

Divisions affected: Chalgrove & Watlington

## **CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAY MANAGEMENT – 26 JANUARY 2023**

### **NETTLEBED: PROPOSED 20MPH SPEED LIMITS**

Report by Corporate Director, Environment and Place

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. The Cabinet Member for Highway Management is RECOMMENDED to approve the proposed introduction of 20mph speed limits as advertised.

#### **Executive summary**

2. The report presents responses to a statutory consultation on the proposed introduction of 20mph speed limits in Nettlebed 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 Nettlebed by making them safer and more attractive.

#### **Formal Consultation**

6. Formal consultation was carried out between 25 November and 30 December 2022. 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, South Oxfordshire District Council, the local District Cllrs, Nettlebed Parish Council,

and the local County Councillor representing the Chalgrove & Watlington division.

### **Statutory Consultee Responses:**

7. Thames Valley Police re-iterated their views on OCC's policy and practice regarding 20mph speed limits; they consider their response as 'having concerns' rather than an outright objection. Stagecoach Bus Company & Oxford Bus Company responded but had no objection or comments to make, however the Business Development Manager from Thames Travel responded supporting the proposals in the centre of Nettlebed but objecting to the extent of the proposals along the A4130 suggesting they will lead to an inevitable reduction in the service the operator is able to offer.

### **Other Responses:**

8. The only online response was an objection from the member of the public living a distance away who submitted their standard objection wording suggesting the proposals unnecessary and potentially hazardous including the danger from cyclists overtaking cars adhering to the proposed limits.
9. The Parish Council report 85% support for lower limits within the village
10. The responses are shown in **Annex 2**, and copies of the original responses are available for inspection by County Councillors.

### **Officer response to objections/concerns**

11. The objections are similar to those expressed and considered in earlier schemes which were then not deemed to warrant a change in proposals. The Oxford Bus Company response is well - considered but the current proposals meet the intentions of the County Council policy that initiated them.
12. The main purpose of the scheme is to improve road safety and 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'.

