

**To: Local Authority Chief Executives**

**15<sup>th</sup> October 2014**

**RSD 01/2014**

## **Circular on the control of Vehicle Speeds in Housing Estates**

**Dear Chief Executive,**

The purpose of this Circular is threefold:

- To advise local authorities of the results of the recent survey in respect of the numbers of housing estates which have ramps and have 30 km/h speed limits
- To reiterate the existing policy regarding traffic calming procedures for housing estates and on streets and roads in Ireland and
- To request local authorities to undertake a review process of speed limits in housing estate so that the Executive and the Elected Members can decide if existing limits are appropriate to ensure a safe environment, particularly for children.

The Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport has overall policy responsibility for road safety matters and the provision of speed limits is catered for in the Road Traffic Acts.

The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads is the statutory responsibility of each local authority, in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. Works on those roads are funded from local authorities' own resources supplemented by State road grants. The selection and prioritisation of works is a matter for the local authority.

### **Default speed limits**

Default speed limits are limits which automatically apply and include the motorway speed limit of 120 km/h, the speed limit on non-urban national roads of 100 km/h, the speed limit on non-urban regional and local roads of 80 km/h and the built-up area speed limit of 50 km/h. Special speed limits (including 30 km/h) may also be applied to roads using bye-laws and these limits override the previous default limits. The making of bye-laws for special speed limits requires a public consultation procedure to be followed and ultimately any decision is made by the Elected Members of the relevant county or city.

### **Definition of Housing Estate**

There is no standard definition of what constitutes a housing estate. For the purposes of this Circular it may be convenient to consider a housing estate as a self-contained grouping of houses with single or multiple entry points for vehicles. Such areas often have green areas or play areas associated with them.

## 1. Recent Survey

The following is a summary of the main findings of a recent survey (6 August 2014- 2 September 2014) conducted by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport in respect of speed ramps and speed limits in local areas;

- There are 8,725 housing estates nationally (from all local authorities who responded)
- On average approx. 14% of estates have speed ramps installed.
- 1,046 main roads/streets have speed ramps
- Excluding Dublin City Council which is referred to separately, 135 estates (or 1.5% of estates) have 30 km/h speed limits
- Three residential areas in Dublin City have a 30 km/h speed restriction, namely; Marino (D3), Irishtown (D4) and adjacent to the South Lotts Road (D4).
- €3,200 is the average cost of installing a speed ramp
- In general, decisions regarding speed ramp installation are made by the local authority Executive, with input from the Elected Members and generally follows the receipt of representation and a public consultation process.
- The principal guidance documents that local authorities refer to when deciding on ramp installation include the Traffic Management Guidelines, the Design Manual for Urban Streets (DMURS) and also local policy documents.
- Local authorities have listed a wide range of criteria/factors which are considered when assessing the need for ramps on a particular road and these include:
  - Accident history
  - Traffic volume
  - Actual traffic speeds
  - Road alignment (horizontal and vertical)
  - Proximity of schools
  - Presence of "rat runs" where there is significant residential development
  - Possibility of alternative traffic calming measures
  - Positive / negative feedback from residents
  - Extent of direct access from frontage along a road
  - Pedestrian generators
  - Danger to vulnerable road users.



## **2. Existing national guidelines regarding speed limits and engineering measures to provide traffic calming**

There are a number of existing documents which are relevant to the discussion of providing appropriate speed limits and engineering measures (including ramps) within housing estates;

- Traffic Management Guidelines 2003
- Guidelines for the Application of Special Speed Limits 2010
- Traffic Signs Manual 2010
- Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets 2013

### **Traffic Management Guidelines 2003**

This was the first Irish document to give detailed guidance regarding suitable traffic calming measures for different situations and to give detailed advice on the design and use of different types of ramps and other types of traffic calming measures. It also addresses the issue of speed management on roads. It introduces the concept of approaching the design of roads in new housing estates in a different way so that speed management is an intrinsic part of the road design and layout.

### **Guidelines for the Application of Special Speed Limits 2010**

Section 5.7 of these guidelines gives particular guidance in respect of 30 km/h speed limits. It notes that in some instances such speed limits may need to be implemented in conjunction with physical traffic calming measures such as ramps. Following the Speed Limit Review in 2013 these Special Speed Limit Guidelines are currently being updated.

### **Traffic Signs Manual 2010**

Clear and effective traffic signs are essential for the efficient operation of the road network, for the enforcement of traffic regulations and for road safety. The Traffic Signs Manual provides details of the traffic signs which may be used on roads in Ireland, including their layout and symbols, the circumstances in which each sign may be used and rules for positioning them.

Chapter 6 of the Manual provides details of the warning signs which may be used on roads in Ireland. Warning signs are used to alert drivers to danger or potential danger ahead. They indicate the need for special caution and may require a consequent manoeuvre or reduction in speed. Appropriate use of warning signs assists with road safety. The application of the signs should be consistent, so that the signs are accepted by drivers as warnings of potential hazards.

