

Division(s): Kennington & Radley

**CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT – 2 JUNE 2011**  
**FOXCOMBE ROAD, BOARS HILL – 40 MILES PER HOUR SPEED**  
**RESTRICTION**

Report by Deputy Director of Environment & Economy - Highways &  
Transport

**Introduction**

1. This report considers the objections/comments received following the consultation and formal advertisement of the proposed '40 miles per hour Speed Restriction', on Foxcombe Road, Boars Hill. The extent of the restriction is shown on the plan at Annex 1.

**Background**

2. Oxfordshire County Council received a request from South Hinksey Parish Council for the speed limit on a 354m length of Foxcombe Road between two existing 40 miles per hour speed limits to be reduced from the national speed limit to 40 miles per hour. The Parish Council stated that the current length of national speed limit did not meet DfT guidance and that the current speed of vehicles presented a significant risk to pedestrians.

**Consultation**

3. Informal consultation with statutory bodies and affected frontagers was carried out between 5 November 2010 and 17 December 2010. The proposals were formally advertised as a Notice in the local press on 17 February 2011. Notices were posted on site and copies of the notice, draft order, statement of reasons and plan posted to all the statutory consultees and affected frontagers.

**Responses**

4. Twenty letters of support and three letters of objection have been received. The objectors (none of whom are local to the Boars Hill area) state that the existing speed limit is satisfactory and a reduced limit would be unrealistic given the nature and surroundings of the road. Copies of these objections have been placed on deposit in the Members' Resource Centre and a summary can be found at Annex 2.
5. National guidelines on the setting of speed limits (Department for Transport Circular 1/06) recommend that the minimum length of speed limit should normally be no less than 600m, although they also recognise limits as short as 300m may be appropriate in some circumstances.

6. Thames Valley Police have replied indicating that they have no objections to the 40 miles per hour speed limit but have raised concerns that the change could dilute the existing speed limits due to the removal of the existing terminal signs. In response it should be noted that it is proposed to install 40 miles per hour repeater signs at the sites of the existing terminal signs alongside the existing 40mph carriageway roundel markings on red surfacing.

## **Conclusion**

7. The national speed limit on Foxcombe Road extends over a 354m length where there is no frontage development and was intended to reinforce the 40mph restrictions either side of this length. Although there is no evidence that the current arrangement works against safety, equally there is a perception that it leads to vehicles entering the adjacent 40mph limits at higher speeds than they might otherwise do. There are precedents in Oxfordshire where continuous 40mph limits have been introduced in very similar circumstances, which appear to perform well in safety terms and the advertised change would be consistent with these.

## **Financial Implications**

8. The cost of introducing these waiting restrictions will be met from existing budgets.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

9. **The Cabinet Member for Transport is RECOMMENDED to approve the introduction of the new 40 mph speed limit restriction on Foxcombe Road, Boars Hill as advertised.**

STEVE HOWELL

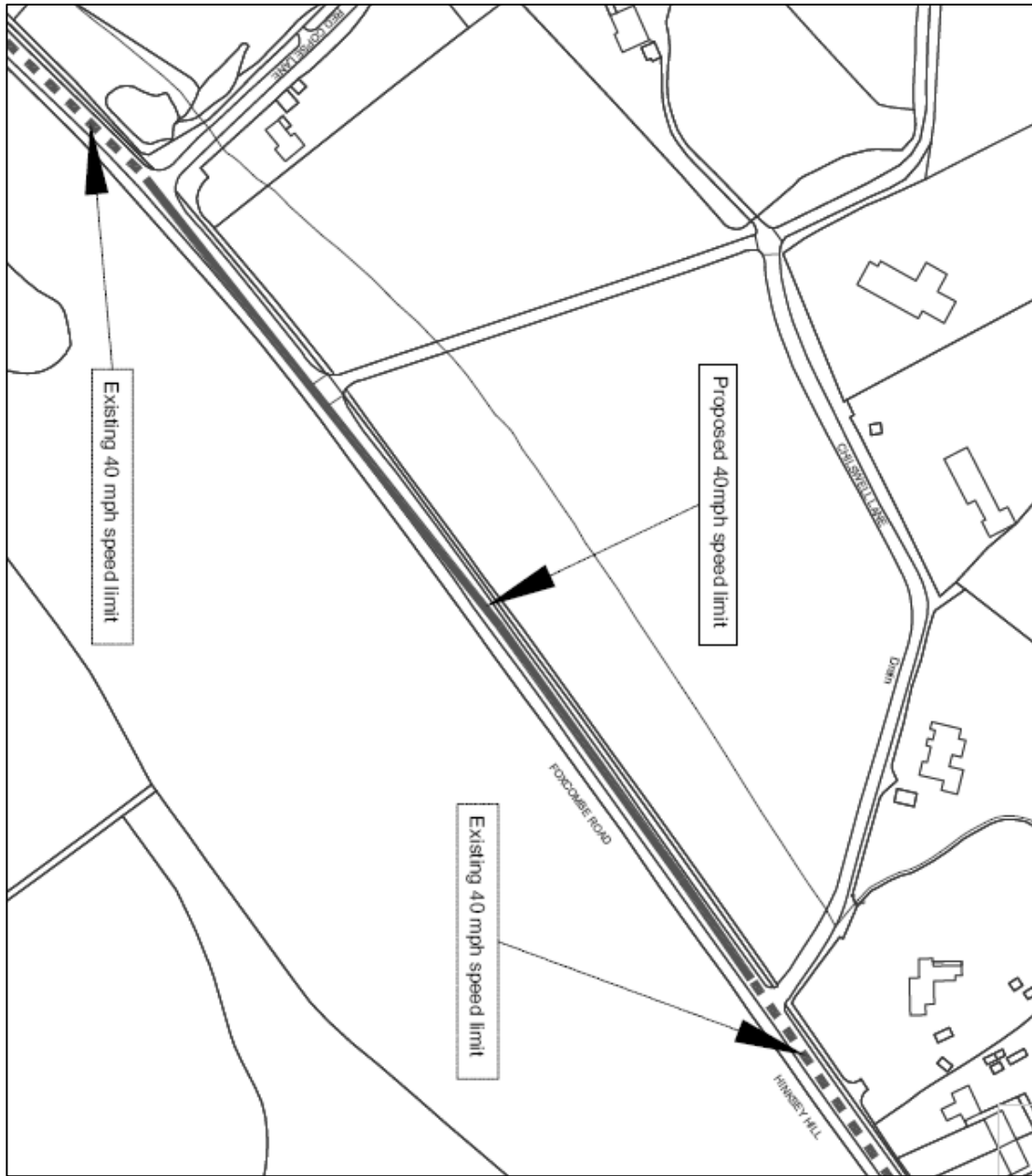
Deputy Director of Environment & Economy - Highways and Transport

