

## **CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT – 29 JUNE 2017**

### **PROPOSED 50MPH SPEED LIMIT – A41 BICESTER - BLACKTHORN**

#### **Report by Director for Infrastructure Delivery**

#### **Introduction**

1. This report presents responses received in the course of a statutory consultation on a proposal for the introduction of a 50mph speed limit on the A41 between (and including) its roundabout junction with the A4421 Bicester Eastern perimeter road and the existing 50mph speed limit by the Blackthorn rail bridge.

#### **Background**

2. The above speed limit change was proposed by developers as part of works to create a new access for a commercial development on the north side of the A41 east of the junction with the Ploughley Road. In considering the extent of the proposal, account was taken of the existing 50mph speed limit on the A41 in the vicinity of the Blackthorn railway bridge, and the alignment and other junctions in the vicinity. A plan of the proposal is shown at Annex 1.

#### **Consultation**

3. The formal consultation on the proposal was carried out between 30 March and 28 April 2017. A public notice was placed in the Bicester Advertiser newspaper and sent to statutory consultees, including; Thames Valley Police, Fire & Rescue Service, Ambulance service, Cherwell District, Bicester Town Council and Ambrosden, Merton & Piddington Parish Councils, and the local County Councillor.
4. Four responses were received. These are summarised at Annex 2. Copies of all of the full responses received are available for inspection in the Members' Resource Centre.
5. Thames Valley Police have not objected to the proposals, taking account of the character of the road and its collision history (excluding the roundabout junction of the A41 with the A4421 – where, in addition to the proposed speed limit, a major improvement is being funded by other adjacent development – a total of 19 injury accidents have been reported in the most recent 5-year period available along the length where the 50mph speed limit is proposed).
6. Two objections were received from members of the public. One was on the grounds that imposing a 50mph speed limit would place an unnecessary restriction on drivers, with 60mph being a safe speed for the road and noting

that any safety concerns arising from the proposed new junction should be addressed by the junction being designed to an appropriate standard to remove such risks, rather than by reducing the speed limit over a distance of approximately two miles. The other objection was on the grounds that speeds are already often constrained by the heavy traffic flows and that therefore a 50mph speed limit was unnecessary.

7. Cherwell District Council support the proposal.

### **Review of responses**

8. The response of Thames Valley Police is noted, together with the support registered by Cherwell District Council.
9. The objection from the member of the public that the speed limit is unnecessary is noted, and while accepting that the creation of the new junction itself is not sufficient grounds for considering a reduction in the speed limit, the Department for Transport (DfT) guidelines on setting local speed limits state that for lower quality A and B roads with frequent junctions, accesses or bends – as is the case for this part of the A41 – a 50mph speed limit is appropriate, with the national speed limit of 60mph being reserved for high quality strategic roads with few such hazards. The proposed reduction in speed limit will therefore benefit the existing traffic and that generated by the new development along the route as a whole.
10. In respect of the objection that the speed limit is unnecessary due to frequent congestion, it is accepted that while this is true at peak times, traffic is usually free flowing outside these times.

### **How the Project supports LTP4 Objectives**

11. The proposals would help facilitate the safe movement of traffic.

### **Financial and Staff Implications (including Revenue)**

12. Funding for the speed limit extension has been provided by the developer of land adjacent to the A41 at Ambrosden

### **RECOMMENDATION**

13. **The Cabinet Member for the Environment is RECOMMENDED to approve the proposals as advertised**

