

Divisions affected: *Benson & Cholsey*

## **DELEGATED DECISIONS BY CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT**

**18 JULY 2024**

### **BENSON: PRESTON CROWMARSH & RAF BENSON – PROPOSED 20MPH & 50MPH SPEED LIMITS**

Report by Director of Environment and Highways

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

The Cabinet Member is **RECOMMENDED** to:

Approve the following speed limits within Benson parish as advertised:

- a) 20mph speed limit on the unnamed Preston Crowmarsh Road, Beggarsbush Hill, and Clay Lane,
- b) 50mph speed limit on the unnamed Preston Crowmarsh Road.

#### **Executive Summary**

- c) The report presents responses to a statutory consultation on the proposed introduction of 20mph speed limits at Preston Crowmarsh, Clay Lane and Beggarsbush Hill (at Benson), and a 50mph speed limit on the unnamed Preston Crowmarsh Road from its junction with the A4074, as shown in **Annexes 1 & 2**.

#### **Financial Implications**

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

#### **Legal Implications**

- e) No legal implications have been identified in respect of the proposals, with proposed changes to existing Traffic Regulation Orders governed by the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and other associated procedural regulations. Failure to adhere to these statutory processes could result in the proposals being challenged.

## Equality and Inclusion Implications

- f) No implications in respect of equalities or inclusion have been identified in respect of the proposals.

## Sustainability Implications

- g) The proposals would help encourage walking and cycling within Preston Crowmarsh and by RAF Benson by making the roads safer and more attractive.

## Formal Consultation

- h) Formal consultation was carried out between 05 June and 28 June 2024. A notice was published in the Oxfordshire Herald 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, South Oxfordshire District Council, the local District Cllrs, Benson Parish Council, and the local County Councillor representing the Benson & Cholsey division.

## Statutory Consultee Responses:

- i) Thames Valley Police re-iterated their views concerning OCC's policy and practice regarding 20mph speed limits and wish their response to be listed as 'having concerns' rather than an objection. They also raised specific concern with the proposed 50mph limit at Preston Crowmarsh, citing that the signage of a 50mph speed limit here could be seen as a 'target' speed for this road, where the current 60mph NSL would be more appropriate
- j) Oxford Bus Company offered no objection, citing that despite the potential impact of 20mph in other larger settlements on the line of route, the proposals would probably have no material impact on the operation of Thames Travel service no.139, which serves RAF Benson.

## Other Responses:

- k) 17 responses were received via the online survey during the course of the formal consultation, and these are summarised in the table below:

Proposal	Object	Partially support	Support	No opinion/ objection	Total
Preston Crowmarsh 20mph	5 (29%)	1 (6%)	10 (59%)	1 (6%)	17
RAF Benson 20mph	6 (35%)	3 (18%)	5 (29%)	3 (18%)	17
Preston Crowmarsh 50mph	6 (35%)	2 (13%)	6 (35%)	3 (18%)	17

\* note – all percentages rounded up/down to nearest whole number.

- l) Those who responded online, were also asked whether if the 20mph speed limit proposals were implemented, would it likely influence a change to their mode of travel in the area, the results of which are shown below:

<b>Travel Change</b>	<b>Number</b>
Yes – walk/wheel more	1 (6%)
Yes - cycle more	2 (12%)
No	13 (77%)
Other	1 (6%)

\* note – all percentages rounded up/down to nearest whole number.

- m) Additionally, one email was received which outlined their support for the proposals, citing that the unnamed road through Preston Crowmarsh is a single track lane and passing traffic can therefore be difficult in places.
- n) The responses are shown at **Annex 3**, and copies of the original responses are available for inspection by County Councillors.

