

Essex Safer Speeds Strategy

Public Consultation Summary

March 2026

SAFER / GREENER / HEALTHIER



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This Safer Speeds Strategy is the single most important tool to realising Vision Zero in Essex, reducing traffic speeds to ensure no one is killed or seriously injured on Essex roads by 2040.”

Nicola Foster
Chair of the Safer Essex Roads Partnership



Developed in partnership with:



Introduction

Speed is the biggest factor in road traffic collisions in Essex. In 2025, 60 people lost their lives on the county's roads, while many more suffered life-changing injuries. Nearly half of the deaths were related to excess speed. Behind every statistic is a family and a community changed forever. Residents also often tell us they feel unsafe walking, cycling or moving around their neighbourhoods because of vehicle speeds.

As a partner in the Safer Essex Roads Partnership, we remain committed to Vision Zero – our shared aspiration that no one should be killed or seriously injured on the county's roads by 2040. To achieve this, we must take steps to manage speeds, improve road design and support safer travel choices.

That is why we are launching a consultation on a new draft Essex Safer Speeds Strategy and want to hear your views on how we can make our county's roads safer. More information about the consultation and how to take part is available later in this document.

The new draft strategy, which we have developed in partnership with the Safer Essex Roads Partnership,

sets out a flexible and evidence-based approach to introducing safer speeds in Essex. We aim to help transform our towns and villages from places which can sometimes feel dangerous and intimidating into safer, greener and healthier local communities.

This is a transitional period for Essex which is expected to see the election of a Mayor for Greater Essex, the reorganisation of current local councils, and potential changes to responsibilities for speed management. However, we believe there are significant benefits in developing an up-to-date new Essex Safer Speeds Strategy to help establish a coordinated and effective approach to managing speeds which recognises the changing ways people now travel.

“Excess speed remains a leading cause of death and serious injury on our network, and this evidence-led strategy provides a clear approach to reducing harm and protecting the most vulnerable road users.”

Adam Pipe
Head of Roads Policing, Essex Police



60
people killed

In 2025, 60 people were killed on Essex roads



846
serious injuries

846 people were seriously injured in road traffic collisions in Essex in 2025



17
minutes

Someone is killed or seriously injured on UK roads every 17 minutes



37%

of road deaths and serious injuries in Essex between 2019 and 2024 involved speed-related factors



47
deaths

was the annual average on Essex roads between 2019 and 2024

Vision and objectives



The Safer Speeds Strategy takes an outcome-led approach, starting with a strong vision of what we want to achieve 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.”

The objectives of this Safer Speeds Strategy support the wider Vision Zero and new Essex Transport Strategy outcomes.

-  All road users are able to reach their destinations safely and reliably.
-  Road users will understand the need for the speed limit and their responsibility to keep others safe.
-  Vehicle speeds are safe for all users in places where road space is shared.
-  Speed limits on the road network support the safe movement of people and goods.
-  Authorities with the statutory powers to set and enforce speed limits will work together to encourage safe speeds.

Benefits of Safer Speeds



Reduction in casualties

Every **1mph reduction** in speeds on urban roads can result in a 6% drop in casualties.



Higher chance of survival

You are **seven times more likely** to survive if you are hit by a car at 20mph than at 30mph.



Improved sense of place

People are **more likely to spend time outdoors** when they feel safe, creating a **stronger sense of community and belonging**.



Protecting the environment

Lowering speeds can potentially help **reduce vehicle emissions, air pollution and noise**.



Local health benefits

As well as the direct health benefits of reduced emissions, safer roads can **make walking, wheeling and cycling more attractive**.

Key principles

The new draft Essex Safer Speeds Strategy is based on several key principles, which we have summarised below.

The full draft strategy is available to read online at: <https://consultations.essex.gov.uk/essex-highways/essex-safer-speeds-strategy>

The Safe System

The Safe System is a globally recognised approach to road safety and has been widely endorsed as best practice, including by the UK Government, World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). It recognises that people make mistakes and that road deaths and serious injuries are preventable. The Safe System is designed so that when people do make mistakes, any resulting impact is low enough to avoid death or serious injury.

Safer speeds is one of five 'layers of prevention and protection' under the Safer System approach. The approach has formed the basis of the new Essex Safer Speeds Strategy, which will help us to both make collisions easier to avoid and also make death or serious injury unlikely for all road users.



Flexible and community-led

Essex is a diverse county, so we want there to be flexibility in how speed limits are set, rather than a blanket approach. Under the new strategy, speeds will instead be decided in a more considered, case-by-case and community-led way. Local people will play a central role in shaping what happens in their area, helping ensure any changes make neighbourhoods feel safer and more welcoming.

Phased approach

Speed limit changes will not be rolled out everywhere straight away and will instead be phased over a number of years, starting in communities where there is strong support and focusing on areas where we can have the biggest impact.

More detail about how the strategy will gradually be implemented is available in the next steps section of this document.

