

**Great Waltham Parish Council Response to Essex County Council's Essex Safer Speeds Strategy Consultation**

Road safety in Essex

1. How important or unimportant do you feel it is to reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured on roads in Essex?

**Very important**

Fairly important  
Neither important or unimportant  
Fairly unimportant  
Very unimportant  
No opinion

2. How safe or unsafe do you feel using the roads and footways (pavements) in your local area?

Very safe  
Fairly safe  
Neither safe or unsafe  
Fairly unsafe  
**Very unsafe**  
No opinion

3. How concerned or unconcerned are you about the potential impacts of the speed of traffic on the safety of you, your family and/or friends?

**Very concerned**

Fairly concerned  
Neither concerned or unconcerned  
Fairly unconcerned  
Very unconcerned  
No opinion

4. To what extent does the speed of traffic discourage you or your family from walking or cycling? (1 = does not discourage at all, 5 = strongly discourages)  
Extent to which you are discouraged from walking or cycling

1  
2  
3  
4  
**5**  
No opinion

Safer Speeds Strategy

5. To what extent do you support the proposed vision for safer speeds in Essex?

“To have safe and consistent speed limits across Essex that enable us to create safer, healthier environments and eliminate death and serious injury on the roads, achieving Vision Zero by 2040.”

Strongly support  
**Support**  
Neither support or oppose  
Oppose  
Strongly oppose  
No opinion

6. To what extent do you support or oppose the proposed Safer Speeds Strategy objectives?

All road users are able to reach their destinations safely and reliably

**Strongly support**

Support

Neither support or oppose

Oppose

Strongly oppose

No opinion

Road users will understand the need for the speed limit and their responsibility to keep others safe

**Strongly support**

Support

Neither support or oppose

Oppose

Strongly oppose

No opinion

Vehicle speeds are safe for pedestrians and cyclists in places where road space is shared

**Strongly support**

Support

Neither support or oppose

Oppose

Strongly oppose

No opinion

Speed limits on the road network support the safe movement of people and goods

**Strongly support**

Support

Neither support or oppose

Oppose

Strongly oppose

No opinion

Authorities with the statutory powers to set and enforce speed limits will work together to encourage safe speeds

**Strongly support**

Support

Neither support or oppose

Oppose

Strongly oppose

No opinion

7. To what extent do you support or oppose the proposed approach to setting safe and appropriate speed limits based on how streets, roads and places in Essex are used?

Strongly support

**Support**

Neither support or oppose

Oppose

Strongly oppose

No opinion

8. Which types of roads or places do you think should be prioritised for safer speeds? Please rank your top three (1 – highest priority).

Country lanes

- 1
- 2
- 3

Major roads linking urban areas

- 1
- 2
- 3

Residential streets

- 1
- 2
- 3

School routes

- 1
- 2
- 3

Town and city centres

- 1
- 2
- 3

Village centres

- 1
- 2
- 3

Other

- 1
- 2
- 3

If you selected 'Other', please specify

**This option has been chosen to reflect the diverse nature of roads within our parish boundaries. These range from a Priority 1 route to single track country lanes. There is an expectation that all roads in the parish should have the same priority in terms of being used at safer speeds, and that to rank one over the other (even though we have answered the rest of the question on that basis) is too simplistic and that a more nuanced case-by-case framework is more appropriate (as implied in the draft Strategy document).**

9. To what extent do you specifically support or oppose the introduction of 20mph speed limits in the following areas, where there is strong community support?

Residential streets

**Strongly support**

Support  
Neither support or oppose  
Oppose  
Strongly oppose  
No opinion

School routes

**Strongly support**

Support  
Neither support or oppose  
Oppose  
Strongly oppose  
No opinion

Town and city centres

**Strongly support**

Support  
Neither support or oppose  
Oppose  
Strongly oppose  
No opinion

Village centres

**Strongly support**

Support  
Neither support or oppose  
Oppose  
Strongly oppose  
No opinion

10. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: 'The new Safer Speeds Strategy sets the right overall approach to help manage speeds in Essex'?