Bill Cotton  
Corporate Director, Environment and Place

Annexes

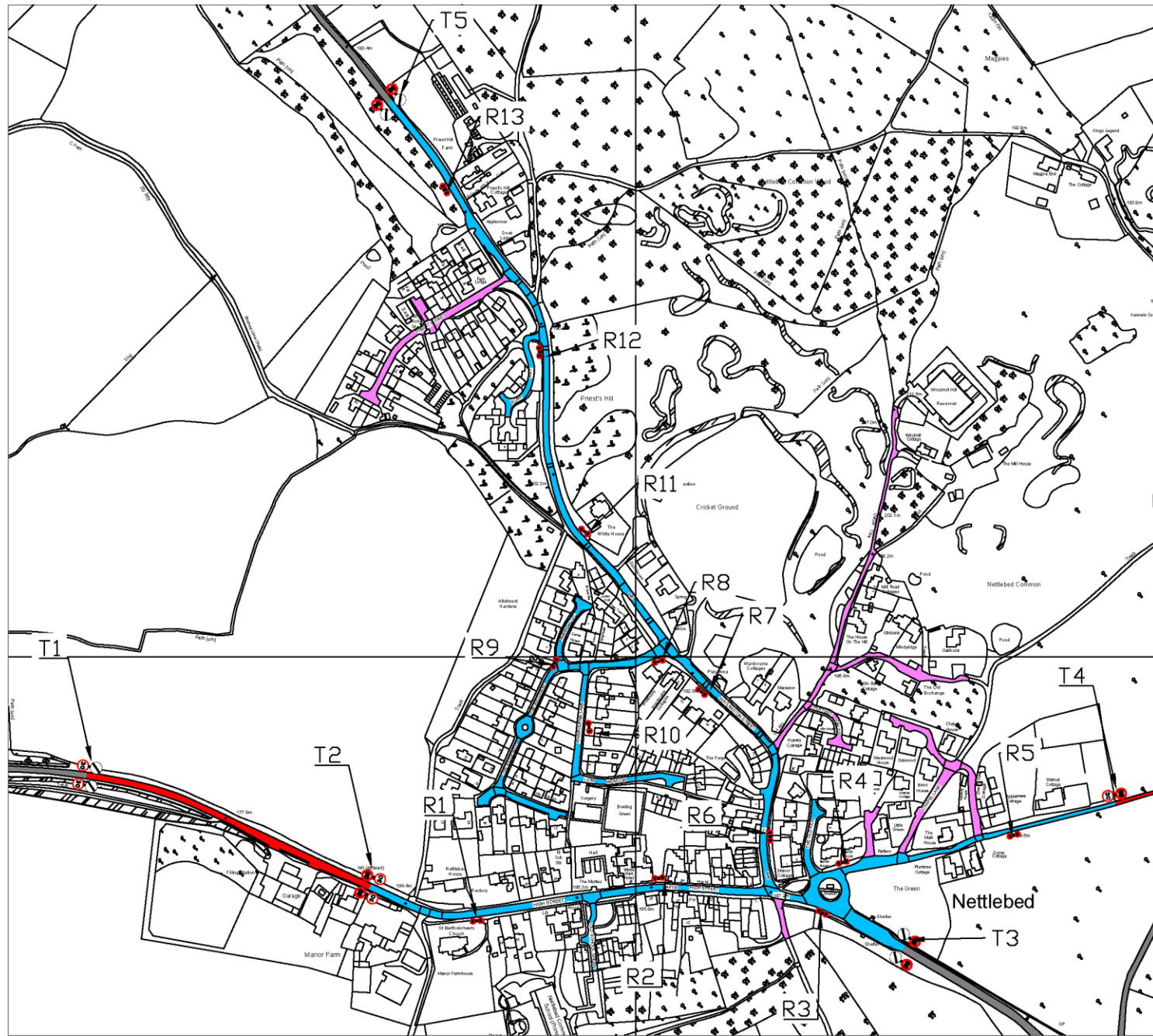
Annex 1: Consultation Plan  
Annex 2: Consultation responses

Contact Officers:

Tim Shickle [tim.shickle@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:tim.shickle@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

Geoff Barrell [geoff.barrell@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:geoff.barrell@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

January 2023



**Nettlebed Overview** Revision 1.0

Legend	
Proposed 20	<span style="color: blue;">█</span>
Existing 20	<span style="color: yellow;">█</span>
Not within Highway Boundary	<span style="color: magenta;">█</span>
Existing 30	<span style="color: red;">█</span>
Existing 40	<span style="color: green;">█</span>
Existing 50	<span style="color: grey;">█</span>
Existing NSL	<span style="color: black;">█</span>
Not Public Highway	<span style="color: black;">█</span>

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Rev.	Date	Purpose of revision	Drawn	Checked	Approved
1.0	25.11.22	First Draft	C.R		

Owen Jenkins  
Director for  
Infrastructure Delivery  
Communities  
Oxfordshire County Council  
County Hall  
New Road  
Oxford  
OX1 1ND  
Tel: 0845 310 1111

Project title: Nettlebed 20mph Scheme

Drawing title: Nettlebed 20mph Scheme Overview

Drawing Status			
Scale @ A3	Drawn by: C.R	Checked by: G.J.B	Approved by: G.J.B
	Date drawn: 25.11.22	Date checked: 25.11.22	Date approved: 06.01.23

