

Divisions affected: *Sutton Courtenay & Marcham*

**CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT –
25 JANUARY 2024**

SUTTON COURTENAY: PROPOSED 20MPH SPEED LIMITS

Report by Corporate Director, Environment and Place

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Cabinet Member for Transport Management is RECOMMENDED to approve the introduction of 20mph speed limits in Sutton Courtenay as advertised.

Executive summary

2. The report presents responses to a statutory consultation on the proposed introduction of 20mph speed limits in Sutton Courtenay as shown in **Annex 1**.

Financial Implications

3. Funding for consultation and the proposals themselves has been provided by the County Council's 20mph Speed Limit Project.

Equality and Inclusion Implications

4. No implications in respect of equalities or inclusion have been identified in respect of the proposals.

Sustainability Implications

5. The proposals would help encourage walking and cycling within Sutton Courtenay by making them safer and more attractive.

Formal consultation

6. Formal consultation was carried out between 22 November and 15 December 2023. A notice was published in the Oxfordshire Herald Series newspaper, and an email sent to statutory consultees & key-stakeholders, including Thames Valley Police, the Fire & Rescue Service, Ambulance service, Bus operators, countywide transport, access & disabled peoples user groups, Vale of White Horse District Council, the local District Cllrs, Sutton Courtenay, Culham, and

Appleford parish councils, and the local County Councillor representing the Sutton Courtenay & Marcham division.




Statutory Consultee Responses:

7. Thames Valley Police re-iterated views concerning OCC’s policy and practice regarding 20mph speed limits which they consider as ‘concerns’ rather than an objection.
8. Oxford Bus Company (OBC) object to some of the proposals which will impact their hourly 33 service. They accept the proposals on High Street and Church Street where footways are narrow or non-existent and many properties front directly on to the road. However they object to the proposals on Milton Road which has good footways on both sides and where properties are set back; they also object to the proposals on Abingdon Road and Appleford Road for the same reasons. They are concerned about increases in end-to-end running times of bus journeys due to the cumulative impact of multiple 20mph speed limits and a general increase in traffic congestion. OBC suggest reductions to bus journey speeds increase the cost of operation and impacts the attractiveness of bus services leading to reduced passenger numbers and revenue.
9. OBC state that if end-to-end journey times continue to increase, they will find it impossible to operate routes at the existing frequency using current resources. They would then need to “straighten out” the route so buses can continue to make a return trip in the current cycle time, but users may need to walk to an alternative stop or another service. It is important that buses can make progress where it is safe to do so. Slowing journeys makes services less attractive to passengers and serves to encourage negative modal shift from public transport to private motor vehicles.

Other Responses:

8. Fourteen online and an email response were received. Four local residents and a group/organisation expressed support. Concerns were expressed by a local resident and member of the public, with objections expressed by five local residents and three members of the public. One respondent sought more extensive 20mph speed limits.
9. The following table is a summary of all the objections and concerns received with the views of some respondents covering more than one category:

View/Opinion	Number of responses
Hard to enforce / will not be enforced	3
Existing 30 limit is adequate / no accident justification / not needed	2 each
Only around schools / more dangerous for cyclists / waste of money / will not be effective / more congestion / increased pollution / more overtaking	1 each

Legend	
Proposed 20	
Existing 30	
Existing 40	
Existing NSL	
Not Public Highway	

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Rev.	Date	Purpose of revision	Drawn	Checked	Approved
1.0	15.08.23	Proposal 1	C.R		

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Project title: Sutton Courtenay 20mph Scheme