## **Officer Response to Objections/Concerns**

- o) The main purpose of the scheme is to encourage greater use of active travel by reducing speeds; this will also reduce accidents. The aim of reducing speed limits is to change driver's mindsets to make speeding socially unacceptable and make more environmentally friendly modes of travel such as walking and cycling more attractive – and also reduce the Counties carbon footprint. This forms part of a countywide programme of works that seeks to deliver 'a safer place with a safer pace'.
- p) The concerns of Thames Valley Police comprise observations applicable to the overall 20mph project but no site-specific comments relating to these proposals.
- q) The authority considers objections along the lines of it being unjustified, anti-car, a waste of money, not enforceable or pointless to not warrant amendments to a proposal. As such the authority has not addressed any specific comments made of this nature in this report.

**Paul Fermer**  
**Director of Environment and Highways**

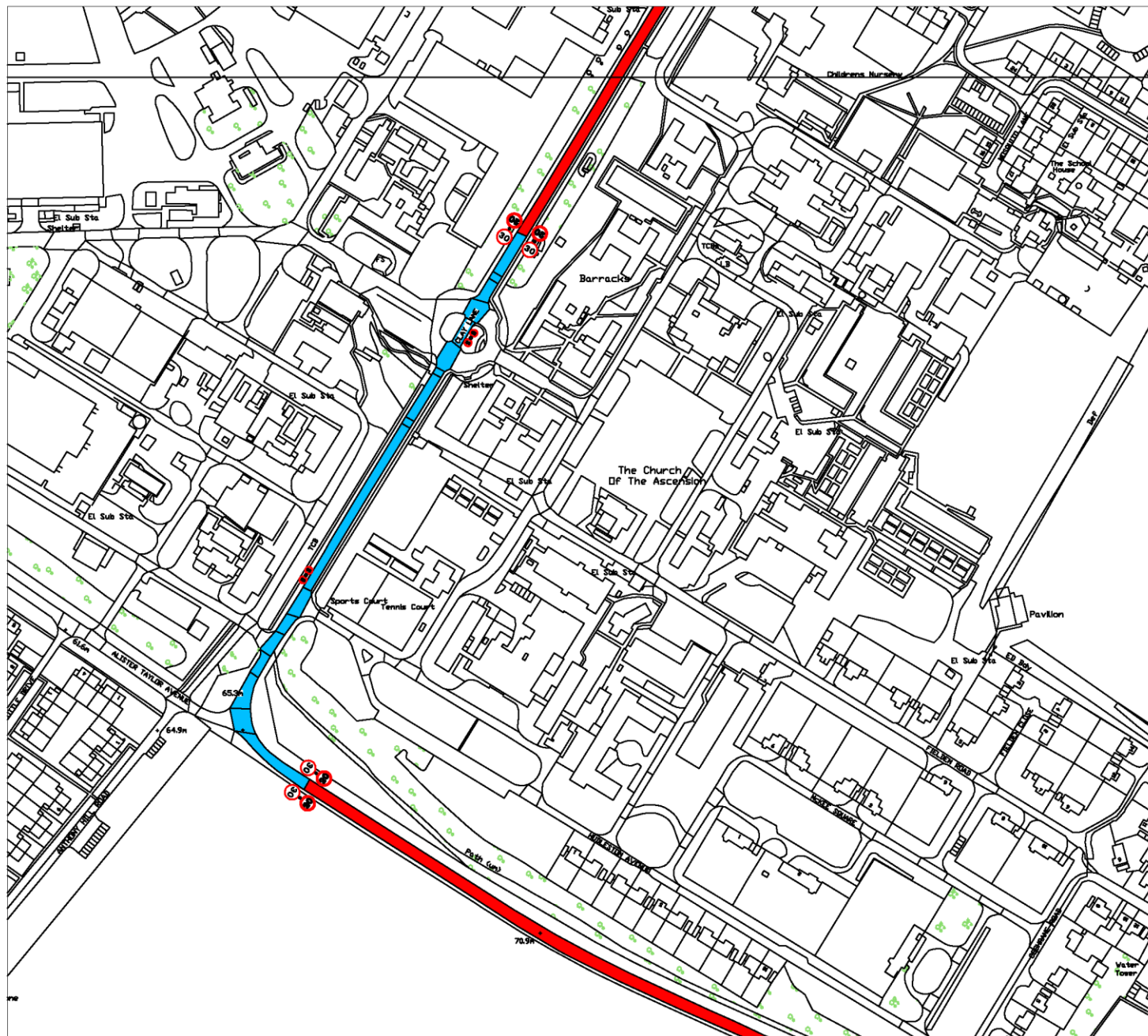
Annexes

Annexes 1-2: Consultation plans  
Annex 3: Consultation responses

Contact Officers:

Anthony Kirkwood, Team Leader – Vision Zero)  
Matt Archer (Portfolio Manager - Programme Delivery)

July 2024



RAF Benson/ Clay Ln 20mph Revision 1.0

Legend	
Proposed 20	<span style="color: blue;">■</span>
Existing 30	<span style="color: red;">■</span>
Not Public Highway	<span style="color: grey;">■</span>

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Rev.	Date	Purpose of revision	Drawn	Checked	Approved
2.0	11.06.23	Proposal 2	C.R		



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Project title: RAF Benson/ Clay Ln 20mph Scheme

Drawing title:  
RAF Benson/ Clay Ln 20mph Scheme Overview

Drawing Status

Scale @ A3	Drawn by: C.R	Checked by: G.JB	Approved by: G.JB
	Date drawn: 11.09.23	Date checked: 19.09.23	Date approved: 19.09.23

Oxfordshire Project No. & File Ref

Drawing No. 1.0	Revision 1.0
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Preston Crowmarsh 20mph Revision 1.0

Legend	
Proposed 20	<span style="color: blue;">█</span>
Existing 40	<span style="color: green;">█</span>
Existing 50	<span style="color: magenta;">█</span>
Proposed 50	<span style="color: orange;">█</span>

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Rev.	Date	Purpose of revision	Drawn	Checked	Approved
2.0	27.02.24	Proposal 2	C.R		



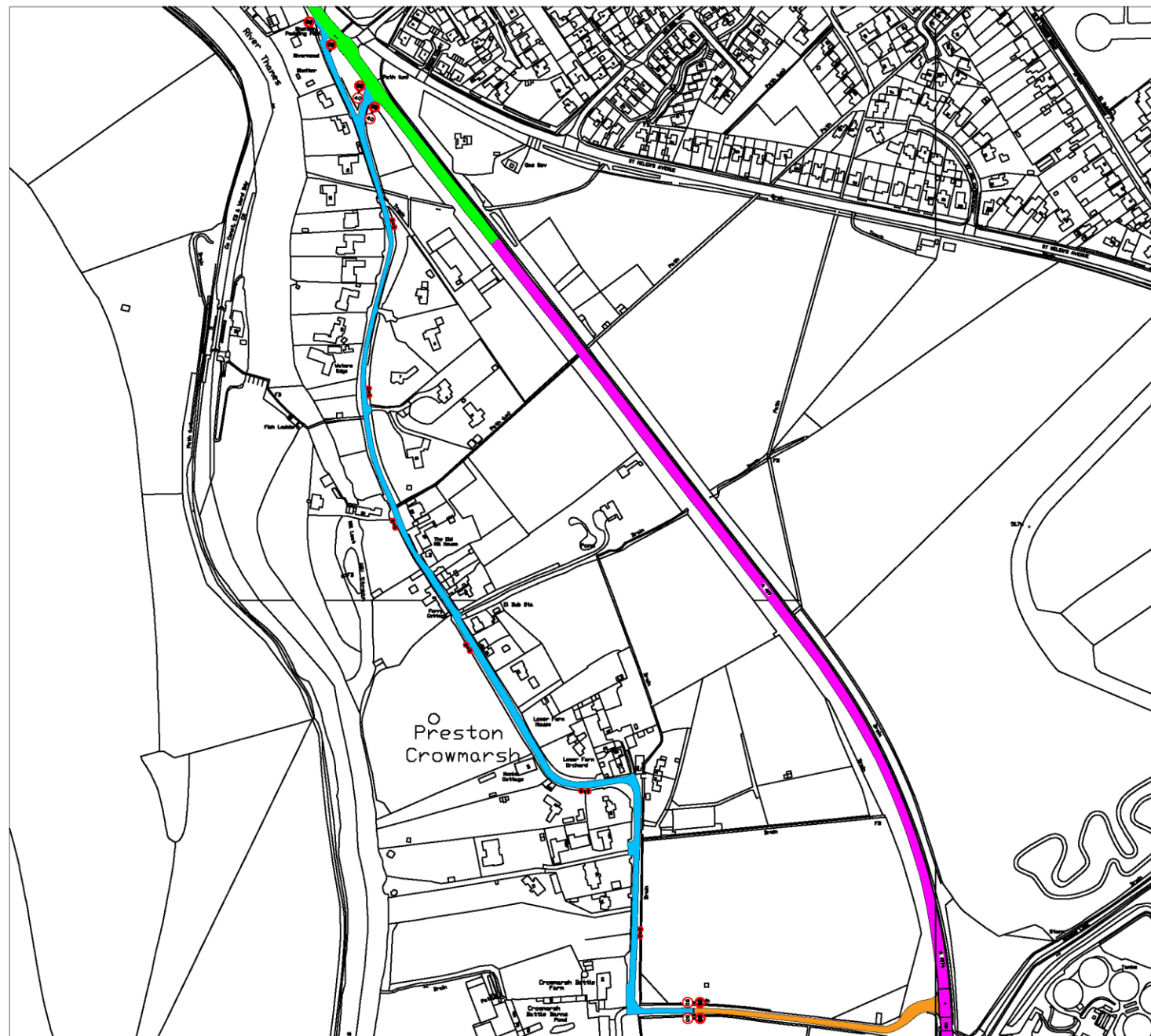
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Drawing No. 1.0 Revision 1.0



