

M32 Eastville Viaduct Response to Statutory Instrument Consultation

**Proposed Permanent 40mph and 60mph
Speed Limits**

July 2025

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Introduction

National Highways recently consulted on a proposed Statutory Instrument to implement:

- A 40mph permanent speed limit in both directions on the M32 motorway from a point 83 metres north of the northern mechanical join of the Eastville Viaduct to a point 22 metres north of the Severn Beach railway line overbridge; and
- A 60mph permanent speed limit on the M32 motorway in the southbound direction between a point 30 metres south of the centre of Heath House Lane overbridge, where the speed limit reduces from the national motorway speed limit of 70mph to 60mph, ahead of the 40mph speed limit at the point on the mainline (83 metres north of the northern mechanical join of the Eastville Viaduct).

The consultation launched on Monday 19 May 2025 and closed at 23:59 on Sunday 6 July 2025.

This document provides a summary of the responses received to the consultation and National Highways response.

Background to the consultation

The M32 Eastville Viaduct is an elevated 1.1km section of the M32 - a 7.1km-long motorway that links the M4 at junction 19 (Hambrook Interchange) with Bristol city centre. It is part of the Strategic Road Network (SRN) owned and maintained by National Highways and carries 65,000 vehicles a day.

A temporary 40mph speed limit is currently in place on the M32 motorway in both directions between a point 83 metres north of the northern mechanical join of the Eastville Viaduct to a point 22 metres north of the Severn Beach railway line overbridge. In addition, a temporary 60mph speed limit is currently in place on the M32 motorway in the southbound direction between a point 30 metres south of the centre of Heath House Lane overbridge, where the speed limit reduces from the national motorway speed limit of 70mph to 60mph, ahead of the 40mph speed limit at a point 83 metres north of the expansion joint at the northern end of Eastville Viaduct. These temporary speed limits were implemented using Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders following an operational review, which deemed that the speed restrictions were necessary for safety reasons.

In December 2024 and January 2025, we consulted on the proposal to make permanent the existing temporary 40mph speed limit on the M32 motorway in both directions from a point 83 metres north of the northern mechanical join of the Eastville Viaduct to a point 22 metres north of the Severn Beach railway line overbridge by way of a statutory instrument

(<https://nationalhighways.citizenspace.com/he/m32-eastville-viaduct-40mph-statutory-instrument/>).

The permanent 40mph speed limit is required due to the geometry of this section of the motorway. The road was originally built in the 1970s and adhered to design standards of the time. If it was built today the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB)¹ would recommend a speed limit of 40mph due to the short distance between junctions 2 and 3, which results in a high level of weaving traffic (i.e. manoeuvring between traffic lanes). The elevated section of the motorway around junction 2 also has limited forward visibility, narrow lanes and narrow hard shoulders, which don't meet the design standards of today's motorways. The proposed speed limit changes are required on safety grounds and to help ensure a smooth-running network.

Since the previous consultation, a safety risk assessment has been produced in accordance with the DMRB's (GG 104) Requirements for Safety Risk Assessment, which determined that there is an operational safety benefit for road users in also making permanent the current temporary 60mph speed limit on the M32 southbound approach to Eastville Viaduct.

¹ The DMRB, or Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, is a comprehensive set of standards and guidelines used in the United Kingdom for the design, assessment, and operation of motorways and all-purpose trunk roads. It provides detailed technical requirements to ensure consistency, safety, and efficiency in highway projects. For more information, please visit www.standardsforhighways.co.uk/dmrbs.

The permanent 60mph speed limit section on the M32 motorway in the southbound direction is required on safety grounds, to facilitate the step-down from the 70mph national motorway speed limit to the proposed permanent 40mph speed limit on the M32 Eastville Viaduct. The safety risk assessment determined that:

