





Report of^[x1]: Environment Scrutiny Committee
To^[x2]: City Executive Board
Date^[x3]: 11th. June 2008
Item No^[EM4]:
Title of Report ^[x5]: 20mph Oxford



Summary and Recommendations




Purpose of report^[x6]: To inform the City Executive Board of  recommendations made by Environment Scrutiny Committee on 20mph  ed limits.



Key decision^[x7]: No


Board Member^[x8]: Cllr. Colin Cook


Scrutiny Responsibility^[x9]: Environment Scrutiny Committee




Ward(s) affected^[x10]: All

Report Approved by:
 nvironment Scrutiny Committee
 James Pownell – Legal services
 Andy Collett –  ance
 Paul Spencer – Environmental Development ^[EM11]




Policy Framework^[x12]: Corporate Plan priority to improve the local  ironment, economy and quality of life.




Recommendation(s)^[x13]: Environment Scrutiny Committee recommends that the City Executive Board:

1. Consider setting up a joint working group with the County Council to discuss the implementation of 20 mph zones and other traffic and transport issues affecting the City.



2. Ask the Head of City Development to circulate a report to the area committees on encouraging the best use of the development control process



Encourage the introduction of Home Zones, and to consider how policy

might be developed to influence the implementation of 20 mph zones and speed limits.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting on 14th April, Environment Scrutiny Committee considered the issue of 20mph zones and speed limits in Oxford. The Committee is very supportive of the introduction of 20mph speed limits in Oxford and has made two recommendations to the Executive Board on this issue.

2. 20mph Speed Limits

- 2.1 It is the responsibility of Oxfordshire County Council to implement 20mph speed limits or zones. The County Council have a policy on the introduction of 20mph speed limits, which states that they are supportive of their introduction. However, they will only consider introducing a 20mph speed limit or zone in streets where mean speeds are already below 25mph. This is in line with guidance from central government.
- 2.2 The Environment Scrutiny Committee would like the County Council to consider introducing citywide 20mph speed limits, especially in residential areas. As well as improving road safety, 20mph speed limits can have a positive impact on the quality of life for local residents. For example, traffic isn't as noisy, and slower traffic encourages more cycling and walking. The Chair of Environment Scrutiny Committee has written to Councillor Ian Hudspeth, cabinet members for transport, on this matter.
- 2.3 In order for the City Council to have greater influence on transport issues in the city, Environment Scrutiny Committee recommend that attempts are made to set up a joint working group with the County Council to discuss the city's transport needs, including 20mph zones. Joint working has been successful in the past (for example, integration of the Air Quality Action Plan into the Local Transport Plan) and the Scrutiny Committee hopes that EB and the County Council will look favourably at this recommendation.
- 2.4 In addition to this, the Scrutiny Committee believes that the City Council could do more through the planning process to secure 20mph limits and zones in the city. As a result, it has recommended that the Executive Board ask the Head of City Development to prepare a report for area committees on the best use of the development control process to encourage the introduction of Home Zones, and to consider how policy might be developed to influence the implementation of 20 mph zones and speed limits.

2.5 The minutes from Environment Scrutiny Committee on 14th April are included at appendix 1 to this report. The reports prepared for the Committee meeting by the Scrutiny Officer and the campaign group Life Begins at 20 are available on request from the Scrutiny Team and also on the City Council's website.

3. **Comments from the Chief Executive**

It is suggested that this work is progressed through the City and County bilateral meetings

Below is a letter in response to the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee from the Chief Executive

Dear Sid,

Re: 20 mph Oxford

THIS WAS DRAFTED JUST BEFORE THE ELECTIONS BUT I THOUGHT YOU MAY STILL BE INTERESTED.

I write in response to your letter dated 17th April 2008. I would firstly refer you to a response from the City Council to a letter received a few months ago from 'Life Begins at 20', which I attach.

I would address the specific points raised by LB@20 as follows:

(1) How can the City re-engage with the concept of streets as places in which people can flourish, beyond the ways in which it at present exercises its influence over the 'streetscape'?

You will of course be aware of the adopted Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016. As referred to in the attached earlier letter, Core Policies within this document demonstrate the level of commitment of the City Council to streets as social spaces. The policies referred to encourage design for slow traffic movement, and shared street space such as Home Zones. These principles are carried through to Parking Standards, Transport Assessments and Travel Plans SPD (downloadable from www.oxford.gov.uk/spd - see in particular paragraphs 95-99 of the SPD).

You will also be aware of the emerging Oxford Core Strategy (the final draft of which will be subject to formal consultation in the summer). One of the headline visions to be set out is *"to enhance the character, culture and role of district and neighbourhood centres across Oxford"* and that *"we will seek to improve the public realm"* and *"reduce the fear of crime"*. The detailed text and policy relating to urban design and townscape character will make clear that new development will be expected to respect the unique townscape characteristics of the area. The policy being drafted on

Community and Culture will also explicitly support community street events.

Hence we have every confidence as officers that the physical and cultural development of Oxford's various communities will encourage the streets of Oxford to flourish as social spaces.

(2) The County is prepared to implement 20mph on the grounds of safety. Is the City in a position to contribute financially to a citywide 20mph scheme to address the quality of life aspects which are not at present addressed?

As far as Officers are aware, there are currently no available funds for contributing financially to a citywide 20mph scheme. However as mentioned above, the City Council is fully supportive of enhancing the social function of streets and spaces, for example in helping to shape new development, and this generally assumes design speeds of 20mph or less. Wider efforts to introduce statutory speed controls are necessarily the financial responsibility of Oxfordshire County Council as the Local Highways Authority.