1

2

RESPONDENT	COMMENTS
(1) Traffic Management Officer, (Thames Valley Police)	<p><b>Concerns</b> - Thank you for the consultation documents, in relation to the proposed speed limit changes. This response relates to all changes. I have addition concern with the proposed 50 limit at Preston Crowmarsh. Signing a 50 might be seen as a target speed for this road, where as the current NSL more appropriate.</p> <p>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 dis-proportionate 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 (<a href="http://www.gov.uk">www.gov.uk</a>)) 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"> <li>• history of collisions</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• road geometry and engineering</li> <li>• road function</li> <li>• composition of road users (including existing and potential levels of vulnerable road users)</li> <li>• existing traffic speeds</li> <li>• road environment</li> </ul> <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) Head of Built Environment and Infrastructure, (Oxford Bus &amp; Thames Travel)</p>	<p><b>No objection</b> – I can confirm that the proposals in Preston Crowmarsh affect no scheduled bus services.</p> <p>RAF Benson is served by Thames Travel service 139 every hour. We have a much broader concern, as you know, about the potential impact of 20mph in other larger settlements on the line of route.</p> <p>These proposals impinge on a 350m section of Clay Lane at the southern end of the military camp, where we see that staff and married quarters lie to the east and operational facilities lie to the west. Both lie behind a tall security fence and access is restricted to a common junction at the Base Main Gate. This has an unusual design that among other things, allows a bus to turn and lay over, resuming its route in forward gear. Service 139 terminates at this point, and it is the only stop serving RAF Benson, given there is no practical means of effecting a hinterland were any other stops to be provided further north within the base area. The 20 mph limit covers the Main Gate area and the bus terminal. This is the only place where significant conflict is likely to take place between vulnerable road users and vehicles. We can see the rationale for a 20mph limit on the main road here, though given the nature and character of the road to the south and north we are not at all clear how well it is likely to be self-enforcing. Traffic calming features already installed on Clay Lane demonstrate that even keeping traffic below the current 30mph limit is far from consistently achieved by signage alone.</p>