Chapter 6.17.8 illustrates Sign W 142 Children Crossing (*see Figure 1 below*). This sign may be used to alert drivers to the danger of children crossing roads in *residential areas* other than at schools and playgrounds. The sign is provided for use in towns and villages

and on roads of a primarily residential character with continuous housing frontage. The sign *may also be provided at the entrances to housing estates* from main traffic routes.



**Figure 1: Sign W 142 (Children Crossing)**

### **Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (2013)**

The Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets is a joint publication between the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTAS) and the Department of Environment Community and Local Government (DECLG) and re-examines the role and function of streets within our urban areas, where vehicular traffic is most likely to interact with pedestrians and cyclists and where public transport can most effectively and efficiently be planned for and provided.

It places emphasis on designing new urban roads and streets in such a way that excessive speeds are discouraged. It gives guidance on how to achieve this by using measures such as restricting carriageway width, limiting forward visibility and by careful horizontal design (including the avoidance of long straight sections of roadway). By following this new design standard for new housing estates and streets local authorities will avoid the need to have to retrofit ramps in the future. It is also open to local authorities to apply many of the principles set out in DMURS to existing estates and streets when a decision is made to upgrade them. However other approaches will also be needed when dealing retrospectively with existing estates which have problems with traffic speeds and these are referenced in the Traffic Management Guidelines.

### **3. New measures to reduce vehicle speeds in estates and residential areas**

The guidance documents already issued by the DTTAS provide a policy framework for public roads under the responsibility of local authorities in respect of:

- Designing new estates so that vehicles travel at much lower speeds than heretofore (DMURS) and



- Revamping existing estates using a wide range of measures (including the use of signage and speed ramps) to assist in lowering vehicle speeds (Traffic Management Guidelines, Speed Limit Guidelines and DMURS)

The DTTAS continues to update its guidance to take account of best practice. In particular it should be noted that the Speed Limit Guidelines are currently being updated and are due to be issued before the end of this year. The purpose of DTTAS's policy framework is to guide local authorities in assessing what actions can best deliver safety improvements in residential areas – the measures selected will depend on the particular location and local authorities need to have the flexibility to make decisions that take account of local conditions.

The most important objective is to reduce vehicle speeds in housing estates so as to improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists and especially children and the Department sees the increased use of a 30km/h speed limit in residential areas as a measure that will help to achieve that objective.

The following process is being recommended to local authorities;

#### **New Signage**

- A. The use of a combination 30 km/h speed limit sign in conjunction with a yellow warning sign showing “children at play” at the entry to a housing estate (a combination sign is shown in Appendix 1). The benefits of the new sign would include;
  - High visibility at entrances to housing estates
  - Clearly indicates that a reduced 30 km/h speed limit applies and links this lower speed limit to a warning sign which shows children at play
  - Can be quickly implemented by local authorities within a reasonable timeframe
  - Would provide consistent signage in estates across the country.

#### **Consultation**

- B. Local authorities should compile lists of estates where they believe that the use of the new combination sign would be a suitable approach (that is, in estates where existing speed are too high). To assist them in compiling such lists local authorities may if they wish advertise what is proposed and ask residents to respond if they believe that their estate should be considered for such treatment. Other approaches are also possible. Local authorities could seek the assistance of their Elected Members in compiling their list.

#### **New Bye-laws**

- C. Local authorities should then go through the process of adopting bye-laws for the new 30 km/h limits for the selected estates and zones. In order to do this it will be necessary for these estates to be taken in charge.
- D. The next stage is to erect the new speed limit and warning signs. The Roads Division of the Department is prepared to consider assisting with the cost of purchasing and erecting these signs under the 2015 Low Cost Safety programme. Eligible Councils

under this programme may insert a single Low Cost Safety scheme to cover all such proposed works in 2015.

- E. Once the signs are in place local authorities should seek to identify if the new speed limits are being observed. Portable speed measurement devices could be used by Councils to collect the required information.

**Other Traffic Calming Measures**

- F. If a local authority detects a speeding problem in an estate it can identify what engineering measures (in accordance with national guidance and including the use of ramps) should be used within that estate to reduce speeds.

Local authorities are requested to draw up a timeline for completion of this multi-stage process and to submit the proposed timeline to [roadsafety@dtas.ie](mailto:roadsafety@dtas.ie) by the 7<sup>th</sup> November 2014.

Local authorities should note that a further circular will issue later this year as a follow up to the 2013 Speed Limit Review and will address various action points from that Review. It should also be noted that all works undertaken on roads including the installation of speed ramps and the provision of new speed limit zones should be recorded on the MapRoad pavement management system.

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## Appendix A

### Combination of 30 km/h sign and Warning sign W142