Strongly agree  
Agree  
Neither agree or disagree  
**Disagree**  
Strongly disagree  
No opinion

11. Do you have any comments about the draft Safer Speeds Strategy?

**Great Waltham Parish Council ("GWPC") welcomes the opportunity to respond in detail on the draft Safer Speeds Strategy document. The following comments complement the answers we have provided elsewhere:**

- 1. GWPC welcomes the Strategy's significant policy shift in terms of looking to give greater focus and attention to the speed of vehicles using Essex roads. We support the introduction of the Safe and Appropriate Speed Limit Framework, although reserve the right to further critique this innovation when details of the parish's own road designations are published. However, we believe that in practice, because 'every road is unique' (p.39), the**

categories within the Place and Movement Framework must be flexible enough to accommodate and address the particular issues, concerns, nuances, and challenges associated with any given road in our parish – it would be disappointing if there is still a ‘best fit’ approach, rather than bespoke solutions being available within any one of the nine categories of the Framework. The document implies the availability of tailored solutions, and we believe this will be essential to fully accommodate local communities demands and needs.

In particular, we can cite instances in our parish where we feel that the type, volume, and speed of vehicles is inappropriate for the assigned status of the road, so until we see the proposed allocation of our roads under the Framework we remain concerned that current situations and issues will not be adequately addressed. We see the potential for inappropriate speed limits to remain; for example, the possibility of the continued use of the 60mph national speed limit on what are effectively single-track country lanes – if a lane is not wide enough to have central hazard markings, how is it suitable for a 60mph limit?

2. Despite the improvements it would introduce, overall GWPC believes the Strategy as written lacks real ambition and does not take the opportunity to be more progressive and bring Essex into line with those more far-sighted areas of the country who have firmly grasped the nettle and introduced really meaningful changes, especially in relation to the implementation of 20mph speed limits. We detail our thoughts below on how we think ECC (and its successors) can introduce a sea-change in drivers’ behaviours and attitudes in Essex, and much more quickly than the document envisages.

We believe ECC should be demanding more sweeping changes, and then taking views on why its proposals might be considered too radical. Instead, the Strategy seems to be a balancing act which looks to effect a trade-off between not overly upsetting those drivers who want to drive at inappropriate speeds and trying to placate those who are calling for real, far-reaching change.

3. Beginning in the Foreword and throughout the document GWPC notes the commitment to Vision Zero. We understand and accept the logic of having an aspirational target (including as a mechanism to achieve interim reduction targets before the 2040 deadline), but while we regard the ultimate zero target as worthy, we believe it is essentially, as its name says, just a vision, and likely a quite chimerical one at that.

On p.11 the document says that to achieve Vision Zero things have to happen so that ‘when people make mistakes [while driving], any resulting impact forces are low enough to avoid death or serious injury’. However, ‘mistakes’ will continue to be made especially by the small tranche of drivers who will continue to routinely exceed speed limits and cause deaths and serious injuries whatever action is taken. Therefore, given the millions of miles driven on Essex roads each year, to completely eradicate irresponsible behaviours to achieve Vision Zero is a vanishingly small likely outcome. We would also contend that describing actions as ‘mistakes’ can be misleading – for instance is it a ‘mistake’ when someone consciously and intentionally drives in excess of the speed limit or drives when unfit through drink or drugs? We would argue that it is a choice which is why, without stricter penalties and better compliance measures, there will always be vehicle related incidents resulting in deaths and serious injuries.

It would seem that at some point before 2040 it will need to be acknowledged that zero deaths/serious injuries is an unrealistic goal. In the meantime, the challenge remains that if achieving no deaths or serious injuries by then is so statistically remote, how much does/will the aspiration actually resonate with irresponsible drivers as an achievable target to make them change their behaviours without more radical change and enforcement?

4. The document only fleetingly directly references (on p.8) the benefits of the introduction of the 20mph speed limit policy in Wales (where it cites the 20% drop in vehicle damage claims and the £50 drop in insurance premiums), and omits entirely any reference to the perhaps most striking benefit, the 30% reduction in road deaths and serious injuries in Wales since the policy was introduced. Surely this effect more than any other makes the strongest case

for 20mph limits as the default in the bid to achieve progress towards Vision Zero (see our further comments below).

At p.30-31 the document does consider in more detail both the many benefits and then the perceived difficulties associated with applying 20mph speed limits to Essex roads. If, in addition to those mentioned above, all of the benefits listed on p.30 are valid, it would be a lost opportunity if Essex does not now replicate the approach used in Wales, but instead adopts the 'flexible approach (not a blanket approach)' cited on p.31.

Compared to the extraordinarily obvious immediate benefits of a blanket approach (although actually in Wales that is not really how the introduction has been applied in practice), limited aspirations such as delivering '20mph [limits] where they are supported and where they are justified' (p.31) appear to be a tentative compromise position when something more progressive could be introduced.