	<p>Irrespective, it is evident that the proposals will have no material impact on the operation of service 139.</p> <p>We thus offer no objection.</p>
(3) Local resident, (Preston Crowmarsh)	<p>Preston Crowmarsh 20mph – <b>Object</b>  RAF Benson 20mph – <b>Object</b>  Nobody particularly speeds down the road and putting up new signs/ markings will change the integrity of the road</p> <p>Travel change: <b>No</b></p> <p>Preston Crowmarsh 50mph – <b>Object</b>  Will not make any difference</p>
(4) Local resident, (Oakley Wood, A4130)	<p>Preston Crowmarsh 20mph – <b>Object</b>  RAF Benson 20mph – <b>Object</b>  The existing speed limits are perfectly adequate, only if drivers stayed within those limits. We don't need more money spent on changing speed limits, that money would be better spent on policing and encouraging drivers to keep to the limits</p> <p>Travel change: <b>No</b></p> <p>Preston Crowmarsh 50mph – <b>Object</b>  Most of that section of the road is already at 30 and 40 MPH there is no need to create confusion by introducing yet another speed limit over such short distances</p>
(5) Local resident, (Benson, Passey Crescent)	<p>Preston Crowmarsh 20mph – <b>Object</b>  RAF Benson 20mph – <b>Object</b>  Other than around schools and village high streets they are too slow, and therefore are ignored by 80% of drivers.They are also not in the Highway Code and, as such cannot be enforced without amending said document.</p> <p>Travel change: <b>No</b></p>

	<p>Preston Crowmarsh 50mph – <b>Partially support</b>  It has an impact on the turn off to Benson and the pedestrian crossing.</p>
<p>(6) Local resident,  (Preston Crowmarsh)</p>	<p>Preston Crowmarsh 20mph – <b>Object</b>  RAF Benson 20mph – <b>Partially support</b>  Preston Crowmarsh does not need to be a 20mph zone. It is a quiet village with little traffic. It would not be policed and we would have yet more unnecessary signs littering the verges.</p> <p>Travel change: <b>No</b></p> <p>Preston Crowmarsh 50mph – <b>No objection</b>  I don't object to this proposal, the traffic through the village is minor and rarely does more than 30mph anyway. Nor do we need yet more signage littering the verges.</p>
<p>(7) Local resident,  (Preston Crowmarsh)</p>	<p>Preston Crowmarsh 20mph – <b>Object</b>  RAF Benson 20mph – <b>No objection</b>  Preston Crowmarsh road is too small and narrow to have a speeding problem and it be unsightly to have road signs and painted notices on the road. This is not necessary.</p> <p>Travel change: <b>No</b></p> <p>Preston Crowmarsh 50mph – <b>Object</b>  Not necessary.</p>
<p>(8) Local resident,  (Benson, Pensfield)</p>	<p>Preston Crowmarsh 20mph – <b>Partially support</b>  RAF Benson 20mph – <b>Object</b></p> <p>(1) Quote: 'Oxfordshire County Council wants to make our built environments safer and more attractive places to walk and cycle.' (Statement of Reasons)</p>

	<p>Which takes priority for safety and public spending? A pothole infested, suspension damaging single-track road being properly repaired so that users are able to proceed safely at 20mph or several 20mph signs that are made redundant by the potholes. OCC, are you an adjunct of the Ministry of Silly Walks? Please get you priorities right and do not waste our taxes. Oh, And Listen!</p> <p>(2) The proposal to have a 50mph limit from the junction with the A4074 for 250 metres to just before Battle Farm is a complete waste of resource. Firstly, there is a speed controlling double bend by the A4074 junction. Secondly, it is a single track road with the odd passing point; 50mph is foolhardy. Thirdly, by Battle Farm is a right angled bend that is a definite speed controller. Just relocate the current 30/20mph sign 50 metres towards the A4074 - mission accomplished with minimal resource.</p> <p>(3) With respect to the proposed 20mph limit near the Main Gate at RAF Benson: This stretch of road is, speed-wise, self regulating. Traffic approaching from the south has just rounded a right-angled corner which to negotiate at speeds more than 30mph is dangerous, as has been demonstrated in the past. Further speed control is provided within 200 metres by the raised Zebra Crossing by the Main Gate. This also provides speed control for traffic already subject to a 30mph limit approaching the Main Gate from the north. New restrictions are an unnecessary exercise and expense to the tax payer.</p> <p>Travel change: <b>No</b></p> <p>Preston Crowmarsh 50mph – <b>Partially support</b> Just to ram home your profligacy. Quote: ‘Oxfordshire County Council wants to make our built environments safer and more attractive places to walk and cycle.’ (Statement of Reasons) Which takes priority for safety and public spending? A pothole infested, suspension damaging single-track road being properly repaired so that users are able to proceed safely at 20mph or several 20mph signs that are made redundant by the potholes. OCC, are you an adjunct of the Ministry of Silly Walks? Please get you priorities right and do not waste our taxes. Oh, And Listen!</p>
(9) Local resident, (Benson, The Cedars)	<p>Preston Crowmarsh 20mph – <b>Support</b> RAF Benson 20mph – <b>Object</b></p>

