

**20s Plenty for Hertfordshire** is a broad-based group campaigning for 20mph to be the default speed limit across urban areas and built-up village streets. We believe its time has come!



## **Highways and Environment Cabinet Panel (HECP) meeting, 19/11/2020, Briefing Paper on the Speed Management Strategy (SMS).**

### **The revised SMS would be a missed opportunity for safer, cleaner, and healthier streets in Hertfordshire.**

The Speed Management Strategy recognises “*the importance of encouraging active travel (cycling and walking) ... in line with LTP4 and the strong public desire for implementation of 20mph speed limits over wider areas*” (para 1.1.9). If this is the case, we would encourage HEPC members to consider the following questions before giving their approval to the SMS:

- Why does Hertfordshire lag so far behind large parts of the UK on implementing default 20mph areas? More than 20 million people in the UK now live, or soon will do, in ‘default 20’ areas. In Hertfordshire, there are no such areas. Why should Hertfordshire not have them? Our petition, which reached 250 ‘signatures’ in less than 48 hours, suggests that the Hertfordshire public want them too.
- Covid-19 is a game-changer, why does HCC not use the SMS to seize the current opportunity and really drive progress towards LTP4’s active travel aspirations? The DfT on 13 November urged councils to do more to promote safe walking and cycling as part of the response to the Covid-19 pandemic and has provided funding to do so.
- Why is the DfT Guidance applied in such a backward-looking manner?
  - DfT Guidance does not require that every road in a proposed 20mph area have an average speed of 24mph or less. Why does Hertfordshire require it?
  - DfT Guidance does not require road speeds to be measured at their fastest point under free-flowing conditions. Why does Hertfordshire require it?
  - DfT Guidance does not require expensive and unpopular engineering solutions where measured average speed exceeds 24mph. Why does Hertfordshire require it?
- Why are changes being made to the SMS that would make implementing wider 20mph areas more difficult, not less? For example, the revised strategy removes the provision from the previous SMS that permitted 10% of roads in a proposed scheme to exceed the 24mph threshold?

We believe that HECP has an opportunity to take decisive action in these unique circumstances to use the revision of the SMS to address public concerns about the environment and the growing demand for slower vehicle speeds in local streets?

## The revised Speed Management Strategy: key concerns:

Wide area 20mph limits:

- **Is there anything new?:** No, nothing substantive. The new SMS is superficially more positive towards wider 20mph areas and active travel but is not an improvement over the July consultation and, as before, **does nothing in practical terms to support active travel as per LTP4.**
- **Wider 20mph areas, easier or harder?:** Harder. The 10% exemption under the March 2014 SMS has been removed, the street-by-street approach retained and the threshold reduced from 25mph in the consultation document to 24mph in the SMS.
- **Is it value for money?** No. The street-by-street approach with a 24mph threshold will continue deliver a patchwork of small 20mph limits bisected by faster roads. These are confusing for all road users and shown to offer poor self-enforcement. And they - at 3-8 times more costly – they are expensive and provide **poor value to the taxpayer.**
- **Does speed rule?** Yes. Current, measured speed will continue to set speed limits in Hertfordshire. This is based on **a misleading interpretation** of DfT Guidance. The much vaunted ‘self compliance’ principle is not, as is claimed, *the key principle* in the DfT Guidance; it is one of several principles. The Annex contains a list of these misleading and inaccurate ‘interpretations’.
- **Do you know a vulnerable (road) user?** If they’re pregnant the SMS says that they’re not vulnerable. Really? If you’re pregnant and crossing the road, or you have young children, speed and its management are directly relevant you. The Inequalities Assessment is flawed. Is the SMS on the HCC risk register? If not, it should be.
- **Will it decarbonise Transport?** No. For all the reasons stated above, the car will continue to be the status quo choice for short journeys in Hertfordshire. **The Strategy as presented will embed the status quo - a missed opportunity.**

## Our Call to Action

We ask all members of the Highways and Environment Cabinet Panel to note and reflect on the growing level of public interest in and concern about managing speed in their local streets.

In its revised form the SMS offers no practical improvements to address these concerns and introduce wide-area 20mph zones, which is what many residents in Hertfordshire want.

The headline words in the SMS show that HCC do recognise a public aspiration to walk and cycle more, to have safer and healthier streets but, the strategy in its current form will fail to meet those aspirations.

We encourage Members from all political parties to reject the SMS and require substantial changes to be made that prioritise and facilitate the widespread adoption of 20mph across our towns and villages.