There is an opportunity to be far more radical by requiring there to be a justification for a speed limit not to be set at 20mph, rather than the other way around.

5. GWPC is not convinced that time is needed to allow 'driver behaviour to adjust' to new 20mph limits, and would argue that it absolutely could 'happen overnight' (p.31). The situation would be analogous to the initial furore over making compulsory the use of seat belts while driving – resistance was quickly disabled when the clear benefits for doing so were explained. The same outcome is likely were a 20mph 'blanket' policy to be introduced.

Furthermore, because Essex has lagged behind other parts of the country, many drivers who live elsewhere but happen to drive on Essex roads will already be familiar with lower speed limits and their enforcement as the norm, as will those Essex residents who drive in more progressive areas. Compared to, say, five years ago, in 2026 there is nothing inherently novel about adopting a more advanced approach.

The 'wider cultural shift towards making safer speed limits the norm' (p.32) is perhaps more an excuse than a reason for not doing what has been achieved successfully elsewhere. GWPC believes that with a robust communications strategy road users would be far readier to accept and comply with lower speed limits (and in particular significantly more 20mph limits) in Essex than the Strategy document implies. We are able to present strong evidence to support this assertion based on the results of a survey we completed in our parish in October 2025 where, in response to the question "Would you support a lower speed limit where you live?", 132 of 157 respondents (84.1 per cent) said 'Yes', and for the question "Would you support a 20mph speed limit in residential areas/your community?", 129 of the 157 (82.7 per cent) also answered 'Yes'.

6. On p.14 mention is made of monitoring and enforcement. In terms of compliance with speed limits, GWPC would argue that how enforcement is currently addressed in practice (tolerating ten per-cent over the limit plus 2mph) is a major factor in poor driving behaviours, but is not addressed under this Strategy. That motorists can, in effect, drive without fear of sanction at closer to 50mph than 40mph in a 40mph limit seems absurd. Apologists will raise the issue of the accuracy of speed gauges and monitoring equipment, but fundamentally speeding is being handled differently to other crimes. For example, there is zero tolerance with theft or damage to property (there criminals are not allowed to steal up to a certain amount or inflict a particular amount of damage before they are prosecuted), so why is speeding treated differently?

Also, on p.37, enforcement is again discussed, but the wording is almost apologetic and seems to treat the prosecution of motorists as a last resort. To encourage compliance with the law we suggest that robust enforcement should be a key, rather than a supporting, aspect of the Strategy. Also, there are plenty of opportunities to consider partnerships with enforcement operatives, such as the TruCam team at Maldon District Council which GWPC itself commissions to do checks on one of its roads (where a significant number of speeding drivers have been prosecuted who would otherwise have travelled over the limit without sanction).

7. While GWPC understands the principle of a 'data-led approach' (p.15), addressing the issue in this way still implies a reactive, rather than proactive, mind-set. There is no mention of either pre-empting road deaths and serious injuries by implementing lower speed limits before serious collisions occur (another reason why Vision Zero is so unlikely to ever be achieved), or consulting with local communities on how the available data should be interpreted alongside their actual lived experiences.
8. GWPC is not convinced that a phased delivery approach of the type indicated is necessary. The document says that 'by trialling a small number of speed-limit changes, we can learn what work well [...]' (p.32). However, none of what would be introduced in Essex is new *per se*, just that it would be new to Essex. It is difficult to envisage a situation in Essex which has not already been encountered, considered, and addressed with success somewhere else in the country. By now there must be a vast body of evidence to call on from experiences elsewhere to know what works well.

As written, the Strategy seems intent more on testing the perceived sensitivities of Essex residents' willingness to change, rather than taking an objective risk-based approach using already well-established principles and data to actually implement fundamental change as soon as possible. As stated above, there is no reason to believe that Essex residents will react differently to the types of limits which have been introduced elsewhere. For that reason GWPC believes the phasing timetable on p.32 could be considerably foreshortened.

9. In relation to 'Who plays a role in realising safer speeds in Essex?' (p.14), GWPC is disappointed that parish councils are not mentioned specifically, and that 'local community groups' are not defined. We believe that parish communities offer ideal micro-level pilot areas (p.33), and that parish councils are bodies already fully engaged and informed about how existing speed limits are, or more importantly, are not working in their areas. They have accumulated local knowledge and information which may exceed that of, or is available to, the highway authorities – importantly, parish councils will have the ear of local residents in ways higher authorities may not.

