

REGULATORY COMMITTEE
17th DECEMBER 2003

20 MPH ZONES OUTSIDE SCHOOLS IN WILTSHIRE

Purpose of Report

1. To consider the TRL report on 20 mph zones outside schools and to agree a policy for Wiltshire.

Background

2. Consultants TRL were commissioned to investigate the issues surrounding the installation of 20 mph zones outside schools. The purpose of the investigation was to provide robust evidence of the desirability or otherwise of installing such zones and to provide full information and guidance to support the development of a countywide policy for Wiltshire.
3. In carrying out the investigation, TRL undertook a number of activities:-
 - (i) Accident and casualty analysis
 - (ii) Identification of national issues, policy and background
 - (iii) An investigation of what counties with similar characteristics to Wiltshire are doing with regard to 20 mph zones outside schools
 - (iv) Examination of the issue of justification of the installation of 20 mph zones at schools, in the context of the wider child road safety programme in Wiltshire
4. The TRL report has now been received and copies are available in the **Members' Room**. This report covers the main findings and its recommendations.

Detail

5. To determine whether there is a casualty reduction case for the implementation of 20 mph zones outside every school in Wiltshire, an analysis was undertaken into child accidents and casualties throughout the County and, in particular, outside schools. The analysis involved:-
 - a comparison between Wiltshire and similar authorities
 - the identification of child accidents/casualties outside schools

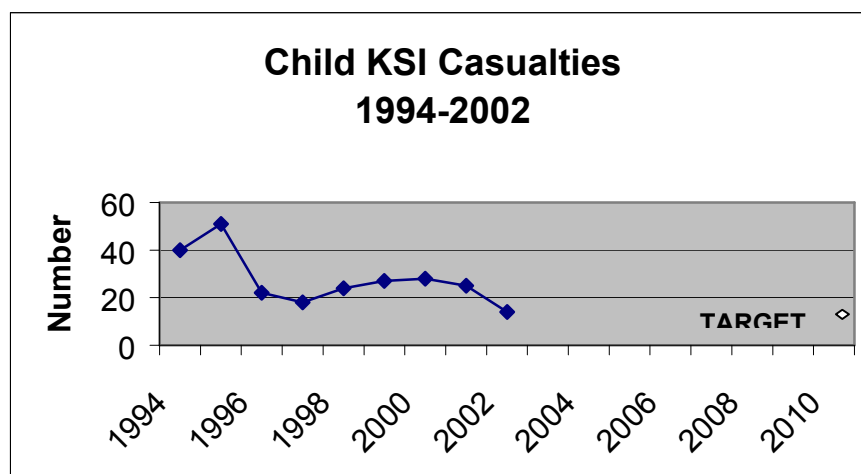
6. The authorities used for comparison purposes are those grouped by the Audit Commission for identifying and comparing similar authorities:-
 - Bedfordshire
 - Cornwall
 - Devon
 - Dorset
 - East Sussex
 - Gloucestershire
 - Lincolnshire
 - Shropshire
 - Somerset
 - Warwickshire
7. To obtain a wider understanding of the issues concerning 20 mph zones outside schools, TRL either made contact with national bodies or reviewed existing published literature.
8. A summary of TRL's findings is as follows:-
 - (i) Wiltshire has formulated with the police and health authorities a road safety strategy involving a number of activities aimed at further reducing child casualties.
 - (ii) With respect to the counties in the similar counties group, Wiltshire does not have an exceptional child casualty problem.
 - (iii) In general, Wiltshire performs better than the average for the group, especially in terms of exposure to risk of each child.
 - (iv) There are very few accidents outside schools involving children walking or cycling.
 - (v) When accidents do occur outside schools, the severity of injury is less severe than average for the type of casualty.
 - (vi) The problem at schools is more perceived than actual.
 - (vii) There is general support for the use of 20 mph zones from all the organisations contacted (Department for Transport, Transport 2000, BRAKE and Sustrans).
 - (viii) 20 mph zones should be applied over an area and not on stretches of road less than 500 metres in length.
 - (ix) Unless the 85th percentile speed is already less than 24 mph, the zone will need to be mandatory and supported by traffic calming, otherwise it will be of limited value and may lose residential support.
 - (x) Variable speed limits should not be used, according to Department for Transport advice.
 - (xi) 20 mph zones are of doubtful benefit if they are only applied outside schools.
 - (xii) Each county contacted indicated that there were no identifiable casualty clusters outside schools.