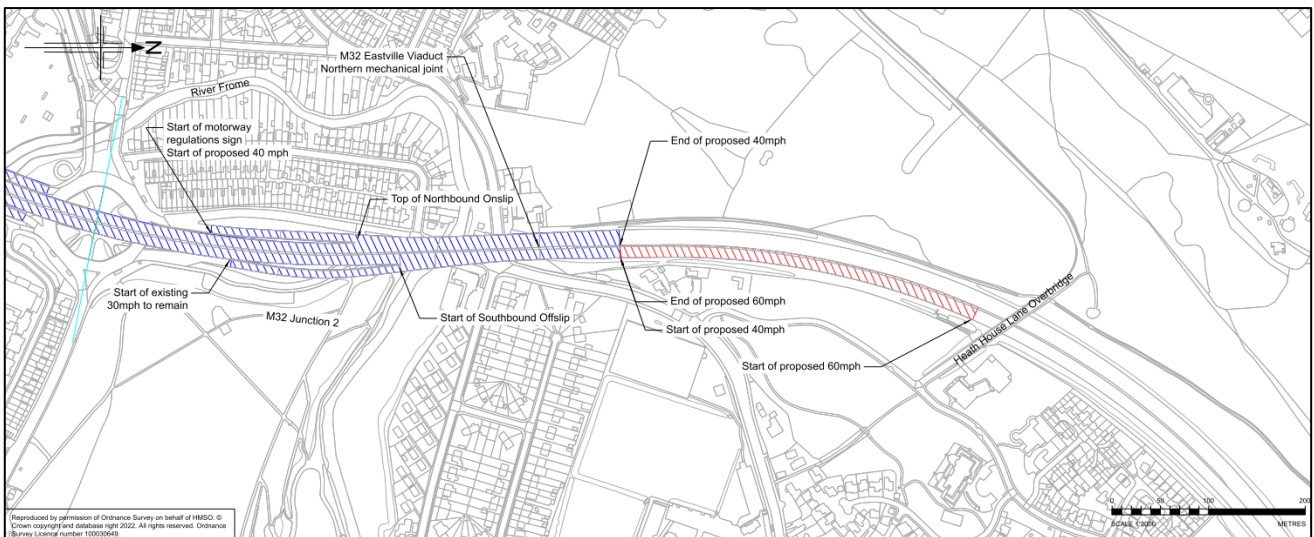
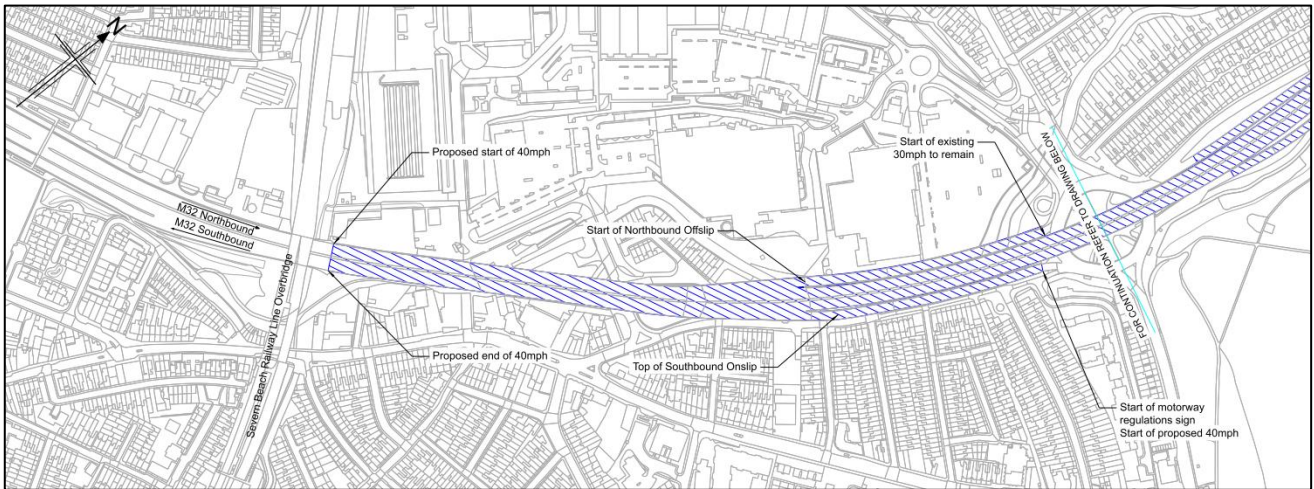
“If the 60mph speed limit is removed, there are a number of hazards for both users and workers that are higher compared to the current arrangement [i.e. national speed limit]”.

