

Speed limit review FAQ

How can I find out about the Review?

The review was advertised via a press release, although social media has also picked it up. We won't be taking any comments raised there into the review as a formal request. Only those that respond to the tm.consultations@wokingham.gov.uk email address with a specific location will be investigated. Each resident request will receive a response about the investigation on their road and a summary report of all roads investigated and borough-wide results will be prepared and made available on the website in the autumn.

Which roads are being considered and why?

The Speed Limit Review is targeted at A & B class roads. It's a recommendation of Government that speed limits are regularly reviewed by highway authorities and a general rule of thumb for this is every 4/5 years. The last review in Wokingham was undertaken in 2011, so it's a bit overdue.

What is involved in the Review?

The Council will be gathering data on traffic speeds from a wide variety of sources to inform decision making about speed limits and road safety in general. However, the data gathering phase for a speed limit review was always on our 2020/21 work programme

Are you going to consult with residents?

Public consultation doesn't normally form part of the review process set out by Government. The decision to open this opportunity for residents to comment was taken because of the level of concern about speeds that we were receiving, especially during COVID. Roughly a fifth of all complaints are about speed or speed related driving and a review of just the A&B roads often leads to complaints that we are not addressing local roads.

When does the consultation close?

We haven't set a closing date, deliberately because residents views will gradually develop as COVID eases and traders open for business, with more people walking and cycling and being exposed to traffic conditions than they have been. However, we will start individual street assessments towards the start of July. Once assessments have been done, we will share the data with police and discuss the viability of any changes and secure support for these with a commitment to enforce.

What will you do with all the data?

Our aim is to get the correct limits for the roads we have, better compliance with existing or changed limits and therefore a commitment to enforce from TVP.

We hope to be able to continue the provision of street specific speed information to residents beyond the review period, as an information service. We have been developing a speed management tool that will enable us to respond directly to resident queries about speeding, rather than defer them until surveys could be undertaken.

Who is responsible for enforcing speed limits?

The Council has no legal powers to enforce speed limits. Thames Valley Police enforce speed limits according to the resources they have available. In the follow up to COVID, the National Police Chiefs Council responded to public concern over speeds on quieter roads during lock down and decided to push increased speed enforcement and speed awareness and asked local police forces to support this through their PR. The Council, as a partner authority to TVP in the Safer Roads Partnership, is supporting the initiative.

If justified, will you reduce the speed limit?

Government guidance suggests that some speed limits may need to be increased as part of a review. However, if supported by the data, we will liaise with Thames Valley Police to agree any revised speed limit. Once agreed, we will commence statutory processes for changing limits agreed and publish these for public objections to be heard. Sometimes, TVP will not accept a lower speed limit without speed management or traffic calming measures being provided and we may also have to consider schemes like this to support our case. If we do, we will also have to wait until we have resources to implement these, which may also be subject to consultation processes.

How long will it take to implement a new speed limit?

The results will go through the normal Individual Executive Member Decision process. This is not an amendment Traffic Regulation Order, it doesn't have anything to do with the regular parking amendments we introduce. Implementation will likely be after the TRO and IEMD processes have concluded, I am hopeful this will be towards the end of this financial year. We may have to determine this subject to satisfactory resources being available for the relevant signing works.

What else is the Council doing to support walking & cycling after lockdown?

Alongside the work we do to promote sustainable travel and encourage walking and cycling for all journey where it's feasible, the work that we are doing to support walking and cycling in transition from lockdown is separate from this speed limit review. We will be introducing experimental measures to support walking & cycling as lockdown eases, especially in urban areas. However, the work that we are doing to support walking and cycling in transition from lockdown is separate from this speed limit review. The review is about the suitability of existing limits and levels of non-compliance, with changes being recommended where better compliance can be achieved.

Managing speed is good for safety, but what about the environment?

The effects on air quality, congestion etc are often determined by the way people drive in relation to speed limits, which are not based on 85%ile speeds, but mean speeds. The mitigation of air pollution on the network is a separate activity and part of the Council's Climate Emergency action plan, especially the congestion reduction strategy. Air pollution has more to do with the management of traffic volume, vehicle classification and highway layout than speed limits, but if the limit is appropriate for the road conditions and closer compliance can be achieved, this generally results in better environmental performance.