	<p>Preston Crowmarsh is a narrow road used extensively by walkers. As for the stretch past RAF Benson, I have never seen an issue with a 30MPH speed limit in part because the speed bumps around the Station entrance are effective at slowing traffic down in any case.</p> <p>Travel change: <b>No</b></p> <p>Preston Crowmarsh 50mph – <b>Object</b> My reason for objecting is because it is farcical to have a different speed limit for such a short stretch of road. I would support a 20MPH limit for the complete length of that road.</p>
<p>(10) Local resident, (Benson, Crown Lane)</p>	<p>Preston Crowmarsh 20mph – <b>No objection</b> RAF Benson 20mph – <b>Object</b> RAF Benson is surrounded by security fences so there is no danger of pedestrians straying onto the road, unlike other urban streets. Hence 30mph is sufficient.</p> <p>Travel change: <b>No</b></p> <p>Preston Crowmarsh 50mph – <b>No objection</b> Not impacted by this.</p>
<p>(11) Local Cllr, (Ewelme, The Street)</p>	<p>Preston Crowmarsh 20mph – <b>Support</b> RAF Benson 20mph – <b>Partially support</b> I fully support the 20mph proposal for Preston Crowmarsh, as this is a poor quality road that is heavily used by pedestrians and cyclists. I tend to support the proposal for RAF Benson, but it seems unhelpful to vary between 20mph and 30mph along this one road. If the proposal is implemented, you would start on Green Lane with 20mph, then go to 30mph for about half a mile and then down to 20mph for the stretch near the entrance to the base, then back up to 30mph as you go up Beggarsbush Hill. It would be much more sensible to have a single speed limit of 20mph for the whole stretch of Green Lane until you reach the foot of Beggarsbush Hill.</p> <p>Travel change: <b>Yes - cycle more</b></p> <p>Preston Crowmarsh 50mph – <b>Support</b></p>

	<p>This lane is inappropriate for 60mph and if the rest of Preston Crowmarsh is 20mph then it makes much more sense for this stretch linking up to the A4074 to be 50mph.</p>
<p>(12) Local resident, (Preston Crowmarsh)</p>	<p>Preston Crowmarsh 20mph – <b>Support</b>  RAF Benson 20mph – <b>Partially support</b>  20mph is fast enough driving through Preston Crowmarsh due to the narrow road and the number of walkers and cyclists.</p> <p>Travel change: <b>No</b></p> <p>Preston Crowmarsh 50mph – <b>Support</b>  I support a reduced speed for the short stretch of road from the A4074 to the 20mph speed through Preston Crowmarsh village.</p>
<p>(13) Local resident, (Preston Crowmarsh)</p>	<p>Preston Crowmarsh 20mph – <b>Support</b>  RAF Benson 20mph – <b>Support</b>  I live on the main straight where the occasional car is going in excess of 50mph. Even 30mph is dangerous on this single track road</p> <p>Travel change: <b>No</b></p> <p>Preston Crowmarsh 50mph – <b>Object</b>  Totally unacceptable on a single track road where there are walkers, runners, kids and pets</p>
<p>(14) Local resident, (Preston Crowmarsh)</p>	<p>Preston Crowmarsh 20mph – <b>Support</b>  RAF Benson 20mph – <b>Support</b>  Abused single track road Preston Crowmarsh</p> <p>Travel change: <b>No</b></p> <p>Preston Crowmarsh 50mph – <b>Object</b>  30mph better suited to the road.</p>