This consultation was to make permanent both the existing temporary 40mph speed limit on the mainline of the M32 motorway and the slip roads, and the existing temporary 60mph speed limit on the M32 southbound mainline by way of a Statutory Instrument.

KEY:

 PROPOSED PERMANENT 40MPH SPEED LIMIT

 PROPOSED PERMANENT 60MPH SPEED LIMIT



Map of affected stretch of the M32 motorway

The consultation process

National Highways considers the views of stakeholders and listens to feedback from anyone with an interest in the proposals as part of the consultation process.

Details about the consultation were sent to 86 stakeholders who were identified as having a potential interest in the proposals due to their role or location. These stakeholders included local councillors, local Government bodies and Members of Parliament (MPs), emergency services and transport services, statutory and regulatory bodies, business groups and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) groups.

The consultation document was also published on National Highways Citizen Space website here <https://nationalhighways.citizenspace.com/he/m32-statutory-instrument-consultation>.

The consultation document explained the proposals and included a consultation response form, which invited stakeholders to share their feedback on the proposals with National Highways. A link to an online version of the consultation response form was also available through the consultation webpage.

The consultation launched on Monday 19 May 2025 and closed at 23:59 on Sunday 6 July 2025.

National Highways has considered all feedback received during the consultation. This document provides a summary of the comments received and sets out National Highways response to them.

Summary of consultation responses

In total, nine responses to the consultation were received - eight via the online form and one via email into the M32 Eastville Viaduct project inbox as an acknowledgement of the consultation notice.

The table below shows the breakdown of responses received from different respondent groups:

| Respondent Group | Number of responses received via online form | Number of responses received via email |
|--|--|--|
| Member of the public | 5 | |
| Emergency services (Police and Fire Service) | 2 | 1 |
| Local Government | 1 | |
| Total | 8 | 1 |

The consultation response form asked respondents if they were in favour of National Highways proposal. A neutral response was received from Avon and Somerset Police regarding their favour for the scheme.

The remaining responses were as follows:

| Response | Total |
|----------|-------|
| Yes | 4 |
| No | 4 |

Respondents were invited to comment on the proposals and seven of the nine respondents provided comments. Responses provided on behalf of an organisation are attributed to that organisation while responses from members of the public have been anonymised, all of which are summarised below along with National Highways response.

Organisation Responses

1. Bristol City Council

Bristol City Council responded to the consultation stating that the council supports the proposed changes to the speed limits along the sections of the M32 on safety grounds. They also reiterated a request for average speed cameras to be considered at this location and elsewhere on the National Highways network, to ensure compliance with speed limits. They supported their statement by commenting that:

‘This aligns with the general discussions that have taken place regarding formalising the existing Road Safety Partnership and taking a regional safe systems approach to road safety with vision zero at its centre’.

National Highways Response

The provision of average speed cameras is not part of the scope of the upcoming M32 Eastville Viaduct Renewals work, noting that National Highways are not responsible for enforcing speed limits. This is the responsibility of Avon and Somerset Police.

2. Avon and Somerset Police

Avon and Somerset Police responded by email to the consultation, highlighting their position regarding the proposal.

They stated that speed limits should be part of a broader speed management strategy that includes road design, signage, education, and driver awareness; not just enforcement. Avon and Somerset Police noted that they will support all appropriate speed limits.

National Highways Response

There is an operational safety benefit for all road users in making permanent both the current 40mph speed limit in both directions in the vicinity of Eastville Viaduct and the current temporary 60mph speed limit on the M32 southbound approach to Eastville Viaduct.

A safety risk assessment has been produced in accordance with the DMRB's (GG 104) Requirements for Safety Risk Assessment, which confirmed that the proposed speed limits are appropriate. The safety risk assessment has been shared with Avon and Somerset Police.

3. Avon Fire & Rescue Service

Avon Fire & Rescue Service responded in favour of the proposal, stating that no significant negative impact on response times or access have been reported whilst the temporary speed limits have been in place on the M32 Eastville Viaduct.

National Highways Response

National Highways acknowledges and thanks Avon Fire & Rescue Service for their response and support for the proposal in this consultation.

4. Southmead Fire Station (part of Avon Fire & Rescue Service)

Southmead Fire Station responded to the consultation in favour of the proposal, stating that on behalf of all four watches they had not encountered any issues when responding to emergencies with the temporary speed limits in place.

