

# Technical Note

**Project:** Faversham 20's plenty

**Subject:** Concept appraisal

<b>Client:</b>	Faversham Town Council	<b>Version:</b>	4
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## I Summary

- 1.1 This note sets out an independent objective technical appraisal of the feasibility of a 20mph zone encompassing the town of Faversham. It seeks to advise the local stakeholders in order to ensure that relevant issues and considerations are understood by all parties involved in the delivery of any proposal, and that a comprehensive overview of the benefits and requirements of a 20mph are properly considered.
- 1.2 The note considers both the strengths of the concept as well as possible drawbacks, and makes recommendations on a method of delivery and direction of travel that is consistent with the aims of the concept in a comprehensive and holistic fashion.

## 2 About the author

- 2.1 This technical note has been prepared by Andrew Saffrey of Phil Jones Associates. Andrew is a highways and traffic engineer with previous experience at Sunderland City Council, London Borough of Harrow, and London Borough of Waltham Forest. He has worked on the implementation of the borough-wide 20mph zone in Waltham Forest, in addition to corridor schemes, junction improvements, and parking regulation schemes for all three authorities. His work at Harrow on the Mollison Way town centre scheme (2011) was recognised in the Transport for London (TfL) best practice document "Better Streets: Delivered".
- 2.2 At PJA, Andrew has led on the design of TfL Cycle Superhighway CS9 between Chiswick and Kensington Olympia, working closely with the host boroughs of Hounslow and Hammersmith & Fulham. He has also been seconded to Sustrans to act as Senior Highway Engineer on the cycling Quietways design and delivery contract on behalf of TfL.
- 2.3 PJA is a multi-disciplinary transport planning, urban design and public realm consultancy. Phil Jones heads up the business, and Phil is recognised within the industry as a leading thinker in progressive approaches to streets design and urban development. He has been centrally involved in the production of Manual for Streets and Manual for Streets 2, amongst other notable guidance documents.

### 3 General principles of 20mph zones and limits

- 3.1 There is a considerable nationwide movement towards making 20mph the default speed limit in urban areas. London Boroughs such as Camden and Islington already have blanket 20mph limits, and Birmingham is moving towards a city-wide 20mph limit in all residential streets. Reduced speed limits can help create conditions more favourable for walking and cycling.
- 3.2 The normal approach to 20mph limits and zones is for them to be self-enforcing or self-explaining as far as practicable as regular police enforcement is burdensome. This means that streets should be narrow and without significant lengths of clear straight road, i.e. not conducive to speeding. It would be expected that long straight roads without urban frontage would struggle to fulfil these conditions.
- 3.3 It is appreciated that not all streets may experience conditions that are consistent with 20mph, however the application of a default 20mph sets out an important message about the local community's priorities and values, and also provides "social proof" or "consent" so that compliance is *expected* if not always achieved. Where overtaking is naturally limited, the driver of a leading vehicle sets the speed of the entire convoy behind, and as such when compliance with a 20mph limit begins to increase, there is almost a universal effect.
- 3.4 The development of autonomous vehicles, which will be regulated by computers with reference to set rules of behaviour, presents an opportunity for 20mph zones to become self-enforcing without the need for comprehensive traffic management and road re-engineering.

### 4 Local context

- 4.1 Faversham is a compact town that is relatively untouched by large-scale 20th-century highway infrastructure, as it lies off the main A2 road. Historic proposals for a major road across Abbey Street in the north of the town centre had been resisted locally. A significant proportion of the town's housing predates the motor car and hence is laid out in terraced streets and a traditional permeable street network. There has been little in the way of urban sprawl by comparison to other nearby towns. Faversham is therefore of a size and urban form that lends itself to walking or cycling, although specific facilities for the latter are largely absent, and pedestrian desire lines are not always met with commensurate crossing facilities. Nevertheless, it is essentially a "slow speed" town by virtue of its narrow main road network, and as such a town-wide design speed of 20mph will ensure that additional development is consistent with the existing character. Many of its main roads are narrow and winding, and parking one or both sides restricts comfortable passage of two-way traffic. Parking therefore acts as a form of natural traffic calming, and as such is part of a self-enforcing mechanism that will aid compliance with a 20mph zone.
- 4.2 A number of development sites are earmarked around the edge of town. The southerly development parcels are south of the A2 Watling Street, which currently is effectively the southern perimeter of the urban area. The A2 is a former trunk road and carries traffic both

cross town (east-west) and, also forms part of a route from many areas of the town towards the M2 motorway.