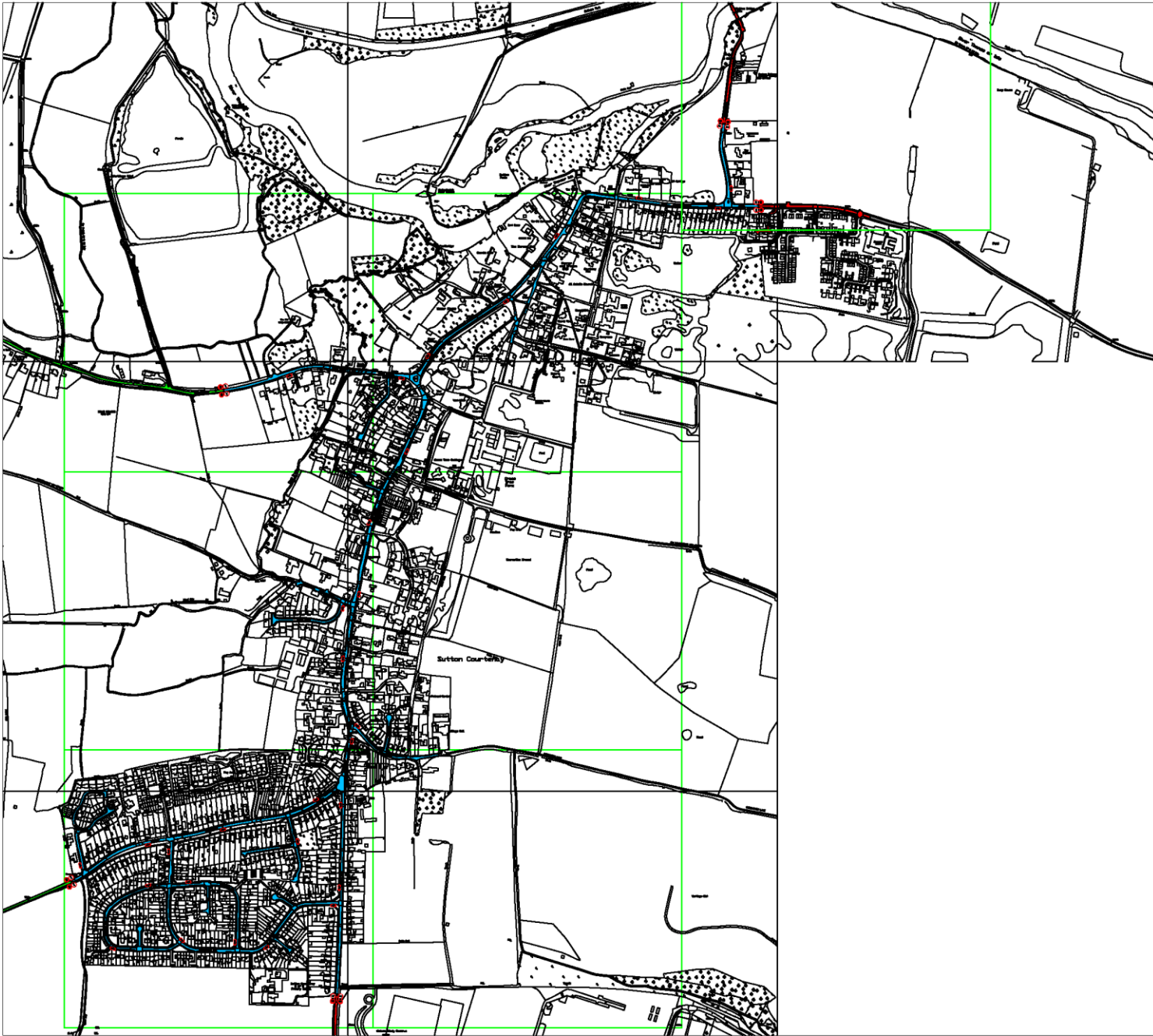
Drawing title:
 Sutton Courtenay 20mph Scheme Overview

Drawing Status

Scale @ A3	Drawn by: C.R	Checked by: G.J.B	Approved by: G.J.B
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RESPONDENT	COMMENTS
<p>(1) Traffic Management Officer, (Thames Valley Police)</p>	<p>Concerns – Thames Valley Police welcome the opportunity to engage on plans for road safety improvement and acknowledge that 20mph limits can be a useful tool in road safety. There are other reasons 20mph limits may be desirable for communities, such as environmental concerns, and creating a shared space environment to encourage greater diversity of road users.</p> <p>Compliance with 20mph limits is a challenging issue as there is a difference between the achievable results of the various available schemes. For example a sign-only scheme will only have a limited effect on the mean speeds, as opposed to other schemes that influence the road environment, which is recognised as being key to achieving compliance. If a speed limit is set too low and is ignored then this could result in the vulnerable road user being less safe. It can also cause a disproportionate number of drivers to criminalise themselves and could bring the system of speed limits into disrepute.</p> <p>Thames Valley Police have no policy to enforce based on arbitrary speed limits alone but will enforce based on threat of harm, risk and resourcing. 20mph limits are not excluded from this and will be enforced where appropriate. There should be no expectation that the police would be able to provide regular enforcement if a speed limit is set too low as this could result in an unreasonable additional demand on police resources and there are no additional resources available to support extra enforcement. Messages from partners that police will not enforce need to be discouraged. Such messaging can encourage non-compliance and should be avoided.</p> <p>The policy of Thames Valley Police is to use sound practical and realistic criteria (Setting local speed limits – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)) when responding to Highway Authorities in an effort to promote consistency and to reduce the burden of constant and unnecessary enforcement. The advice shown in Circular Roads 1/2013 states.</p> <p>The key factors that should be taken into account in any decisions on local speed limits are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • history of collisions • road geometry and engineering • road function • composition of road users (including existing and potential levels of vulnerable road users) • existing traffic speeds • road environment

