

Councillor Karen Shore

Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member - Environment, Highways & Strategic Transport
Cheshire West and Chester Council
Sent via email

18 July 2022

Dear Karen

The case for the whole of Curzon Park being a 20mph zone

I am writing to you as the Chair of Curzon Park Residents' Committee. I'd like to make the case for the whole of Curzon Park to have a 20mph speed limit.

The speeding on Curzon Park North and South is the issue of greatest concern to our residents. Residents worry about the risks to children and cyclists of speeding vehicles.

Implementing a 20mph speed limit would improve the environment and make the area safer. It would accord with DfT guidance, build on the success of the 20 mph programme, and reflect current practice in other authorities.

I know this issue has been raised before and rejected by the Council. However I believe now is a good time to reconsider this matter for reasons I will explain.

Background

In January 2016, the Council introduced 20mph speed limits on suitable residential roads and around schools to deliver significant benefits including a reduction in road traffic collisions and to encourage more people to walk and cycle.

The speed limit in Curzon Park, with the notable exception of Curzon Park North and South, was reduced to 20mph as part of year 4 of the programme.

Since then, residents have continually voiced concerns about the speed limit remaining at 30 mph on Curzon Park North and (even more acutely) Curzon Park South. This is the single biggest issue for our residents.

Given the strength of concern from residents, Curzon Park Residents' Association (CPRA) has made several requests to the Council for a 20mph limit to be implemented across all of Curzon Park. These requests have been turned down. The Council's reason for turning down our requests is that the average speed on Curzon Park North and South is above 24mph.

We have scrutinised the government guidance on speed limits and reviewed how other highways authorities are improving road safety. We think it is timely for the council to reconsider its position and we would welcome a discussion on this.

Department for Transport Guidance

The current guidance is the Department for Transport Circular 01/2013, Setting Local Speed Limits.

The introduction states: "Traffic authorities are asked to: keep speed limits under review... consider the introduction of more 20mph speed limits and zones, over time, in urban areas... that are primary residential, to ensure greater safety for pedestrians and cyclists, using the criteria in Section 6." Thus, not only is there a requirement for the council to review speed limits on an ongoing basis, the aim when considering speed limits is to introduce more 20mph limits where possible.

Section 6 – Key Points, states: "Traffic authorities can, over time, introduce 20mph speed limits or zones on:

- Major streets where there are - or could be - significant numbers of journeys on foot, and/or where pedal cycle movements are an important consideration, and this outweighs the disadvantage of longer journey times for motorised traffic.

This is in addition to

- Residential streets... particularly where the streets are being used by people on foot and on bicycles, there is community support and the characteristics of the street are suitable."

Thus, not only may the Council reduce speed limits on residential streets, which both Curzon Park North and South are, but also more major routes.

The Circular further states "...for residential streets... ... with high pedestrian and cyclist movement, local traffic authorities should consider the use of 20mph schemes."

Both Curzon Park North and South are pedestrian streets with high pedestrian and cyclist movement. On Curzon Park South pedestrians regularly walk on the roadway at night because the footpaths are poorly lit.

The Circular goes on to state "Sometimes a decision about a road's primary or most important function needs to be taken." Curzon Park South runs parallel to Hough Green (A5104).

The A5104 is the main arterial route into the City from the west. It is a wide road with a dedicated bus lane. Furthermore, there are wide pavements on both sides of the road; the northern one includes a cycleway to separate motorised traffic from cyclists. The primary function of the road is to move motorised traffic in and out of Chester. The A5104 is 30mph throughout the section designated Hough Green.

Curzon Park South is a residential road, with housing along its length. It is narrow, such that large trucks cannot pass each other without driving on the verges. The footpaths are also narrow, in places only wide enough for a single person, and undulating in places. Due to the narrowness of the paths, those wishing to walk side by side often walk in the roadway. And, the low level of lighting in places leads to many pedestrians walking along the roadway at night. Curzon Park is a residential area and thus people of all ages cycle on the roadways, including many children travelling to and from school. Many pedestrians and cyclists use Curzon Park South to avoid the busy Hough Green. Furthermore, many people Curzon Park North to access the city via the footbridge adjacent to the railway bridge. The primary purpose of both Curzon Park South and North is as residential roads; for residents of the area to move either on foot, by bike or in a car, yet the speed limits are the same as the A5104.