- (xiii) In only one of the rural counties surveyed is there a policy to introduce 20 mph zones outside all schools in the county. This county is now experiencing difficulties caused by the additional signing required to support the zones.
- (xiv) Most of the counties will consider 20 mph zones outside schools. However, there is definitely a move towards implementing wider zones to address problems away from the school entrance.
- (xv) There is a mixture of mandatory and advisory zones being installed. In general, the mandatory zones are supported by traffic calming. In the one county introducing zones outside all schools, the zones generally have no traffic calming. There is very limited use of variable speed limits.
- (xvi) Some of the counties will only consider a zone if it is actively supported by the school and parents. There is some evidence that a purely advisory zone can be extremely effective when supported by the local community.
- (xvii) The cost for a zone varies widely. However, the typical cost for a zone is approximately £10,000 which primarily just covers legal and signing costs.
- (xviii) Support for zones, by engineers and members, varies widely.
- (xix) It seems that the most productive approach is based on the development of guidelines for implementation based on casualty figures, vehicle speeds and number of children at the location, but only if there is support for the zone from those most affected by its introduction.

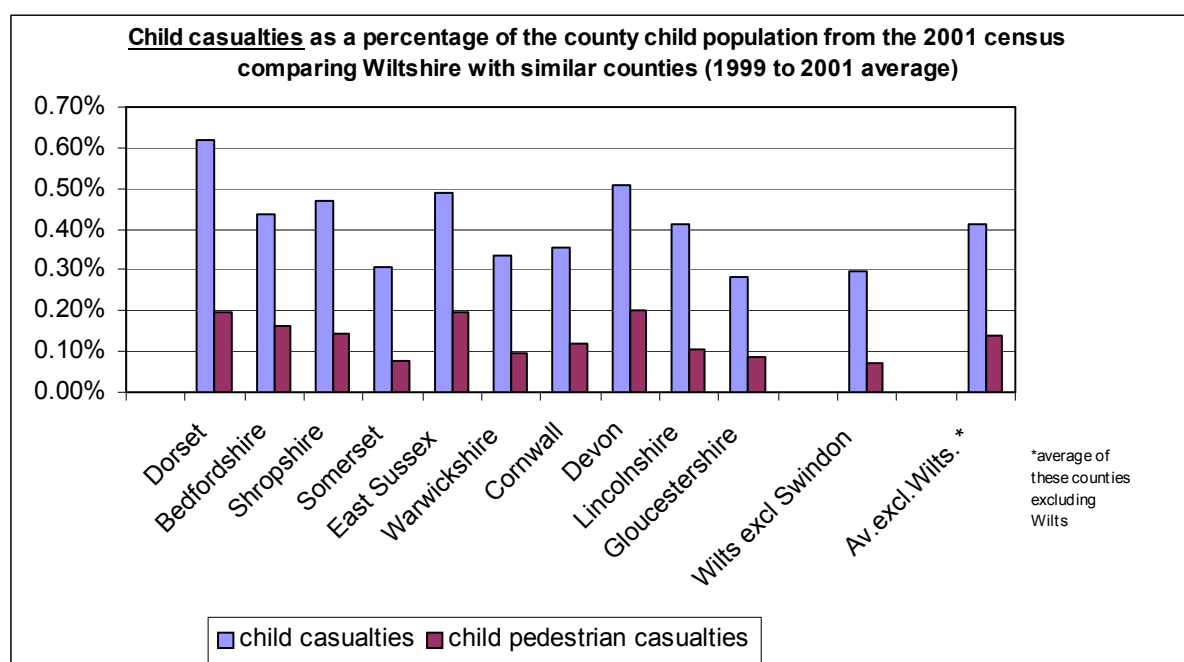
Main Considerations for the Council

9. The impact of introducing a policy of 20 mph zones outside schools in the County has been considered by TRL, particularly in relation to Wiltshire's commitment to casualty reduction targets and the activities set out in the Wiltshire Road Safety Strategy for reducing child casualties. Detailed analysis of the individual accidents suggests that few of these accidents would have actually been prevented by the introduction of a 20 mph zone. The figure in **Appendix 1** puts the child casualties at schools into perspective with the overall casualty problem in the County. In 2002 there were 37 children travelling to or from school involved in road accidents, only six of which occurred near to a school. This is 2% of all child casualties.
10. The current policy of preventing child casualties by undertaking the activities set out in the Wiltshire Road Safety Strategy developed and delivered jointly with the Police and the Health Authorities has no doubt contributed to the County Council's good record on child casualties. The work of the authority's Road Safety Unit with schools on pedestrian and cycle training is considered particularly important. The aim is to give children the necessary road safety skills to make them safer throughout the highway network.
11. The Road Safety Education, Training and Publicity service of the County Council has recently undergone a Best Value Review. It concluded that when the service is compared with that provided by other authorities, it is apparent that the service gives good value for money, providing the full range of road safety activities on budgets modest in comparison with other authorities.