National Highways Response

National Highways acknowledges and thanks Southmead Fire Station for their response and support for the proposal in this consultation.

Members of the public responses

Respondent #1

The respondent was not in favour of the proposed speed limit and suggested using advisory speed limits instead. They argued that speed limits should be justified with clear reasoning, which they did not believe had been provided. Additionally, they believed limits should consider 85th percentile speeds - the speed at or below which 85% of drivers travel - which can vary significantly.

National Highways Response

Mandatory enforceable speed limits are used on the SRN and are required at this location due to the geometry and design of the road section. Advisory speed limits may only be used in limited circumstances and are not appropriate here.

The proposal to make permanent both the current temporary 40mph and 60mph speed limits is based on the geometry and design of the road section. The road was originally built in the 1970s and adhered to design standards of the time. If it was built today the DMRB would recommend a speed limit of 40mph due to the short distance between junctions 2 and 3, narrow lanes and narrow hard shoulders. The permanent 60mph speed limit section on the M32 motorway in the southbound direction is required on safety grounds, to facilitate the step-down from the 70mph national motorway speed limit to the proposed permanent 40mph speed limit on the M32 Eastville Viaduct.

Respondent #2

The respondent commented that they were not in favour of the proposal. They believed the current speed restrictions on the M32 Eastville Viaduct are unnecessary and counterproductive stating that lower speed limits have negatively impacted emergency response times and operational efficiency, without significantly improving safety. The respondent advocated for a return to the previous speed limits to better support emergency services and maintain effective traffic flow.

National Highways Response

The temporary speed limits have been in place for some time and, as reported by Avon Fire & Rescue and Southmead Fire Station, no impact to response times has been experienced.

The proposal to make permanent both the current temporary 40mph and 60mph speed limits is based on the geometry and design of the road section. The road was originally built in the 1970s and adhered to design standards of the time. If it was built today the DMRB would recommend a speed limit of 40mph due to the short distance between junctions 2 and 3, narrow lanes and narrow hard shoulders. The permanent 60mph speed limit section on the M32 motorway in the southbound direction is required on safety grounds, to facilitate the step-down from the 70mph national motorway speed limit to the proposed permanent 40mph speed limit on the M32 Eastville Viaduct.

Respondent #3

The respondent believed the current 40mph speed limit on the M32 Eastville Viaduct is too low and causes safety and traffic flow issues. They proposed a more balanced approach including introducing a 50mph limit for part of the stretch currently limited to 40mph and extending the 60mph buffer zone further north to allow for smoother transitions. The respondent also suggested avoiding sudden changes from national speed limit to 40mph, stating this can be dangerous, especially for lower-powered vehicles on uphill sections. They further said the 40mph should be retained only south of the railway bridge, where urban congestion and safety concerns justify it.

The respondent believed the current arrangement causes inconsistent speeds, sudden braking, and driver confusion and suggested a reassessment is needed.

National Highways Response

The proposal to make permanent both the current temporary 40mph and 60mph speed limits is based on the geometry and design of the road section. The road was originally built in the 1970s and adhered to design standards of the time. If it was built today the DMRB would recommend a speed limit of 40mph due to the short distance between junctions 2 and 3, narrow lanes and narrow hard shoulders. The permanent 60mph speed limit section on the M32 motorway in the southbound direction is required on safety grounds, to facilitate the step-down from the 70mph national motorway speed limit to the proposed permanent 40mph speed limit on the M32 Eastville Viaduct.

The DMRB's (GG 104) Requirements for Safety Risk Assessment, which has been carried out, has determined that there is an operational safety benefit for all road

users in making permanent both the current 40mph speed limit in both directions in the vicinity of Eastville Viaduct and the current temporary 60mph speed limit on the M32 southbound approach to Eastville Viaduct. The GG 104 Safety Risk Assessment ensures a safe as reasonably practicable solution.

Consultation Outcome

National Highways has considered all responses received to the consultation and is grateful to respondents for their feedback.

National Highways intends to take forward the proposals contained in the consultation document. It is anticipated that the new Statutory Instrument, which will implement the proposals set out in the consultation document, will come into force later in 2025.