporting evidence suggests a higher speed limit is more appropriate and not be detrimental to road safety, it should remain an option.

4.5 The Council will also continue to seek support from North Yorkshire Police before any speed limit proposal is considered for implementation. Without this support in place, it is unlikely any speed limit reduction will be taken forward.

4.6 Alongside any quantitative or qualitative analysis required that may be required, the Strategy acknowledges that local communities and their elected representatives are at the heart of local decision making and so is clear that the principles on which the Strategy is based are:

- Empowering local communities;
- Being more responsive to their needs;
- Evidence based;
- Data led;
- Consistent with national guidance;
- Supporting the wider land use and transport policy agenda

- 4.7 Engaging with all relevant stakeholders is key, these include:
- Town/Parish Councils
 - NYC divisional members
 - North Yorkshire Police
 - Internal NYC teams, e.g. Road Safety and Area Highway Team
 - Y&NY Road safety Partnership at the policy and strategy level
 - Environment Corporate Director and Executive Member for Highways and Transportation (Section 9 Governance and Oversight).
- 4.7 This list is not exhaustive and where there are other interest groups, they will be included in the stakeholder engagement exercise and/or consultation process.
- 4.8 The key documents to be used for the purposes of developing and delivering the Strategy and speed limit reviews are:
- i. Circular 01/2013 Setting local speed limits
 - ii. 20mph Speed Limit and Zone Policy (January 2022) [Review of 20mph Speed Limit Policy.pdf](#)
 - iii. Review of 20mph Speed Limit and Zone Policy Report (July 2023) ([Public Pack](#))[Agenda Document for Executive, 04/07/2023 11:00](#)
 - iv. York and North Yorkshire Road Safety Partnership Speed Management Protocol
 - v. Temporary Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS) Protocol
- 4.9 The Speed Management Strategy also recognises the Code of Practice 'Well Managed Highway Infrastructure' with respect to setting speed limits according to the function of a road and linkages to neighbouring authorities' speed limit setting on cross-boundary parts of the road network.
- 5.0 SPEED MANAGEMENT STRATEGY – PRACTICAL APPLICATION**
- 5.1 Over time, it is proposed to undertake a series of planned speed limit reviews across the whole road network, working through a prioritised programme. The process for undertaking these reviews is set out further in Appendix 1.
- 5.2 The ranking methodology will be based on the frequency of collisions over the previous five years and the population and the extent of road network in the area. In order to generate a risk rating, these factors will be combined to create a 'collision rate per capita' and a 'collision rate per km' score, which is then averaged out.
- 5.3 There will be occasions when a speed limit review on one road may extend into a neighbouring locality and so there is a level of flexibility and pragmatism, to allow the extent of the speed limit to be fully assessed. There will also be times when officers may have to prioritise an assessment in another locality because of an emerging collision pattern, or because it makes sense to integrate a review with other road safety engineering activity.
- 5.4 Similarly, it may also make sense on occasion to bring forward a speed limit review, in order to tie in with a parish or town council request. For the most part though, the expectation is that speed limit review requests will form part of the planned speed limit review timetable. Nevertheless, officers will endeavour in the main, to remain consistent with progressing the reviews in line with the prioritised programme.
- 6.0 PRIORITISATION OF SPEED LIMITS**
- 6.1 The expectation is that the speed limit reviews will generate a draft pipeline of largely lower speed limit schemes, which in time will need to be ranked against the budget at the point at which the aggregate cost of pipeline schemes exceeds the funding available. This further

prioritisation methodology is currently in development and will be added into the Strategy when required. Given the likely relatively low cost of typical signed only schemes, it is expected that the budget for them is more than sufficient to deliver the schemes without the need to constrain their introduction through a ranking process at this time.

7.0 SPEED MANAGEMENT STRATEGY - NATIONAL PARKS AND NATIONAL LANDSCAPES

- 7.1 Circular 01/2013, published by the DfT states that when a C or Unclassified single carriageway rural road is within a National Park or National Landscape or if it forms part of a recommended route for vulnerable road users outside these areas, a speed limit of 40mph may be considered. Authorities also have the power to use relevant signage for 40mph zones in these areas.
- 7.2 This is a clear steer on lower quality roads in areas of natural beauty and the Council believes this is the right approach to improve the safety of vulnerable road users using the rural network in North Yorkshire.
- 7.3 North Yorkshire is a predominantly rural landscape and includes large parts of the North York Moors National Park and the Yorkshire Dales National Park. The County also includes several National Landscapes such as Nidderdale, Howardian Hills and the Forest of Bowland. Well over half of the County is currently within either a National Park or National Landscape.
- 7.4 The popularity of cycling on rural roads will continue to rise, especially with the introduction of more affordable e-bikes. As a result, North Yorkshire's rural road network is set to become even more popular with leisure cyclists and keeping them and vulnerable road users generally, safe, is a priority.
- 7.5 Given the popularity and size of the National Parks and National Landscapes in North Yorkshire, it is proposed that the Council will reduce the speed limit to 40mph in circumstances when all the following conditions are met:
- i. the road is C Class or Unclassified
 - ii. it is a recommended (mapped or signed) route for vulnerable road users i.e. cycling route, walking route or horse riding route
 - iii. there is a significant risk to vulnerable road users, particularly children
 - iv. the carriageway width and alignment encourages lower speeds
 - v. the existing mean speed and volume are appropriate
 - vi. the road environment looks and feels appropriate for a 40mph speed limit
 - vii. there is no footway or a sub-standard footway
 - viii. there is local community, local member, National Landscape and National Landscapes and police support

It is considered that this approach is also consistent with and helps satisfy its duties under the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act (2023), to seek to further the purposes of protected landscapes.

8.0 SPEED MANAGEMENT STRATEGY – COMPLEMENTARY ACTIVITY

- 8.1 In addition to the speed limit reviews, the Council and its road safety partners also undertake the following related activity, which plays an equally important role in road safety and managing speed across the County:
- i. **Education:** informed by road casualty statistics, NYC works with its road safety partners on identifying higher risk road user road user groups and the development and implementation of attitude and behavioural change programmes;

- ii. **Engineering:** collision investigation and analysis, including cluster site and route analysis and fatal collision investigation, as well as initiatives such as the Temporary VAS Protocol and 20mph Speed Limit and Zone Policy.
- iii. **Enforcement:** Support for North Yorkshire Police on their core activity.

8.2 The expectation is that implementation of the speed limit reviews will be integrated with other core road safety engineering and road safety partnership activity.

9.0 SPEED MANAGEMENT STRATEGY - GOVERNANCE AND OVERSIGHT

9.1 In a similar way to the identification and implementation of the Highways Capital Maintenance Works Programme, it is intended that the annual works programme for speed limit schemes would be submitted to the Environment Corporate Director and Executive Member for approval.

9.2 In practicality, subject to how quickly the reviews are carried out, there may be more than one Environment Executive report each year, seeking approval to introduce the schemes, which are supported by the local community for implementation.

9.3 Local member input, which is key, would be through consultation on the individual schemes as they are identified and generated.

SPEED LIMIT REVIEW PROCESS MAP

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