## 5 Challenges and exceptions

5.1.1 There are a handful of roads that are incongruous to the otherwise “slow speed” nature of the town, namely:

- A2 Watling Street (London Road / Canterbury Road)
- Crescent Road
- Love Lane
- Oare Road
- Western Link
- Whitstable Road

5.1.2 Other than Crescent Road which lies in the town centre, these roads are essentially peripheral to the town. Crescent Road is a purpose-built road skirting the town centre to the north east, and appears to date from the 1950s. It is effectively part of an incomplete inner ring around the very centre of Faversham

5.1.3 Western Link is currently a national speed limit peripheral road leading from the A2 to the main industrial area at the north western edge of the town. Its lack of any frontage would mean an urban speed limit would be inappropriate. However, its current National Speed Limit may be inappropriate given its relatively short length, and the staggered junction midway along its length.

5.1.4 The A2 Watling Street runs to the southern edge of the built-up area, and with a few exceptions, marks a strong boundary of the town. Some of it is bounded on both sides by buildings, but some sections feel more like a trunk road, particularly around The Abbey School, which is somewhat incongruous. A narrow footbridge is provided to allow children to cross this section of the A2, and it becomes very congested at school times. However, new development is earmarked south of the A2 which will mean it will over time become more part of the town, and its barrier status will need to be overcome in order to achieve local legibility.

5.1.5 Love Lane is at the eastern edge of the town, and connects to the A2. It somewhat mirrors the Western Link in terms of peripheral function, although it is not a purpose-built by-pass road. It is fronted on one side with residential properties, and abuts farmland on the other.

5.1.6 Oare Road is a north-western radial into Faversham from the hamlet of Oare. It is predominantly built up but has a short section with undeveloped frontage, between Lakeside Avenue and Ham Road

## 6 Recommendations

6.1 In light of the local context, opportunities and challenges, this technical notes makes some guiding recommendations. These are not exhaustive, but should be considered as a general guidance to explore further during the process of scheme development, design, and scrutiny.

6.2 These recommendations are grouped into four categories:

- overall approach
- interim and initial low-cost measures
- longer-term strategy
- additional considerations

### **Overall approach**

6.3 Whilst not all streets may exhibit inherent “low speed” characteristics, there is nevertheless scope for an in-principle 20mph zone to be cast around the entire urban area, given the predominant “slow-speed” nature of the town’s streets. Many residential side streets are cul-de-sac or narrow and short, and thus volumes and speeds are expected to be low.

6.4 Streets peripheral to the town would form part of a transition buffer of 30 or 40mph to help bring down speeds in a stepped but logical manner. Normally, speed limits are to be a minimum of 800m in length to be consistent with national guidance. It therefore may be appropriate or necessary to extend the 30mph or 40mph buffer beyond existing change in speed limit locations. The recent change to TSRGD has relaxed the requirements for repeater signs, hence a comprehensive 30mph or 40mph buffer zone would now require far less signage than previously was the case.

6.5 Following this principle, it is advisable to reduce the speed limit on Western Link to 40mph, in recognition of its relatively short length and its interruption by a staggered junction and uncontrolled pedestrian crossing points. Turning off Western Link at Bysing Wood Road would result in a strong 20mph gateway at the edge of the contiguous urban area. The junction of Oare Road and Western Link would also be 20mph, so there is a clear termination of the high-speed environment at the end of Western Link.

