

Safer Roadsides Guidelines 2026

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Introduction

The following are extracts from the new DfT Road Safety Strategy published this year.

“The Safe System is an internationally recognised, evidence-based approach to road safety. It recognises that while human error is inevitable, deaths and serious injuries are not; the road and vehicle environment should be designed to protect people as much as possible. The strategy aligns with the Safe System’s five pillars and eight enablers (as depicted in Figure 1) People make mistakes. Humans are vulnerable to injury. Death and serious injury are unacceptable”.

“Safe Roads and Roadsides Roads and roadsides should be designed to reduce the risk of collisions and protect all users. Local authorities in England manage around 98% of publicly maintained roads (by length) and are responsible for embedding safety into road design and maintenance in their areas”.

“Safe roads and roadsides and safe speeds are pillars within the Safe System and key to the collective work to reduce collisions and casualties on the roads. It is important to recognise where there are issues on the road network, enabling action to be taken to address these and keep all road users safe”.



Source: Agilysis 2022

Passive Safety UK continues to be committed to promoting safer roadsides as part of a safe system approach. The creation and maintenance of safer roadsides can greatly reduce the number of fatalities and casualties occurring on the UK Road network.

These Guidelines are intended as an aid to all Highway Engineers involved with the design and maintenance of safer roadsides.

Andrew Pledge, Passive Safety UK

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 These guidelines provide advice for the creation, provision and maintenance of a safer roadside on non-built up roads, as part of a safe system approach to road safety. The guidelines are advisory and we advise highway authorities to consider fully whether to adopt them in full or in part. Passive Safety UK believes that there are no safety risks but only safety benefits if they are adopted. Advice is given on prioritising these guidelines to those roads where it is likely to offer the greatest benefit.

1.2 Driver error or behaviour is often a prime cause of errant vehicle impacts. The resulting fatalities and serious injuries happen when people are subjected to intolerable forces.

1.3 Whilst the amount of the force subjected on vehicle occupants in a crash can be reduced by lowering the speed involved, clear zones, or, at least reducing the amount of unprotected hazardous roadside features, can also reduce the likelihood of a fatal or serious injury when an errant vehicle leaves the carriageway.

1.4 Energy absorbing features in vehicles, such as air bags, inertia reel seat belts and crumple zones, reduce the amount of force experienced by vehicle occupants in a collision. In the same way, energy absorbing, passively safe, roadside features reduce the amount of force experienced by vehicle occupants in a collision.

1.5 The present level of unprotected, hazardous roadside features on our non-built up "A" and "B" road network, such as signposts, Lighting Columns, Telegraph and Power Poles, Mobile phone masts and ITS and data collection Equipment remains unacceptably high. Clearing the area next to the carriageway and reducing unnecessary signs and other roadside clutter can cost little or even save money in the longer term.

1.6 The difficult area of trees and roadside safety is in need of examination. Balancing environmental interests, people's love of trees and roadside safety is emotive and difficult to reconcile. Deaths and serious injuries from impacts with trees remain frequent but the toll can be reduced if suitable measures are taken.

1.7 The following chapters deal with the four "R"s to providing a safer roadside, which are:
Removing unnecessary hazardous items to create a clear zone.
Relocating items further away from the carriageway or from near bends.
Rationalising items by consolidating them onto shared supports.
Replacing support(s) with passively safe, collision friendly, alternatives.

1.8 Additionally, there are further measures that are suggested within this advice that we also consider to be beneficial. These are discussed in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 2: REMOVING UNNECESSARY HAZARDOUS ITEMS

2.1 A clear zone next to the carriageway will make a large contribution to roadside safety. Historically the DMRB advised a clear zone of 4.5metres for trunk roads where speed limits were 50 mph or over. Current advice for trunk roads in the DMRB dictates that a road restraint system provision/clear zone width is subject to a risk assessment approach.

2.2 For non-trunk A or B roads a 4.5m clear zone is recommended free of hazardous obstructions where verge space is available but all efforts to provide as much of a 4.5m clear zone width as is reasonably possible are likely to improve safety. Signposts, lighting columns and other supports within 4.5m of the edge of the carriageway should be passively safe unless behind a road restraint system.

2.3 There are locations where a 4.5m clear zone may be considered insufficient. Examples are:

- a) where vehicles have, in the past, left the road at speed at bends ending up a long way from the carriageway
- b) where the ground falls away from the road, in these cases a wider clear zone or safety fence may be needed. In built up areas it may often be impossible to provide a clear zone as the footway is often next to the road and there are often buildings or boundary walls at the back of the footway. However, the use of passively safe street furniture next to the road will still be advantageous in these situations.

2.4 Where above ground utilities are located these should be sited where possible 4.5m or more away from the carriageway on A and B roads. Utility poles and mobile phone masts in particular pose a significant risk to vehicle occupants.

2.5 Keeping non-passively safe street furniture and all heavy roadside obstructions and potential hazards outside of the clear zone for A and B roads may often involve only careful planning and should be considered as a goal for all road schemes.