Background papers: Copies of all the legal documents plus letters and emails received in response are available in the Members' Resource room.

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June 2011

Annex 1



**PROPOSED 40mph SPEED LIMIT – FOXCOMBE ROAD, BOARS HILL**  
**Summary of Objections**

No.	Objector	Summary of Objection or Comment
1.	A resident of Bampton	<p>In my view, the 40mph limits (particularly at the NE end) are already somewhat low for the stretch of road. In my opinion, joining the 40mph sections by removing the national speed limit (NSL) will give an <i>increase</i> in speeds as there will no longer be any apparent delineation between the 40mph sections of road and the rural NSL section. As there will no longer be terminal signs at each end showing the entry to the original 40 mph sections, drivers may not slow down as they enter them so could end up travelling faster than before in those sections.</p> <p>Oxfordshire's limits are already a significant problem for those of us who comply with them. Because they're artificially low, other drivers frequently react aggressively to people sticking to the limits, attempt dangerous overtakes and intimidate compliant drivers/riders.</p>
2.	Oxfordshire Rep. for Association of British Drivers	<p>I do not share that unsubstantiated belief and speed limits should not be set in accordance with the wishes of local residents with no knowledge of the scientific basis of how speed limits should be used.</p> <p>Speed limits can only influence less experienced drivers if they are set at a level that the more experienced majority accept as reasonable. The currently unrestricted section of Foxcombe Road is virtually straight, reasonably wide, and has a wood on one side and open fields on the other. It is demonstrably a rural road, where drivers would expect the national speed limit to apply. A 40 mph speed limit on this section of road would be seen as unreasonably low by most drivers, so there would be widespread non-compliance.</p> <p>Another purpose of speed limits, to warn drivers of expected hazard density, is also only achieved if the speed limit is seen by the majority of responsible and experienced drivers to be appropriate for the road environment they can see ahead of and around them. A 40 mph speed limit on this section of Foxcombe Road would certainly conflict with most drivers' assessment of the hazard density presented by the road environment. By making the 40 mph speed limit continuous along Foxcombe Road and Hinksey Hill, the terminal signs at each end of the currently unrestricted section would have to be removed. There would thus be no traffic signing to indicate the change from open rural road to those stretches with ribbon development alongside them. The</p>

		<p>likelihood is, therefore, that some drivers who speed up along the open section would fail to slow down again when entering the developed areas. Speeds through those areas would thus likely increase.</p> <p>I understand that the parish council is concerned about accidents that have occurred at the junction with Oxford Road, and this is the main reason for requesting a 40 mph speed limit on the unrestricted section of Foxcombe Road. This appears to be an irrational, knee-jerk reaction.</p> <p>In my view, however, a better speed limit strategy for Foxcombe Road would be to remove the 40 mph limit at the Oxford Road end entirely, which, together with relocating the terminal signs at the south-west end to the junction with Foxcombe Lane, would reduce driver frustration and overtaking. If that is considered too radical, imposing a 50 mph speed limit from Oxford Road to Foxcombe Lane might be acceptable, depending on the results of speed surveys along this length of road to ensure the speed limit would not be below the existing mean speed</p>
3.	A representative of Drivers Protest Union	<p>Speed limits should not be set in accordance with the wishes of local residents with no knowledge of the scientific basis of how speed limits should be used. Why should any qualified police officer instigate prosecutions of drivers based on the aspirations of some less qualified parochial councillor or even a highways official?</p> <p>What will indicate to drivers that they have moved from a totally rural aspect into a more habituated area? Are we next going to see an increase in accidents within the existing 40mph areas and so subsequently be asked to reduce these to 30mph?</p>