	50mph far too fast. Single track
(15) Local resident, (Preston Crowmarsh)	<p>Preston Crowmarsh 20mph – <b>Support</b>  RAF Benson 20mph – <b>Support</b>  Lots of people walk through Preston Crowmarsh old and young and it will be much safer.</p> <p>Travel change: <b>Yes - cycle more</b></p> <p>Preston Crowmarsh 50mph – <b>Support</b>  Lots of pedestrians in the Preston Crowmarsh area.</p>
(16) Local resident, (North Stoke, White House Road)	<p>Preston Crowmarsh 20mph – <b>Support</b>  RAF Benson 20mph – <b>Support</b>  I support both proposals, but I'd like to know why the supporting documents can't be more specific to each site? The document is very generic, stating the change to speed limits is in line with the local authority's strategy and to encourage use of other forms of transport, but it would be far more persuasive if it referenced traffic incidents / accidents / speeding statistics for the road in question.</p> <p>Travel change: <b>No</b></p> <p>Preston Crowmarsh 50mph – <b>Support</b>  If anything, a new 50mph limit still seems too high for this particular road. It's a short stretch of road with no markings which quickly joins a 30mph limit road.</p>
(17) Local resident, (Preston Crowmarsh)	<p>Preston Crowmarsh 20mph – <b>Support</b>  RAF Benson 20mph – <b>Support</b>  Safety</p> <p>Travel change: <b>No</b></p> <p>Preston Crowmarsh 50mph – <b>Support</b></p>

	Safety
(18) Local resident, (Preston Crowmarsh, Thames Footpath)	<p>Preston Crowmarsh 20mph – <b>Support</b> RAF Benson 20mph – <b>No objection</b></p> <p>The road in Preston Crowmarsh, although it has no name, forms part of the Thames Footpath. It seems extraordinary, since this is a National Footpath, that there is any doubt it needing to have a 20mph speed limit. Why should a National Footpath be singled out as only one of a few roads in the neighbourhood currently NOT warranting this lower restriction. The section nearest to Benson must surely warrant the TWENTY mph limit.</p> <p>Travel change: <b>Yes – walk/wheel more</b></p> <p>Preston Crowmarsh 50mph – <b>No objection</b> People will drive fast on this piece of road in any case, as they are near to their workplace.</p>
(19) Local resident, (Preston Crowmarsh, the unnamed road)	<p>Preston Crowmarsh 20mph – <b>Support</b> RAF Benson 20mph – <b>No objection</b></p> <p>Preston Crowmarsh urgently needs a 20 mph limit. The road forms part of The Thames Footpath. With electric vehicles and speeding cyclists, walkers are in great danger. It is unreasonable for the increased safety offered by a 20 mph limit to be denied those walking here.</p> <p>Travel change: <b>No</b></p> <p>Preston Crowmarsh 50mph – <b>Support</b> Preston Crowmarsh is a small rural hamlet which has increasingly become a more dangerous place to walk. Certain road users seem unaware of the dangers.</p>
(20) Local resident, (Preston Crowmarsh, the unnamed road)	<p><b>Support</b> – Our house is towards the northern end of the main straight lane through the village. I am aware that some of our neighbours do not see the need for the speed limit to be reduced from 30mph to 20mph but this is not a view that we share. Preston Crowmarsh is described as a single track lane and passing is difficult in places ; traffic has increased considerably over the years ( especially with courier company and food deliveries ) and there are quite</p>

	frequent near misses especially close to the northern end junction so we hope the decision to reduce our speed limit to 20mph will be made.
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