Given the very different purposes of Hough Green (an A classification major road) and Curzon Park South and North (residential roads) it would be appropriate for the roads to have speed limits in keeping with the different purposes. Hence 20mph would be an appropriate speed for Curzon Park South and North.

The DfT Circular states “The implementation of 20mph speed limits over a large number of roads... ..should be considered where mean speeds at or below 24mph are already achieved over a number of roads.”

Curzon Park is a contiguous area that can only be accessed by three roads (Mount Pleasant, Selkirk Drive and Curzon Park North). 16 of the 18 named roads (89%) in Curzon Park are already 20mph.

Thus, the DfT circular allows for all roads in Curzon Park to be designated 20mph despite the average speed on Curzon Park North and South being above 24mph.

Other local authorities have interpreted the guidance in this way, notably Portsmouth and The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. The latter introduced a borough-wide 20mph scheme on 13 November 2020 under an Experimental Traffic Order. On 30 March 2022 the borough-wide speed limit was made permanent as recommended by The Director of Transport and Regulatory Services Decision. Of note their paper¹ details speeds on 15 roads in the borough, all of which were in excess of 24mph before the implementation of the 20mph limit.

¹ <https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/documents/Decision%20Report.pdf>

Benefits to Residents

The Council clearly lays out the benefits to residents across the City in its report 20mph Speed Limit Programme – Year 4 Update and Evaluation Report (20 June 2022). The report highlights the overall reduction in incidents (43% reduction in road traffic collisions, 14% reduction in killed and seriously injured and a 47% reduction in slight injuries).

The 20mph programme has clearly been a success and led to residents feeling safer and more secure when cycling or walking on or adjacent to roads. Thus, it would be appropriate to continue the rollout where the opportunity presents itself, such as in Curzon Park.

The year 4 data shows for Curzon Park a 29% reduction in traffic flow above 25mph, but a 33% increase in traffic above 30mph. There is no indication which roads in Curzon Park have been measured and the changes of speed on them. Overall mean traffic speed has reduced by 1.0mph to 20.6mph.

Anecdotal evidence from residents is that the morning “rush hour/school run” is when they see most excess speed, in particular on Curzon Park South. Vehicles wishing to avoid queues on Hough Green enter Curzon Park from Selkirk Drive, some even enter via Glan Aber Park and then cut through the un-named road to the north of Dolphin Court onto Selkirk Drive. Selkirk Drive is approximately 140m long at 20mph (less than 50% of the minimum distance recommended by DfT guidance). Drivers then enter Curzon Park South where the speed limit increases to 30mph and thus they increase speed accordingly.

Any measure to reduce speed on Curzon Park South, especially when children are walking or cycling to school, would increase peoples’ confidence to leave the car behind and use alternative methods of travel.

Cheshire West and Chester Speed Limit Assessment Policy Review

The Council is currently reviewing its speed limit assessment policy. CPRA welcome this review and consider it timely, given that the current policy is based upon DfT Circular 01/2013, which is now approaching ten years old and has been superseded by developments in road use and the Highway Code update of 29 January 2022. Furthermore, the review of policy seeks to achieve “...greater community engagement...”.

CPRA as a community organisation would be keen to work with the Council to understand how we can achieve a complete roll out of 20mph speed limit across Curzon Park. 20mph roundels painted on the road at the three entrances to Curzon Park (Mt Pleasant, Selkirk Drive and Curzon Park North), would be highly effective in communicating that the whole of Curzon Park is a 20mph zone.

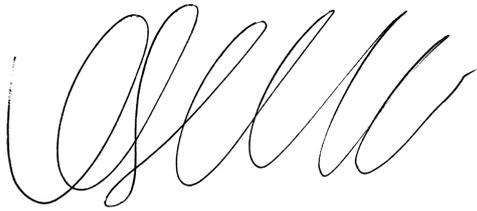
Next steps

Firstly, I would be grateful if you could acknowledge that you've received this letter.

I'd like to request a meeting with you or your team to discuss whether this is something that can be progressed. The CPRA Annual General Meeting is scheduled for the 14 September 2022 and I'd like to be able to feedback to our residents then.

Thank you for taking the time to read what is a long and detailed letter. This matter is very important to our residents and I do hope we can resolve this together.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'AKendall', written in a cursive style.

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