CMDE5

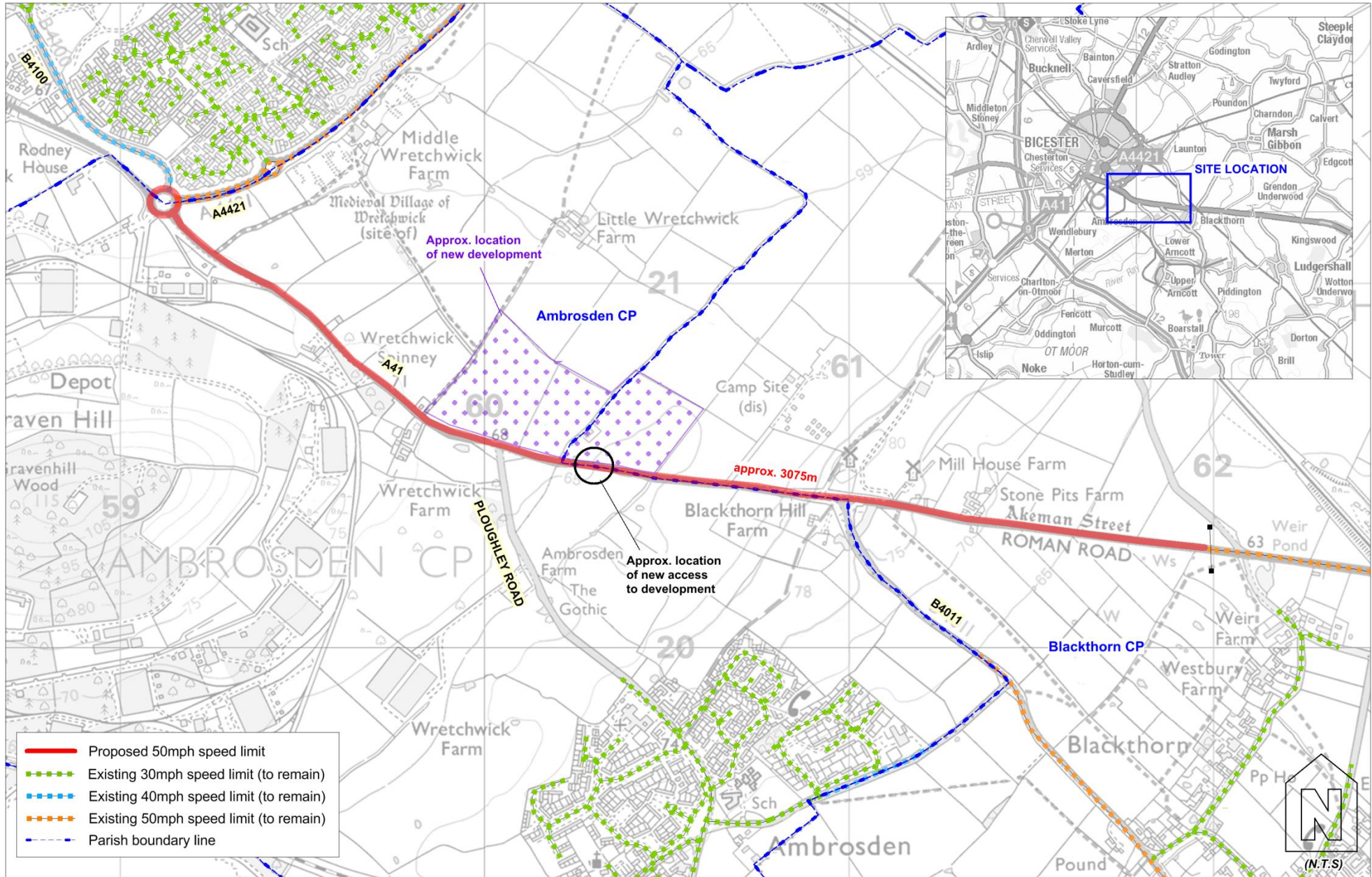
OWEN JENKINS  
Director for Infrastructure Delivery

Background papers:        Plan of proposed restrictions  
                                     Consultation responses

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OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL - HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT



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Date drawn: 16/06/2017  
 Drawn by: CJM

Map centre:  
 easting. 460560, northing. 220570

RESPONDENT	SUMMARISED COMMENTS
(1) Thames Valley Police	<b>No objection.</b>
(2) Cherwell District Council	<b>Support</b> - In summary, Cherwell District Council welcomes the proposals as a step towards addressing accessibility issues, congestion and improving the safety of the A41. However, some of the options identified in the emerging Bicester Masterplan will require further investigation and development.
(3) Resident, (Titchener Close, Bicester)	<p><b>Object</b> - The 2-mile section of the A41 covered by this proposal is a wide trunk road with good sightlines and currently the subject of a NSL restriction.</p> <p>The road includes protected right-turn ghost islands at the junctions with the entrance to the Graven Hill site, with Ploughley Road and with the B4011. The absence of speed-related accidents at all of these junctions over a long period is ample evidence that the combination of the road width and good sightlines allows road traffic to proceed at speeds of up to 60mph without undue risk. Furthermore, the alignment and engineering of existing junctions is such that potential hazards are easily detected by users of the road who self-evidently take appropriate mitigating action when required.</p> <p>The presence of a single additional junction for the new commercial facility does not sufficiently change the character of a 2-mile section of road such that it warrants a reduction in the speed limit to 50mph, and any safety concerns relating to this junction should be addressed by appropriate improvements to the design of this junction. Taking account of the character of the road, a 50mph limit on this 2-mile section of the A41 will have no effect on road safety but will instead criminalise the reasonable actions of safe and competent drivers and place an additional enforcement burden on the Police, where none currently exists or is required.</p>
(4) Resident, (Woodpiece Road, Upper Arcott)	<b>Object</b> - The speed limit change is pointless. The traffic on that road at peak times crawls as it is. The ridiculous warehouses being put there will simply make a bad situation worse.

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