Safe and Appropriate Speed Limit Framework

As set out in the next section, recommended speed limits will be decided based on a new Safe and Appropriate Speed Limit Framework, which considers how different streets and places are used.

Safe and Appropriate Speed Limit Framework

To help achieve our vision and objectives, we are proposing a new way to set speed limits across Essex using a Safe and Appropriate Speed Limit Framework. The new approach recognises that different people use our roads for a variety of reasons and vehicle speeds have a key role to play in ensuring they function as they should.

The new framework follows a new approach to categorising the road network in Essex, which acknowledges the differing levels of ‘place’ and ‘movement’ that exist across our streets and roads.

All streets and roads across Essex will be classified into one of nine street types, reflecting their function. This classification is then the basis for setting safe and appropriate speed limits, meaning they are directly informed by how our network is used and by who.

The table below sets out recommended safe and appropriate speed limits for different street types

across Essex. Where ranges are proposed, speed limits will be considered on a case-by-case basis, with local involvement.

More information about the proposed Safe and Appropriate Speed Limit Framework, including examples of each classification, can be found in the full draft Essex Safer Speeds Strategy. This is available at:

<https://consultations.essex.gov.uk/essex-highways/essex-safer-speeds-strategy>

Essex street types	Example streets and roads	Key risks to users	Essex safe and appropriate speed range (mph)
Destination Place	Major high streets, town squares and tourist areas, which are often partly pedestrianised or restricted to traffic	Highest presence of people walking, cycling and travelling with mobility aids	 (where traffic is permitted)
Linear Place	Other high streets or community streets with through road	Used by cars, buses and people travelling outside of vehicles. Risks associated with high potential for conflict between users (evidence suggests highest collision rate)	
Movement Area	High activity areas for multiple modes e.g. bus and rail stations or modal interchanges	Used by a mixture of modes and users. Risks associated with high potential for conflict between different road users and vehicles (evidence suggest highest collision rate)	
Local Street	Streets attracting local activity only e.g. residential streets or employment areas	Used by local vehicles, light good vehicles, and people walking, cycling and using mobility aids. High potential for conflict, related to the mix of users walking, cycling, travelling with mobility aids and in vehicles	

Safe and Appropriate Speed Limit Framework (continued)

Essex street types	Example streets and roads	Key risks to users	Essex safe and appropriate speed range (mph)
Mixed Use Street	Streets which provide access to local convenience shops and services, as well as through movements, e.g. village centres, local shopping parades or busier residential streets	Used by a wide variety of travel modes with higher volumes of traffic due to this mixture. Risks associated with the number of different uses, creating confusion and high potential for conflict	 20-30
Main Urban Road	Key movement routes within an urban area	Used by vehicles, buses and goods vehicles, typically providing a link between strategic roads and the more local network. Given urban location, there is potential for interaction between vehicles and other modes, including pedestrians and cyclists. Risks associated with whether users are separated and the level of interaction between vehicles and other users	 20-50
Local Road	Movement corridors which provide important local connections between villages and towns (typically rural)	Used by cars, buses and goods vehicles, lower presence of people travelling outside of vehicles. Risks associated with higher speeds, bends, poor visibility, potential for head-on collisions and side road accesses	 20-60 (upper speed limit determined by national speed limit)
Lane	Typically quieter rural routes which provide local access to properties and/or other rural land uses	While at a low level, used by people who are walking or cycling in certain areas, often without any other infrastructure. Unexpected presence of walkers and cyclists is a risk, alongside other risks related to often higher speeds, narrow carriageways, bends, poor visibility and side road accesses	 20-60 (upper speed limit determined by national speed limit)
Strategic Road	Main movement corridors with a strategic function e.g. major A roads	Used by vehicles, buses and goods vehicles. Risks associated with higher speeds and vehicle collisions	 40-70 (upper speed limit determined by national speed limit)

Focus areas

We recognise the diversity of Essex and the proposed Essex Safer Speeds Strategy considers safe and appropriate speeds across all parts of the county, whether it be our urban towns and cities, rural villages and hamlets, or coastal communities. However, the strategy has a few key focus areas, where we believe we can have the biggest impact in protecting all road users.



20mph speed limits

We want to work with local communities to introduce 20mph speed limits on people-focused streets. Reducing traffic speeds is especially important on residential streets, and in village, town and city centres. It helps create streets which feel safer and more welcoming, helping more people feel confident to walk, cycle and spend time in their local community. Evidence to date consistently demonstrates the benefits of introducing 20mph speed limits on streets where people are likely to spend time.

A person hit by a car driving at 20mph is seven times more likely to survive than at 30mph, while there is a negligible difference in vehicle journey times.

Unlike in other areas of the UK, we are not proposing a blanket approach to 20mph speed limits. Instead, they will be decided in a case-by-case and community-led way, focusing on areas where we can have the biggest impact and where there is public support.

School routes

We want every child in Essex to be safe travelling to school. Reduced speeds will make it safer for children to walk and cycle independently to and from school. This will also have health, environmental and social benefits for pupils and the wider community.