12. The Government's target for 2010 of reducing the number of children killed or seriously injured by 50% has already been exceeded in Wiltshire. **Figure 1** below shows the yearly reductions achieved. However, given the low numbers the reductions are likely to fluctuate and therefore the momentum must be maintained and new initiatives considered. For example, a new pedestrian training scheme, 'Walksafe', has been developed for Wiltshire schools and a scheme to train younger cyclists is to be developed.



13. **Figure 2** below shows the child casualties in Wiltshire compared with similar authorities.



Environmental Impact of the Proposal

14. The erection of signing and provision of road markings can be considered detrimental to the visual environment. However, measures that improve safety could encourage walking and cycling rather than use of the car, with obvious benefits to the environment.

Risk Assessment

15. The resources available for casualty reduction are limited and therefore, to achieve maximum benefit, they should be used in the most effective way. Use of resources to address perceived problems would reduce the likelihood of the County Council achieving the national casualty reduction targets and the LPSA target.

Financial Implications

16. Using an average figure of £10,000 per scheme (which would permit only minimal site works), a budget of £2,580,000 would be needed to treat all of the state schools. Even based on the assumption that all the casualties near schools could be eliminated (which is by no means certain), it would take 32 years to recoup the investment (excluding any maintenance costs) assuming a 3.1% first year rate of return. However, if the £2,580,000 were invested in conventional Local Safety Schemes (LSS), based on the treatment of actual accident problems, the return is likely to be in the region of £8 million over the same period, assuming the typical first year rate of return of 300% for LSS.
17. In economic terms, the implementation of 20 mph zones outside all schools represents a very poor investment. The funds committed to their introduction will impact on the ability to achieve the casualty reduction targets Wiltshire is already committed to achieving.

Conclusions

18. Considering the very large numbers of pedestrian movements into and out of schools each day in Wiltshire, child pedestrian casualties are an extremely rare event. Accident remedial measures are normally applied at sites once it has been established that there is a problem and that the problem will recur if untreated. Sites are not treated in anticipation of an accident happening as this would create an unsustainable burden on resources. It is important to accurately identify the accident contributory factors in order to apply the most appropriate remedial measures. It is fallacious to assume that 20 mph zones at schools are a blanket solution for all pedestrian accidents.
19. The study has shown that whilst there is public and political pressure on local authorities to introduce 20 mph zones at schools, there is no hard evidence to show that they will make a contribution to safety since the majority of schools do not have an accident problem in the first place.
20. In Wiltshire there is no economic justification for blanket 20 mph zones based on cost benefit analysis and it could be argued that if more funding were available it should be used to fund extra pedestrian and cycle training activity which have contributed to the County's good safety record for children.
21. With regard to enforcement, the view of the Police is that 20 mph zones should be self-enforcing and this means engineering measures would considerably increase the installation cost.

22. Discussions with other similar Local Authorities suggest that the most effective policy is to develop a set of guidelines which address the actual and perceived problems outside schools. The suitability of a zone should be tested against a set of criteria, to include accident and casualty frequency, vehicle speeds, the number of child and pedestrian movements, and level of congestion.

Reason for Recommendation

23. On considering the findings of the TRL report it is appropriate to now agree a policy for speed restrictions at Wiltshire schools. In Wiltshire there are 258 state primary, middle, secondary and special schools. Some have split sites and all but 19 have a speed limit of 30 mph or less on the road outside the school.

Future Policy

In the towns

24. Amongst other things, requests for traffic calming are currently being assessed using a criteria based approach. The requests are being considered against the Government's transport objectives in order to gauge priority and try to identify suitable transport projects for the County Council's future works programme funded from the Integrated Transport allocation in the Local Transport Plan settlement. Within 30 mph areas, as part of the selection process, priority for traffic calming (and consequently a 20 mph zone) could be given to those areas which include a school that has an effective and active School Travel Plan. There are likely (or at least potentially likely) to be significant numbers of children walking and cycling to and from school.

In Rural Areas

25. The schools (16 primary, 2 secondary and 1 special needs) not covered by a 30 mph speed limit are listed in **Appendix 2** together with an indication of the current restriction in force. It is recommended that 30 mph should be the normal restriction outside schools unless there are extenuating circumstances. The recommendations for each of the rural schools currently without a 30 mph limit are explained in **Appendix 3**.
26. The independent schools in the County should be subject to the same policy.

Recommendation

27. That:-
- (i) In the criteria based assessment for future Integrated Transport schemes in Wiltshire towns, a priority factor for traffic calming and consequential 20 mph zones will be areas that include a school with an effective and active School Travel Plan where there are roads that are likely to be used by significant numbers of children walking and cycling to and from school.

- (ii) In rural areas all schools to have a 30 mph speed limit unless there are extenuating circumstances. The implementation of this to be considered in the 2004 Annual Speed Limit Review.

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The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report:

TRL Report