2.6 Trees on UK roads are statistically equal, if not more of a danger, than man-made roadside infrastructure. The challenge for designers is to reconcile these road

safety issues with landscaping and streetscape considerations, within the current environmental legislation. Trees are exceptionally dangerous to strike as a result of their weight, strength and rigidity. On motorways the risk of a fatality involving a vehicle striking a tree is higher than if it hits a road sign.

2.7 The DMRB previously advised that a tree or trees having, or expected to have, trunk girths of 250mm or more (measured at a height of 0.3m above ground level, at maturity) are a risk. Many non-trunk rural roads will have numerous trees exceeding this limit close to the carriageway.

2.8 Passive Safety UK proposes that where such trees exist, consideration be given to lowering the speed limit, carrying out preventative coppicing (where trees are suitable), removing trees where possible and creating policies that encourage only shrubs being planted near the road and for larger trees to be sited a safe distance from the carriageway on A and B roads.

CHAPTER 3: RELOCATION OF HAZARDOUS ITEMS

3.1 Where possible supports or sign face edges should preferably have a minimum clearance to the edge of the hard carriageway of 1.2 metres to reduce the chance of an impact and subsequent replacement costs.

3.2 Moving supports even further away from the edge of the carriageway, and away from bends should always be considered. Where this is not possible, e.g. in the case of chevron signs, passively safe alternatives should be used.

CHAPTER 4: RATIONALISATION OF INFORMATION AND SUPPORTS

4.1 Removal of roadside clutter is a key theme within advice such as the Traffic Signs Manual. Rationalisation ensures the information signs contain is provided only when required. The Department for Transport expects authorities to be proactive in removing unnecessary clutter, and design schemes to minimise clutter from the outset.

4.2 Traffic signs in use on the highway must either be prescribed by TSRGD as amended or be specially authorised by the national authority. Signs that are neither prescribed nor authorised are obstructions on the highway and must be removed.

4.3 Using other supports, such as lighting columns for the mounting of signs and ITS equipment, including cameras and detectors, can help to reduce clutter, but often requires collaboration between different design teams to achieve.

4.4 In the past, the use of multi-function supports in the UK has been explored and are in common use overseas. These types of innovative supports should be considered wherever possible.

CHAPTER 5: REPLACEMENT OF HAZARDOUS ITEMS

5.1 Passively safe street furniture can significantly reduce deaths and serious injuries on the road network. It should be noted that while speed affects the severity of collisions the statistics demonstrate serious injury casualties and deaths with street furniture frequently occur in both urban areas and on rural roads. Use of passively safe street furniture almost eliminates the chance of serious injury or death in these impacts regardless of the cause of the collision.

5.2 Using passively safe signposts and lighting columns saves lives. The main barriers to their widespread use remain initial cost, some continued resistance to change and a lack of appreciation by highway authorities of the safety benefits they can certainly deliver.

5.3 Although passively safe street furniture is often more expensive than its traditional counterpart, measures such as the wide range of passively safe signposts and lighting columns using aluminium or composites also offer a long and maintenance free life.

5.4 Several electrical suppliers offer electrical isolation systems for the passively safe lighting column and traffic signal market. As a result, designs involving roadside passive safety continues to be increasingly affordable.

5.5 Advice is given in Table NA.1 of the National Annex to BS EN 12767:2019+A1 on the appropriate classes of passively safe products for lighting columns, signposts and non-harmful support structures.

5.6 A table giving the recommendations is included within the UK Annexe. When selecting products from the table, it should be noted that all passively safe products tested to EN 12767 will be much safer in any impact at any speed than traditional steel or concrete posts. The decision to use an EN 12767 tested product is far more important than the class selected to EN 12767

5.7 Additional advice and guidance on passively safe supports is listed in Chapter 8 below.

CHAPTER 6: ADDITIONAL MEASURES FOR CONSIDERATION

6.1 Enhanced edge definition is a key factor in helping to create a safer roadside. This can be achieved in several ways:

Street Lighting, where deemed appropriate.

Enhanced nearside edge markings, with, where appropriate, the addition of physical element(s) within the mix to enable the creation of a rumble or other vibration which can be transmitted to the driver via the nearside wheels.

Enhanced robust and high visibility road stud provision, where necessary, particularly where the road is not street lit.

The use of active road studs, which provide a source of self-illumination as well as retro-reflectivity for the driver.

The use of dropped or half battered kerbing on non-built up roads, or alternatively, profiled safety kerbing, should be used where considered necessary. There are now products available to the UK that also provide retro-reflection which can be affixed to kerbs, to further highlight the roadside edge.

Hazard Marker posts, to highlight entrances, informal crossing points, poor horizontal alignment and sharp bends.

Careful use of a road restraint system can also improve roadside safety, however, as much as possible should be done to minimise the potential for harm that these systems can create e.g. the use of motorcycle protection panels beneath the rail to prevent a rider impacting the support posts.