On routes outside schools in urban and residential areas, we are recommending 20mph speed limits as part of a wider limit or zone protecting the whole journey to school. This can be more difficult in rural areas, where some schools are located on roads which also serve a purpose in connecting villages and towns. However, lowering speed limits outside schools will be considered where practical, if it is likely to have a recognised impact in reducing speeds and risk.



Rural areas

More than half of fatal crashes in Great Britain occur on rural roads. They present the greatest risk per mile travelled for all kinds of road users, with speed often a major factor in road traffic collisions in rural areas.

Essex has a significant number of rural roads. Several are narrow and have blind bends, trees and hedges at the roadside and limited safe places to pass. In many cases, they don't have footways (pavements) or cycle facilities, but are frequently used by people walking, cycling, motorcycling or riding horses.

We want our rural areas to be safer for everyone. In the shorter term, we will prioritise reducing speed limits on known high-risk sections, where we can have the greatest impact. Over the longer term, we will continue to respond to evolving national guidance to inform how safer speeds are introduced across the wider rural network in Essex.

Public consultation

We want to hear the thoughts of the people who live, visit or work in Essex on the draft Essex Safer Speeds Strategy. Your feedback will help us refine and improve the strategy before it is finalised and adopted later this year.

The best way to tell us what you think is by completing our online consultation survey, which is available by scanning the QR code at the bottom of the page or at:

<https://consultations.essex.gov.uk/essex-highways/essex-safer-speeds-strategy>

The survey opened on **Monday, 16 March 2026** and will close on **Sunday, 26 April 2026**.

A printed copy of the survey is also available on request and can be printed, filled out and posted to the following address (please note the address is case sensitive):
**FREEPOST ESSEX HIGHWAYS
ENGAGEMENT TEAM**

You can request a printed copy of the survey, the strategy and/or this consultation summary document, or an alternative format, by emailing:

saferspeeds@essexhighways.org



We also have a small number of printed copies available in the following libraries:

- Basildon Library
- Braintree Library
- Canvey Island Library
- Chelmsford Library
- Clacton Library
- Colchester Library
- Dunmow Library
- Epping Library
- Harlow Library
- Maldon Library
- Rayleigh Library

Please respond to the survey via only one of the methods. We cannot accept responsibility for ensuring that responses sent in other ways are considered. When responding please state whether you are responding as an individual or representing the views of an organisation.

Drop-in events

We will be joining the Safer Essex Roads Partnership at its upcoming Vision Zero community events. Come along to find out more about the draft Essex Safer Speeds Strategy and ask any questions.

- **Colchester**
Wednesday 18 March 2026 (10am – 2pm)
- **Harlow**
Tuesday 24 March 2026 (10am – 2pm)
- **Chelmsford**
Tuesday 7 April 2026 (10am – 2pm)
- **Wickford**
Thursday 23 April 2026 (10am – 2pm)

Specific locations will be confirmed nearer the time and published on our consultation page at:

<https://consultations.essex.gov.uk/essex-highways/essex-safer-speeds-strategy>

Next steps

Consultation report and adoption of the strategy

Once our public consultation has closed, we will analyse and review all responses. Your feedback will help us consider potential changes to improve and finalise the strategy. A consultation report will be published, setting out the feedback we received. A final version of the strategy is then expected to be adopted later this year, subject to approval.

Implementing the strategy

We will use a combination of Essex County Council and external funding to implement the strategy, striking a balance between where communities want to see changes and areas which will have the biggest impact. We will take a phased and gradual approach to help us learn from each stage and ensure our decisions are well-informed, practical and supported by local communities.



Ongoing	Phase 1 - Continue to assess our major roads and high-risk areas. Develop our detailed implementation plans further with partners.
Short-Term (1-2 years)	Phase 2 - Delivery of a community-led pilot in areas where communities want to see changes.
Medium-Term	Phase 3 - Prioritising high-risk areas with the most impact to reduce collisions and save lives.
Long-Term	Phase 4 - Expanding speed limit changes gradually across the wider network, as funding and opportunities allow.

Community-led pilot

We will run a community-led pilot, giving local people the opportunity to shape early changes to speed limits in the places where they feel they are most needed and likely to have an impact. Communities will be able to put themselves forward to take part, however, we will initially only be able to run pilots in a small number of areas. By trialling speed limit changes in this way, we can learn what works well, understand any challenges and build a strong evidence base to help guide wider changes across Essex in the future.

Medium to longer-term changes

We will make wider changes to speed limits in priority areas and those where there is the highest risk of collisions and vulnerable road users, such as near schools, town centres, and busy pedestrian routes. New housing developments and major transport schemes will be designed to ensure safe speeds are established from the outset. Changes will then gradually be expanded to the wider road network in the longer-term when funding and opportunities allow.

This information is issued by:
Essex County Council

Contact us:
saferspeeds@essexhighways.org

The information contained in this document can be translated, provided in print, and/or made available in alternative formats, on request.

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