Notwithstanding its reservations about the need for them, GWPC supports its parish being one of the chosen pilot areas, if the proposed Strategy is adopted. We believe our parish has a range of road types with currently inappropriate speed limits which would lend themselves to meaningful change, to be monitored under any pilot/test scheme.

10. GWPC agrees that new technologies (p.36) will make an important contribution to how the Strategy is successfully implemented. In particular, it agrees that average speed cameras should continue to be introduced to aid compliance. It also assumes that the Strategy will seek to accommodate all new driver assistance technologies, including driverless vehicles (which are not specifically mentioned) given that speed limit compliance would be an automatic consequence of such vehicles' algorithmic functions, and thus would naturally complement the Strategy.
11. The document alludes briefly to local government reorganisation (LGR) in Essex (p.14). GWPC is concerned that the pace of any traffic management change and delivery will be compromised by how LGR unfolds. It is mindful too of the already glacial speed with which some ECC strategic traffic management documents have been drafted, reviewed, adopted and implemented, and is concerned that the Essex Safer Speeds Strategy could also become a victim of similar bureaucratic machinations under the new structure. Hence we believe the opportunity should be taken now to make quick strides and foreshorten the phasing process to avoid unnecessary delays.
12. In summary, GWPC welcomes the new Strategy framework in terms of its Speed Limit Framework (subject to its application to the roads in its parish), but believes it should be much more ambitious, in particular by both adopting a 20mph blanket approach (with agreed exceptions, as per the model in Wales), and in terms of the speed of its implementation.

Personal information

This section asks for information about you. Any personal information you provide is confidential.

12. What is your full name?

**Great Waltham Parish Council**

13. What is your postcode?

**CM3 1DF**

14. Which of the following reasons explain your interest in Essex? Please select all that apply.

- Live in Essex
- Work in Essex
- Visit Essex
- Have family or friends in Essex
- Have a business or organisation which is based in Essex
- Have a business or organisation which operates in Essex
- Other**

If you selected 'Other', please specify

**Parish Council**

15. Which of the following areas do you live in?

- Basildon
- Braintree
- Brentwood
- Castle Point
- Chelmsford**
- Colchester
- Epping Forest
- Harlow
- Maldon
- Rochford
- Southend
- Tendring
- Thurrock
- Uttlesford
- Other

If you selected 'Other', please specify

16. Are you responding on behalf of a business or organisation?

- Yes**
- No

If you are responding on behalf of a business or organisation, what is the name of that business or organisation?

**Great Waltham Parish Council**

17. What is your email address?

**clerk@gtwaltham-pc.gov.uk**

18. Would you be happy to be contacted by email about the Safer Speeds Strategy in the future?

Yes

No

About you

This section asks a series of questions about you. We will use the data collected for monitoring purposes and to help us assess whether the consultation has reached a representative section of the community. The information you provide is confidential and will not be collated with any information which makes you identifiable.

These questions are entirely optional, and you are not obliged to answer any of the questions. If you choose not to answer the questions, it will not affect your participation.

19. Which age group do you belong to?

Under 18

18 - 24

25 - 34

35 - 44

45 - 54

55 - 64

65+

Prefer not to say

20. To which gender do you most identify?

Female

Male

Non-binary

Prefer not to say

Prefer to self-describe

If you selected 'Prefer to self-describe', please specify

21. To which of these ethnic groups do you consider you belong?

Asian/Asian British ethnic groups

Bangladeshi

Chinese

Indian

Pakistani

Any other Asian background

If you selected 'Any other Asian background', please describe

Black/African/Caribbean/Black British ethnic groups

African

Caribbean

Any other Black/African/Caribbean background

If you selected 'Any other Black/African/Caribbean background', please describe

Mixed/multiple ethnic origins

White and Asian

White and Black African  
White and Caribbean  
Any other mixed/multiple ethnic background

If you selected 'Any other mixed/multiple ethnic background', please describe

White ethnic groups

English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British  
Gypsy/Irish Traveller  
Irish  
Any other white background

If you selected 'Any other white background', please describe

Other ethnic group

Arab  
Any other ethnic group

If you selected 'Any other ethnic group', please describe

**Prefer not to say**

22. Do you consider yourself to have a health condition, disability or impairment? Please select all that apply

No impairment  
Hearing impairment/deaf  
Visual impairment/blind  
Deafblind  
Mental health needs  
Physical impairment  
Learning difficulties/disabilities  
Autism spectrum disorder  
**Prefer not to say**  
Other

If you selected 'Other', please specify