6.6 Along the A2, the speed limit could be reduced to 20mph within the contiguous urban section. That is, from the west of Ospringe to the junction with Love Lane. The section between Brogdale Road and Love Lane is more or less trunk road in characteristics, and hence some intervention here may be required to reinforce the 20mph limit. This is discussed further in the subsequent sections of this note.

6.7 Oare Road should be within the 20mph zone, although its short rural section between Lakeside Avenue and Ham Road may feel like an exception. This could be addressed by permitting development to front the road, consistent with a 20mph design speed, or introducing traffic calming features.

6.8 A pre-implementation programme of speed surveys would inform where 20mph conditions may already be met, and then this can be compared at a later date to determine the effect of the interim measures. This is consistent with the 20mph default speed limit in Camden, where the authority accepts that not all roads are self-compliant, but monitoring speeds allows it to set in motion a programme where funds are sought to improve the effectiveness of the scheme over time. The pre-implementation surveys may help give certainty to the external boundary of the 20mph zone, although it is desirable for the entire urban area to be consistently covered.

### **Interim and initial low-cost measures**

6.9 Parking in some streets could be amended to create natural chicanes, i.e. alternating from one side of the road to the other, or in other streets rotated through 45 or 90 degrees in order to reduce carriageway width. Control of footway parking, i.e. so that vehicles park wholly on the carriageway, would also create a natural traffic calming effect, although it is noted that footway parking appears to be rare in Faversham.

6.10 Some streets could benefit from the introduction of cycle lanes in order to reallocate road space. This could take the form of “parking-protected” cycle lanes, i.e. where parking is moved 2m out from the kerb to create a cycling lane between the nearside of vehicles and the footway. This may be achievable on parts of Whitstable Road.

6.11 Most streets could have the centre line marking removed. TfL research has found that this has the effect of reducing traffic speeds as drivers are less confident and hence take more care. Although some specific sites may require turning pockets for capacity reasons, where volumes are low, consideration should be given to removal of turning pockets and reallocating kerbside space to parking or additional footway or cycleway. Low-cost road narrowing could be introduced by using stick-down kerbs, kerbside hatching or ground-mounted planters. This could then be improved at a later date when the concept has been proven and funds become available.

6.12 These interim low-cost measures would be feasible along the A2 around The Abbey School, where the current “trunk road” typology is in conflict with the need to cater for crossing movements to and from the school

### **Longer-term strategy**

6.13 Monitoring of the scheme will identify where compliance is achieved and where further work may be required.

6.14 Moneys from Section 106 and CIL could be utilised to introduce point traffic-calming measures or corridor schemes to address streets where 20mph conditions are not observed after the introduction of the zone.

- 6.15 Point measures would comprise junction geometry tightening, raised tables, or localised narrowings (e.g. at pedestrian crossing points). Corridor treatments would comprise “road space reallocation” (i.e. cycle tracks, footway widening) along main roads, or neighbourhood traffic calming schemes (essentially a local programme of point measures).
- 6.16 A town-wide traffic management plan would be of benefit to identify a more comprehensive package of measures that can support growth in Faversham in a sustainable manner that is also consistent with the character of the “slow speed” town.

### **Additional considerations**

- 6.17 A corridor scheme could replace the proposed new roundabout at the A2/A251 junction, which is incongruous with the town’s urban form. Roundabouts are not pedestrian or cycle friendly, and generally create the feeling of motor priority. As such, a roundabout is likely to re-emphasise the barrier effect of the A2 road, whereas effort ought to be made to “urbanise” the A2 so that new development to the south is better tied-in with the rest of the town. The corridor scheme could still bring about capacity improvements if, with lower speeds achieved, gap acceptance is improved and courtesy behaviour observed. Moreover, a more walking and cycling friendly A2 would support efforts to encourage trips away from the private car, as evidence has shown that people are more willing to consider e.g. cycling where the environment to do so is conducive. This in turn would help manage traffic congestion.
- 6.18 It is advisable that an independent consultant with experience in innovative street design reviews the current junction proposal, with a view to making recommendations that may include a junction arrangement that is at a more “human scale” that would unlock movement by active modes.
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