

Attn:

Steve Newman, Town Clerk, Dorchester Town Council
All members of the 20mph Working Group, Dorchester Town Council
Cllr Ralph Ricardo, Chair, DTC Planning & Environment Committee
Cllr Les Fry, Vice-Chair, DTC Planning & Environment Committee



Dorchester Transport Action Group
3rd December 2025

DTAG Statement of Support for Dorchester Town Council's 20mph Work

1. Introduction

Dorchester Transport Action Group (DTAG) strongly supports Dorchester Town Council's decision to explore an area-wide 20mph limit and to form a dedicated Working Group, as recently reported in the Dorset Echo. We present this statement to confirm the high level of public support and to underline why a consistent, town-wide 20mph limit is both necessary and achievable.

Dorchester is already under increasing pressure from congestion, safety concerns and rising through-traffic. With major growth expected, including the North Dorchester development, these challenges will intensify unless proactive steps are taken. A town-wide 20mph limit is one of the simplest and most effective measures available to improve safety, reduce traffic impacts and create healthier, more liveable neighbourhoods.

2. Who we are

DTAG is a non-political, community-led group made up of local residents, councillors and professionals with expertise in transport, road safety, public transport operations, planning and sustainability. We gather community views through meetings, surveys and ongoing engagement with people who walk, wheel, cycle, use mobility aids, drive or rely on public transport in and around Dorchester.

This broad base of experience means DTAG is well placed to reflect local concerns and provide constructive, evidence-based input.

3. Public support

At our public meeting in summer 2025, residents of all ages expressed strong support for lower speed limits. The concerns we heard were consistent:

- Everyday walking routes feel unsafe
- Crossing busy roads is stressful and dangerous, especially near schools
- Pavements are narrow or exposed to fast traffic
- Peak-time congestion creates noise, pollution, discomfort and danger.

Residents also highlighted frustration that speed limits have been introduced piecemeal, leaving similar streets with inconsistent rules. A single, clear default speed across the town resolves this unfairness and avoids the long delays of case-by-case requests.

4. Why DTAG supports an area wide 20mph speed limit

The Virtuous Cycle effect

A consistent 20mph environment triggers a positive chain reaction:

- Slower speeds reduce danger
- Safer streets encourage more walking and cycling
- Reduced local traffic improves air quality and noise
- Neighbourhoods become healthier, sociable and more connected.

Meanwhile people who need to drive through the community, can.

Reducing through-traffic

Satnav systems route drivers towards the fastest option though 20 mph has little effect on journey times. However, drivers who know of the 20mph limit may change their behaviour and encourage a shift of east-west traffic onto the A35 rather than residential streets, thus reducing non-local traffic near homes, schools and shops and relieving peak-time congestion.

Addressing unsafe walking conditions

Dorchester's narrow pavements, blind bends and constrained historic streets mean that even small reductions in speed significantly improves actual and perceived safety, particularly for children, older people and those with mobility challenges.

Improved safety and lower insurance premiums

Data from Wales' first year of default 20mph shows marked reductions in fatalities and serious injuries. Meanwhile Esure Group report that drivers could save £50 per year on insurance premiums in 20mph zones. The evidence is clear: lower speeds save lives and money.

Economic and social benefits

Quieter, calmer streets encourage people to walk into town, increasing footfall, in turn supporting local shops and businesses, potentially bringing new life to vacant units.

Simple, cost-effective and easy to implement

With only 11 vehicle access points into the town, an area-wide 20mph limit requires a limited number of entry signs, keeping costs low and maintenance manageable. A single limit is clearer for drivers and significantly more cost-effective than multiple isolated zones.

Future-proofing growth

Future development will shape the town for decades. Establishing a town-wide 20mph limit now embeds safer, healthier expectations before new residents move in. Travel habits form quickly; often within the first two weeks of moving. Acting now gives Dorchester control over how change unfolds, ensuring growth supports, not overwhelms, the town.

5. Alignment with Dorset Council policy

Dorchester clearly meets all stated criteria in the Dorset Council's 20mph Policy for residential and high-pedestrian-activity areas to improve safety for people walking and cycling:

- Dense residential areas
- High levels of walking, wheeling and cycling
- Constrained historic streets
- Strong community support.

The policy also emphasises healthier lifestyles, improved quality of life and environmental benefits, all outcomes that a town-wide 20mph limit directly supports.

5. DTAG's Continued Support

DTAG welcomes the opportunity to support the 20mph Working Group through evidence gathering, community engagement and constructive collaboration. We stand ready to assist in any way that helps deliver a safer, more liveable Dorchester.

Yours sincerely,



Stewart Palmer, Chair
Dorchester Transport Action Group

cc:

All Dorchester Town Councillors

All Dorchester Ward Councillors, Dorset Council

Cllr Nick Ireland, Leader, Dorset Council

Cllr Jon Andrews, Cabinet Member for Place Services, Dorset Council

Jack Wiltshire, Director for Highways, Engineering & Transport, Dorset Council

MP Edward Morello