(3) Are there any existing developer contributions which could be used for such support?

All highways related developer contributions are paid directly to the County Council as the Local Highways Authority. The City Council does not, therefore, hold any such funds.

(4) What steps can the City take to ensure that the County addresses quality of life and 20mph limits when preparing its next Local Transport Plan, for the period 2011-16?

The City Council is required to be consulted as a stakeholder as the next Local Transport Plan is prepared. Also, the LTP must take account of the relevant development plan and spatial strategy. Further to this, the City and County Councils have jointly agreed to commit to a quarterly Transport and Parking Liaison Meeting, to ensure proactive liaison before firm decisions are taken regarding strategic transport and parking issues affecting Oxford. The meetings will be between the relevant Portfolio Holders supported by Chief Officers. This protocol will ensure thorough consultation during the formative stages of the next LTP.

I hope these comments provide members of Environmental Scrutiny Committee with the appropriate level of information.

Yours sincerely

Peter Sloman
Chief Executive

4. Comments from the Board Member

I am happy to refer the issue of 20 mph zones, together with associated issues such as evidence gathering, enforcement and the use of speed guns by the community, to the City County Bi-lateral Meeting in order that we may discuss with the County Council how best to pursue the matter.

Name and contact details of author^[x14]:

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Background papers: None



Appendix 1

Minutes of Environment Scrutiny Committee – 14th April 2008.

84. 20 MILE PER HOUR OXFORD

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report (previously circulated now appended), presenting information on the possibilities for 20mph speed limits in Oxford. With the agreement of the Committee, Corinne Grimley-Evans, Richard Bradley and Paul Cullen from Life Begins at 20 participated in the discussion and presented some information which picked up on issues raised in the officers report.

Mr Bradley said that a reduction in the speed limit to 20 mph not only made the streets safer but also made them feel safer to local people and improved the quality of life for pedestrians. The costs involved in establishing 20mph zones could be counteracted by the introduction of measures on a piecemeal basis and by making use of the expertise of other local authorities. In North Lanarkshire, data demonstrated the introduction of such measures to be cost effective. For example, spending on dealing with accidents had reduced. Additionally, 20mph speed limits can help reduce street clutter, as there is less need for signs to direct slow moving traffic. Many of the perceived objections to the proposals could be overcome by a change in attitude to street safety, which needed to be included in the formulation of transport policy.

Councillor Tanner referred to two separate letters sent to him by the County Council highways section. The first letter stated explicitly that the County Council did not condone children playing in the streets, while the second confirmed that street safety measures would only be considered after a certain number of accidents had been recorded. Members agreed that these examples illustrated that the objection to street safety went beyond the financial means to implement measures, to the way in which the function of streets were perceived by the County Council. Councillor Huzzey said that there was a difference of opinion between the City Council and the County Council on the future approach to reclaiming the streets and a shared space philosophy. He suggested that a letter might be sent to other Councils across the Country with the aim of creating a national profile for the issue.

Councillor Hollander said that playing in the street might not always be possible and there were some areas where a 20 mph speed restriction would be inappropriate with the need to maintain the flow of traffic. He also asked about the evidence produced by North Lanarkshire suggesting that the introduction of 20mph zones had proved value for money. Councillor Timbs asked about enforcement, a matter which had been raised at the local police board. Councillor Pressel said that the Department of Transport document referred to in the report was out of date, that comparisons should be made with other authorities and asked why a County Council representative was not present. The Chair said that County Councillor Hudspeth had been invited but was on holiday and that he did not want an officer to attend unless he was also there. Councillor Pressel said that Oxford should have been asked to participate in a trial citywide 20mph

scheme after Thame had refused and that the Council could do other things to reduce traffic speeds, such as making Home Zones a condition of new developments within the planning process.

Councillor Fooks said that she had also written to the County Council but had received an unhelpful reply referring to costs, problems with legislation, enforcement and the use of other traffic calming measures. She agreed that there was a need to press for a change in philosophy and that it was important to keep raising awareness. There was also a need to recapture some of the influence through joint working with the County Council on transport proposals such as existed during the early stages of the Oxford Transport Strategy.

The Chair said that there was a consensus on the general issue. Mr Cullen thanked the Committee for its support. He said that the citizens needed to create the culture where such proposals were encouraged and that there was evidence that this was happening with growing support to make the streets safer for pedestrians of all ages. This could also be seen where a new generation of transport policy people began to replace the previous generation bringing a shift in thinking towards policy development.

Resolved to:

1. Ask the Chair to:

- a. write to the Government on the national issues regarding the implementation of 20mph zones.**
- b. write to the County Council expressing concern about the issues raised by Councillor Tanner and asking the County Council to reconsider its apparent opposition to 20 mph zones, and ask them for their views on the Manual for Streets.**
- c. write to the Chief Executive of the City Council requesting answers to the questions raised in the report produced by Life Begins at 20.**

2. Ask the Executive Board to:

- a. consider setting up a joint working group with the County Council to discuss the implementation of 20 mph zones and other traffic issues affecting the City.**
- b. ask the Head of City Development to circulate a report to the area committees on encouraging the best use of the development control process to encourage the introduction of Home Zones, and to consider how policy might be developed to influence the implementation of 20 mph zones and speed limits.**