

# **The Essex County Council (A1025 Gilden Way and Various Roads, Harlow and Sheering) (Harlow and Epping Forest) (Combined Speed Limits) Order 202\***

## **STATEMENT OF REASONS:**

Funded through the Major Projects budget previously allocated within Essex Highways, and supported by National Highways, the dual carriageway Link Road forms part of the wider infrastructure scheme associated with the construction of Junction 7a on the M11 Motorway. The scheme was opened to the public in 2022, with the dual carriageway Link Road connecting to the upgraded B183 Gilden Way, now designated as the A1025.

The primary objectives of this scheme focused on:

- Improving accessibility to and from Harlow.
- Ensuring the infrastructure is appropriately scaled to accommodate future traffic growth.
- Supporting planned housing developments around Harlow and employment growth to the east of the town.
- Reducing congestion, particularly along the A414 corridor through Harlow.

Improvement works on the A1025 included the addition of a new lane, resulting in two southbound lanes and one northbound lane. This upgrade was necessary to accommodate projected increases in traffic volumes. The scheme also features a shared surface for both cyclists and pedestrians adjacent to the Campions residential area.

### **50mph Speed Limit Reference TRAF8602**

The westbound carriageway of the Link Road, between the western dumbbell roundabout of the M11 Motorway (junction 7a) and the Campions Roundabout in the Epping Forest District of Essex, has been designed to operate with a speed limit of 50mph. This section of dual carriageway is 651 metres in length.

The new Link Road has been built across farmland on the edge of Harlow, which is currently considered a rural setting. Normally, a rural road of this type would be designed for higher speeds, potentially allowing for a 70mph limit.

The design, however, reflects and safeguards the opportunity to provide a northern bypass for Harlow, should this be pursued in the future.

In addition, significant development is planned for the surrounding land within the next 5 to 10 years. A developer is currently planning housing to the south, in accordance with the Harlow and Epping Forest local plans. Proposals for the new Princess Alexandra Hospital are also being considered to the north and are currently at the site selection and feasibility study stage. These developments are expected to transform the area into an urban environment in the foreseeable future.

In anticipation of this change, the road has been designed with its future urban context in mind, rather than its current rural surroundings. Urban dual carriageways are typically constructed with lower speed limits to reflect the characteristics of built-up areas.

Designing the road for a slightly lower speed has also ensured that the layout accommodates existing constraints, such as for example safeguarding an area of ancient woodland in the vicinity. As a result, the road opened with a 50mph speed limit, which aligns with standards for urban roads and will remain appropriate as the area evolves.

### **40mph Speed Limit Reference TRAF8601**

The eastbound carriageway of the Link Road, between the Campions Roundabout and the western dumbbell roundabout of the M11 Motorway, in the Epping Forest District of Essex, has been designed to operate with a speed limit of 40mph. This section of dual carriageway is 651 metres in length.

The Link Road includes a bend that is sharper than the ideal for its current design speed. This bend was introduced through the design process to ensure the protection of nearby ancient woodland to the south of the link road, which has ecological significance for local wildlife.

Due to the bend and the presence of a central reserve safety barrier, forward visibility is reduced, particularly for smaller objects on the carriageway. The barrier obstructs the line of sight around the bend, preventing drivers from seeing as far ahead as would typically be expected to stop safely at 50mph.

At higher speeds, drivers require longer stopping distances than the available visibility permits. This presents a potential safety risk, as low-level hazards may only become visible when it is too late to respond safely.

To mitigate this risk, the speed limit on the eastbound carriageway has been reduced to 40mph. This ensures that drivers have sufficient time and distance to detect and react to potential hazards, without the need for physical alterations to the road layout.

### **Derestricted Speed Reference TRAF8603**

The proposed Derestricted Traffic Regulation Order applies to the section of carriageway located east of the Link Road, excluding the slip roads that provide access to and from the M11 Motorway. The order specifically applies to the east and west dumbbell roundabouts, as well as the dual carriageway link connecting them via the overbridge, with a total length of 236 metres.

This order is necessary to manage the transition between the motorway-standard slip roads and the dual two-lane link road, which is subject to imposed speed limits of 40mph for eastbound traffic and 50mph for westbound traffic.

The section of road in question is equipped with street lighting. As a result, it is currently subject to a default 30mph speed limit under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. This default limit is triggered solely by the presence of street lighting and does not reflect the road's physical characteristics or intended function.

The order seeks to remove this default 30mph speed limit and designate the specified section of road as derestricted, thereby aligning the speed environment with the road's design, strategic role, and surrounding network.

The link road is designed to accommodate higher-speed traffic and serves as a strategic connector between the local road network and the motorway. The current 30mph limit is inappropriate and inconsistent with the road's function and design.

The proposed derestriction facilitates a logical and consistent transition between the 40mph and 50mph limits and the national speed limit applicable on the motorway slip roads. This avoids abrupt and confusing changes in speed limits that could undermine driver compliance and road safety.

A 30mph limit on a high-standard dual carriageway is counterintuitive and may result in poor compliance, especially when multiple speed limit changes occur over a short distance. A derestricted limit better aligns with driver expectations and promotes safer, more predictable driving behaviour.

Removing the unnecessary speed restriction will improve traffic flow, reduce journey times, and support the efficient operation of the strategic road network. The proposal aligns with Department for Transport guidance (Circular 01/2013, updated March 2025), which advocates for speed limits that are evidence-led, self-explaining, and appropriate to the road environment.

The proposed derestricted TRO is therefore necessary to correct an unintended speed restriction resulting from street lighting and to ensure the speed limit is appropriate, consistent, and supportive of safe and efficient traffic movement.

The Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO's) are retrospective as the 40mph and 50mph restrictions are already road-marked and signed on the ground.