	<p>However I recognise Oxfordshire County Council now have their own Policy for Setting Speed Limits and I expect full compliance of that policy going forward in relation to both monitoring , future engineering and self-enforcement through Community Speed Watch .</p> <p>Our stance remains that primarily 20 mph speed limits and zones should be self-enforcing</p> <p>Speed limits should be considered as part of a package of measures to manage vehicle speeds and improve road safety. Changes to the highway (for example through narrowing, providing vertical traffic calming or re-aligning the road) may be required to encourage lower speeds in addition to any change in speed limit. Though these may be more expensive, they are more likely to be successful in the long term in achieving lower speeds without the need for increased police enforcement to penalise substantial numbers of motorists.</p>
<p>(2) Sutton Courtenay Parish Council</p>	<p>Support - Sutton Courtenay Parish Council supports the scheme and would request that the section of Appleford Road marked to remain as a 30mph limit also be included due to the quantity of new housing and housing being built south of the road.</p>
<p>(3) Business Development and Partnerships Manager, (Go Ahead Group bus operator)</p>	<p>Object – Thames Travel services 33 provides a service through Sutton Courtenay every hour in each direction to Oxford via Abingdon to the north and to Wallingford via Milton Park and Didcot to the South.</p> <p>We have no problem with and support these proposals where they do not affect the bus route. Where the proposals affect our 33 bus service, we do not object to the introduction of 20mps speed limits on the main north-south spine through the village of High Street and Church Street. The footways on these roads can be narrow or non-existent in places and there are properties that front directly on to the road.</p> <p>We do however object to the proposal to reduce the speed limit on Milton Road to 20mph. Milton Road has good footways on both sides of the road, with the footway to the south of the road is largely separated from the road by a wide verge. Properties along Milton Road are set back from the road. We therefore believe that Milton Road should retain a 30mph speed limit.</p> <p>Similarly, to the north of the village we object to the proposal to reduce the speed limit to 20mph on Abingdon Road and the section of Appleford Road to the east of the “Sutton Courtenay” road sign that greets people as they enter the village from the north. Again, properties on these sections of road are set well back from the road.</p>

As you are aware we are very concerned about increases in end-to-end running times of bus journeys due to the cumulative impact of multiple 20mph speed limits and a general increase in traffic congestion. Along the line of the 33 route, reduced 20mph speed limits have either been recently introduced, or are proposed, in Wallingford, Brightwell-cum-Sotwell, Milton, Abingdon, Wotton and Cumnor. These reductions to bus journey speeds increase the cost of operation and impacts the attractiveness of bus services leading to reduced passenger numbers and revenue.

If end-to-end journey times continue to increase, there will come a point where it will no longer be possible to operate the 33 routes at the current frequency using the current number of buses and drivers. At that point a decision will be needed with three options being available:

1. Increase the number of buses and drivers to provide the current level of service. This will increase cost. The level of service will remain the same and so revenue will also remain the same (or be lower due to longer journey times). Therefore, additional revenue support would be needed to maintain the service.
2. Reduce the level of service so that a timetable can be created that uses the existing number of buses and drivers. This is likely to be difficult to achieve in any sort of passenger friendly manner. If this option were to be taken it would likely involve buses no longer operating at clockface intervals. Instead, for example, buses would need to operate at ten past one hour, twenty past the following hour and half past the next hour. This would provide a far worse service for passengers and so result in fewer people traveling and so reduced revenue. Therefore, additional revenue support would again likely be needed to maintain the service.
3. Look to "straighten out" the route or trim the ends of the route so buses can continue to make a return trip in the current cycle time.