Oxfordshire Project No. & File Ref

Drawing No. 1.0	Revision 1.0
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RESPONDENT	COMMENTS
(1) Traffic Management Officer, (Thames Valley Police)	<p><b>Concerns</b> – 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> <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 Strategic Development and the Built Environment, (Stagecoach Bus Company)</p>	<p><b>No objection</b> – In line with our general practice, I am again happy to confirm that Stagecoach has no comments or observations to make and offers no objection to these proposals.</p>
<p>(3) Interim Managing Director, (Oxford Bus Company)</p>	<p><b>Support</b> – Thanks for sharing this. We have no issues with these proposals and are happy to support them.</p>
<p>(4) Business Development and Partnerships Manager, (Thames Travel Bus Company)</p>	<p><b>Concerns</b> – We have no problem with and support these proposals where they do not affect bus routes.</p> <p>Where the proposals affect our 23 bus service (Didcot – Henley), we again have no problems with the proposals to implement a 20mph limit in the central area of Nettlebed High Street between the Lichgate to St Bartholomew’s Church and the junction with the B481 Watlington Road. We believe this is a sensible suggestion, given the road widths in this area and the narrow footways for pedestrians. We would support a 20mph limit being introduced in this area.</p> <p>However, for the sections of the A4130 either side of the central section as described above we object to the proposal to reduce the speed limit from 30 to 20mph.</p> <p>In these areas, road widths are wider and there are no active frontages that would encourage or lead to frequent and planned mixing between vulnerable road users and motorised traffic. Extending the length of 30mph at the Port Hill end of the village will provide an increased 30mph buffer between the National Speed Limit and the 20mph area.</p>

	<p>Retaining a section of 30mph road at the southeast of the village will provide a similar buffer for traffic at this end of the village.</p> <p>Whilst the sections of road we propose remain at 30mph are modest, 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 would serve to encourage negative modal shift from public transport to private motor vehicles, which is contrary to the council's policies. Ultimately if journey times become too great, either, extra bus and driver resource needs to be added to maintain the same level of service (i.e. increased cost for no increased revenue) or alternatively timetables need to be trimmed so that they can be operated with the existing resource (i.e. reduced revenue from the same operating cost). This could lead to services becoming financially unsustainable and so could lead to service reductions.</p> <p>Given the distances involved and the topography of the A4130 between Wallingford, Nettlebed and Henley-on-Thames it is unlikely that cycling or walking will make up significant mode share on this corridor. Therefore the council should be seeking to maximise support for public transport on this corridor to help achieve our decarbonisation aims.</p>
<p>(5) Local Resident/Member of public, (Moulsford, Ferry Lane)</p>	<p><b>Object</b> – The 20mph proposals are in nobody's interests. As a motorist I strive to strictly observe 20mph limits just as I observe all other speed limits. Where speed limits are inappropriately low, compliance usually leads to a hazardous and unpleasant driving experience owing to tailgaters. Worse still, it often leads to overtakes by less patient drivers presenting extreme danger to other road users, especially pedestrians who may not anticipate traffic on the wrong side of the road.</p> <p>As a pedestrian, when stepping into or crossing a road I certainly won't assume that oncoming traffic is crawling along at 20mph, just because there's a 20mph sign. It is much safer to assume that the vehicular traffic will be judging their speed according to their natural instincts founded upon Newtonian physics and stopping distances and so quite logically, they will often be travelling at closer to 30mph. Thus, there is absolutely no benefit to pedestrians - we still have to treat all traffic as if it were travelling at similar speeds to a 30mph limit.</p> <p>Just occasionally, when a pedestrian wishes to cross a road, a vehicle will turn out to be actually driving in compliance with the speed limit at 20mph or less. The pedestrian must then wait patiently by the roadside for it to pass, waiting much longer than they would in a 30mph limit, before they can safely cross behind it. I personally have frequently experienced this delay in other inappropriate 20mph limits, and find it extremely annoying.</p>

Regarding speed limits in general, such TROs have no legal significance for cyclists. Yet in the case of 20mph limits many reasonably fit cyclists often exceed that speed, and can continue to do so perfectly legally. This will give rise to the bizarre situation whereby those few motorists who actually observe the limit could find themselves tailgated by impatient/aggressive cyclists. When assisted by a slight gradient, perhaps even overtaken by cyclists - which is highly unlikely to be a safe manoeuvre. It may also give rise to a further temptation for cyclists to illegally ride on the footway, if it allows them to get past slower traffic more easily. Any inducement for cyclists to use the footway is dangerous for pedestrians.

There is a further danger that, even if compliance becomes common, pedestrians will become accustomed to the lower traffic speeds of affected vehicles. They will then be taken by surprise when legally exempted vehicles (cyclists etc) out to be travelling much faster.