CHAPTER 7: PRIORITISING IMPLEMENTATION OF SAFER ROADSIDES

7.1 Passive Safety UK advises that non trunk A and B roads should be prioritised for delivering safer roadsides as follows:

Priority 1	All Rural A-Roads
Priority 2	40mph Urban A-roads
Priority 3	All Rural B-roads
Priority 4	40 mph Urban B-roads
Priority 5	30 mph Urban A-roads
Priority 6	30 mph Urban B-roads

7.2 The following roads are lower risk and are unlikely to need attention (unless collision history or other risk factors indicate otherwise).

- a) Roads with 20mph speed limits
- b) Roads usually lined with parked cars
- c) residential and factory estate roads and roads where traffic speeds are unlikely to exceed 25 mph
- d) Country lanes and roads with low traffic volumes (unless there is a pertinent collision history or an obvious high risk feature such as a heavy concrete lighting column on the outside of a sharp bend).

CHAPTER 8: OTHER RELEVANT ADVICE & GUIDANCE AVAILABLE

Traffic Signs Manual

BS EN:12767: 2019 +A1 Passive Safety of Support Structures

CD 354 Design of Minor Structures

CD 377 Requirements for Road Restraint Systems

CSS SL4 2007 Report on Passive Safety

Design Manual for Roads & Bridges

GG104 Risk assessment

IHE Passive Safety Electrical Guide

IHE Sign Structures Guide

Passive Safety Guidance from ARTSM

Provision of Road Restraint Systems on Local Roads

TR30 Guidance from the Institution of Lighting Professionals

TOPAS 2546A Performance Specification for Passively Safe Products under BSEN 12767

APPENDIX A

Safer Roadsides Company Directory

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Boundary Concepts Ltd



Boundary Concepts

Mark Reynolds MIAI MCIHT AIRSM RSP offers independent advice on design, manufacturing and conformance of RRS, with over 20 years of impact testing experience. Mark and Boundary Concepts Ltd (BCL) provide technical support for delivering new and modified RRS products, as well as conducting technical peer reviews for sections of DMRB and MCHW standards.

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Our brochure:



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Simulations can be used during the design phase of a new product or for getting a direct certification of a modified version of a tested product (without the need to perform new crash tests). The EN16303 is the European norm defining how simulation should be done to be acceptable for certification purposes, the NCHRP179 is the equivalent for the US market.

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With more than 65 years of experience, Glasdon UK Limited is a trusted leader in road safety equipment. We create durable, high-performance solutions for highway schemes and active travel routes with options for both urban and rural settings.

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Our socket systems for key products allow for easy and speedy installation, removal and replacement when and where necessary. This helps reduce the need for major traffic management, increasing road worker safety and lowering long-term maintenance costs.

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From temporary roadworks to high-risk sites, we tailor our approach to help customers create safe, sustainable environments - with confidence and compliance at the core.

[Hill & Smith Infrastructure](#)

Hill & Smith VRS



Hill & Smith VRS, part of Hill & Smith PLC, is a leading British designer and manufacturer of Vehicle Restraint Systems (VRS) providing road safety solutions for the highways and off-highways sectors worldwide. We combine the knowledge and experience of two well-known VRS providers, Hill & Smith Barriers and Varley & Gulliver.

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Mallatite Limited is a supplier of Jerol (both NE and HE options), Lattix, and Optimast passively safe supports, as well as lighting columns and bollards. Our products comply with BS EN 12767 standards, and our range includes aluminium columns certified to EN40-6 / EN 12899. We are an accredited company with ISO 9001, ISO 14001, and ISO 45001, operating manufacturing plants throughout the UK.

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Passive Safety UK



Despite our best efforts to improve road safety, injuries sustained during collisions continue to happen at an unacceptable rate. 'Passively safe' crash friendly roadside products, such as lightweight supports for signs, lighting and other roadside items offer a lower risk of personal injury when struck by a vehicle and are now being installed alongside many UK roads as part of a Safe System Approach.

We seek to offer an improved understanding of the current standards, advice and issues relating to these items to encourage their use.

We do so by providing the information on our website, www.passivesafetyuk.com through Crash Demonstration days and at our annual Passive Safety conference.

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DEMONSTRATION DAY
THURSDAY 09/07/26

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Our mission is to deliver services and solutions that make roads safer and ultimately reduce casualties. We aim to deliver practical solutions that make a positive difference to everyday life and we are proud of our reputation as people that are friendly, reliable and easy to do business with.

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Westcotec is a UK-based leader in Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS) and Intelligent Smart City Solutions.

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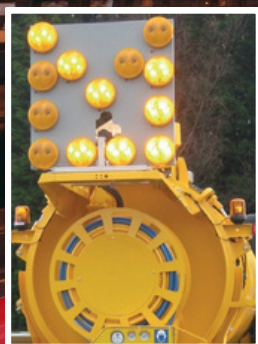
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