Option 3 is likely to be the least bad option in terms of costs of operation and the impact on passengers. Passengers on the section of route no longer served would be impacted but it may be possible to walk to an alternative stop or another service. Where a section of route is "straighten out" this is likely to benefit end-to-end passengers who will now have a slightly faster journey time. After many years of bus speeds becoming progressively slower a lot of routes have already been straightened out and ends trimmed as far as is reasonably possible.

In the case of the 33 route, as set out in our response to the Brightwell-cum-Sotwell consultation, our hope is that bus speeds can be maintained, or preferably be improved, so that the existing route can be maintained. However should bus speeds continue slow to the point where it is no longer possible for buses to complete a round trip in their current cycle time, we would plan for the 33 service to remain on the main A4130 road and not divert through the village of Brightwell-cum-Sotwell.

	<p>As we have stated in many previous consultations, it is important that buses are able to make progress where it is safe for them to do so. Slowing journeys makes services less attractive to passengers and serves to encourage negative modal shift from public transport to private motor vehicles. This contrary to the Council's policies and increased motor traffic is detrimental to active travel modes such as walking and cycling leading to a negative cycle of yet more motor traffic.</p>
<p>(4) Local resident, (Sutton Courtenay)</p>	<p>Object – I have Googled ‘objections to 20 mph limits’ and come to the conclusion that whatever we paymasters say will be ignored by the public servants who we pay, this time in the form of Oxfordshire County Council. Therefore there is literally no point in raising objections, because you will ignore everything, just as you ignored the consultation about LTNs etc</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have seen no cost-benefit analysis of this latest move • There is zero history of accidents between cars and pedestrians in this village, we already have speed humps which practically imply 20 mph. Will you be removing the speed bumps now? • If I were to follow your ‘slower = better’ argument in relation to accident outputs, we’d soon be back behind the man with the red flag <p>I just want you to know that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I object strongly to this proposal to change satisfactory long term speed limits without local consultation, and with no benefits shown 2. The idea that people in rural villages will suddenly be persuaded to swap cars for bikes and walking is naive in the extreme. When I drive around the idiotic road schemes in Oxford, with lines painted everywhere, I see few if any cyclists [except in the student area in term time]. Bicycles don’t work for those with children, for busy people, those carrying heavy shopping, in the dark, in the rain, when it is cold, for infirm or older people, and so forth and so forth. You are trapping those people in their homes, which is probably what you want, so you can sell them heat pumps [another bonkers idea]. Do you cycle everywhere? Do you respect red lights, and speed limits? <p>But I know that you won’t be persuaded by argument, so I’ll rest my case and will simply watch with amusement as the majority of drivers ignore the new speed limits - or better still paint the 20mph signs over - or even tear them down!</p>
<p>(5) Member of public, (Bicester)</p>	<p>Object - Reducing speed limits from 30mph to 20mph has "little impact" on road safety, according to a study from Queen’s University Belfast, Edinburgh University and the University of Cambridge: https://www.rac.co.uk/drive/news/motoring-news/do-20mph-speed-limits-reduce-the-number-of-car-crashes-and-casualties/</p>

	<p>This 20mph scheme is all about more control and making life harder for drivers. The council is paid by us to serve us, not to run ideological wars on us.</p>
<p>(6) Member of public, (Shrivenham, Charlbury)</p>	<p>Object - The current speed limits are not enforced and are routinely ignored. I suspect any reduction of the speed limits will also not be enforced and those who ignore the limits will continue to ignore the limits. Any reduction in the limits will simply widen the variation of speeds of the traffic making it much more dangerous for other road users. I also object to the proposal due it costs when the council's budget is in such a sorry state.</p>
<p>(7) Local resident, (Sutton Courtenay, Amey Close)</p>	<p>Object - I believe that 30 mph is a safe speed and it was introduced in the past for that reason. I don't recall any fatal incidents on the road in Sutton Courtenay while the car was driving at 30 mph. To improve safety on the roads we should focus on making new cycle paths and footpaths, and encourage people to cycle. At the moment it is dangerous to cycle not because of the speed limit but the sheer amount of cars on the roads.</p>
<p>(8) Local resident, (Sutton Courtenay, Asquith Park)</p>	<p>Object - I think no matter what speed a car in going it's producing emission. We have gone years and years without causing a fuss and local residents are not going to comply with this as it'll make the village run slower and it'll cause more unnecessary congestion especially in the week down towards culham bridge with the traffic. The longer it takes a vehicle to pass through our wonderful village the more emission it will let out. I understand the thoughtfulness of safety due to pedestrians and collisions. But look at the reports, look on our streets. Everyone is mindful of pedestrians and horse riders. In my opinion I feel it's unnecessary also due to the fact how everyone maintains the 30mph limit due to the speed bumps placed around the village and this keep people complying with the road laws. I hope you take my thoughts into account.</p>
<p>(9) Local resident, (Sutton Courtenay, Amey Close)</p>	<p>Object - In my opinion the speed bumps limit the speed in Sutton Courtenay where required. The remaining roads in the village with 30 mph limit have been safe for years and the speed limit should remain as is. The latest speed showing signs are sufficient. There's no need to change the speed limit to 20 mph with the additional costs for new signs. Most of the time there's horrendous traffic and standstill anyway.</p>

<p>(10) Local resident, (Sutton Courtenay, Harweil Road)</p>	<p>Object - Agree with 20mph near schools, but not elsewhere without good reason.</p>
<p>(11) Member of public, (Wootton, Cumnor Road)</p>	<p>Object - Roads with no reason to cross, such as the B4016 should not be made 20mph. One side of the road has no pavement and thick hedges so does not present a risk to pedestrians crossing as there is no where to cross too. From the a cyclist perspective if the limit is too low it makes overtaking more dangerous as vehicles take much longer to pass so are more likely to come into conflict with approaching vehicles and get squeezed out. In other areas where limits have been reduced unnecessarily there is now much more overtaking, particularly in 30mph areas where drivers continue at 20mph. The consultations referred to either are in a different context; (inner city, average speeds already below 20mph - Edinburgh, Dublin, London) have significantly increased enforcement plus new road layouts (London) and have had no statistical improvement in safety figures (Dublin), high accident rates to start wit. Little consideration has been given to negative factors (transactional analysis, driver frustration, greater differences in vehicle speeds in the 15 - 30mph range, more overtaking etc) Inadequate publicity in the local area, no signs around the village visible while driving.</p>
<p>(12) Member of public, (Didcot, Plym Drive)</p>	<p>Concerns - Doesn't include newer residential section to East of village by retaining existing 30mph. That existing 30mph to the East end of the village should be 20mph too.</p>
<p>(13) Local resident, (Sutton Courtenay, Drayton Road)</p>	<p>Concerns - Very hard to police especially in the margins where it goes from 40 to 20.</p>
<p>(14) Local resident, (Sutton Courtenay, Brook Street)</p>	<p>Support - Two of the key roads in Sutton Courtenay - Brook Street and Church Street are used regularly by a significant number of cyclists and the way the roads are being driven pose a direct threat to the safety of the elderly, children and other road users. A 20mph zone would help if not solve the way the roads are used. However the existing road markings need to be updated/renewed as they are often ignored.</p>

<p>(15) Local resident, (Sutton Courtenay, Chapel Lane)</p>	<p>Support - To improve the safety of local residents</p>
<p>(16) Local resident, (Sutton Courtenay, Chapel Lane)</p>	<p>Support - I am in favour of the introduction of a 20mph speed limit in Sutton Courtenay primarily as I expect that this will reduce accidents and protect local residents from injury. I would also expect it to reduce noise and air pollution both of which would make the village a more agreeable and a safer environment to live in. Furthermore it is likely to encourage more people to walk and cycle which should further reduce motor traffic and concomitant emissions thus providing associated health benefits. If it keeps traffic flowing more freely that would clearly be an added advantage.</p>
<p>(17) Local resident, (Sutton Courtenay, Courtenay Close)</p>	<p>Support - I support the proposed plan, but I am concerned about a possible increase in accidents caused by impatient drivers. There are already issues with drivers who are not happy to limit themselves to the existing 30mph limit.</p>