

Divisions affected: Otmoor

CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAY MANAGEMENT – 17 NOVEMBER 2022

MERTON: 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 Merton as shown in **Annex 1**.

Financial Implications

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

Equality and Inclusion Implications

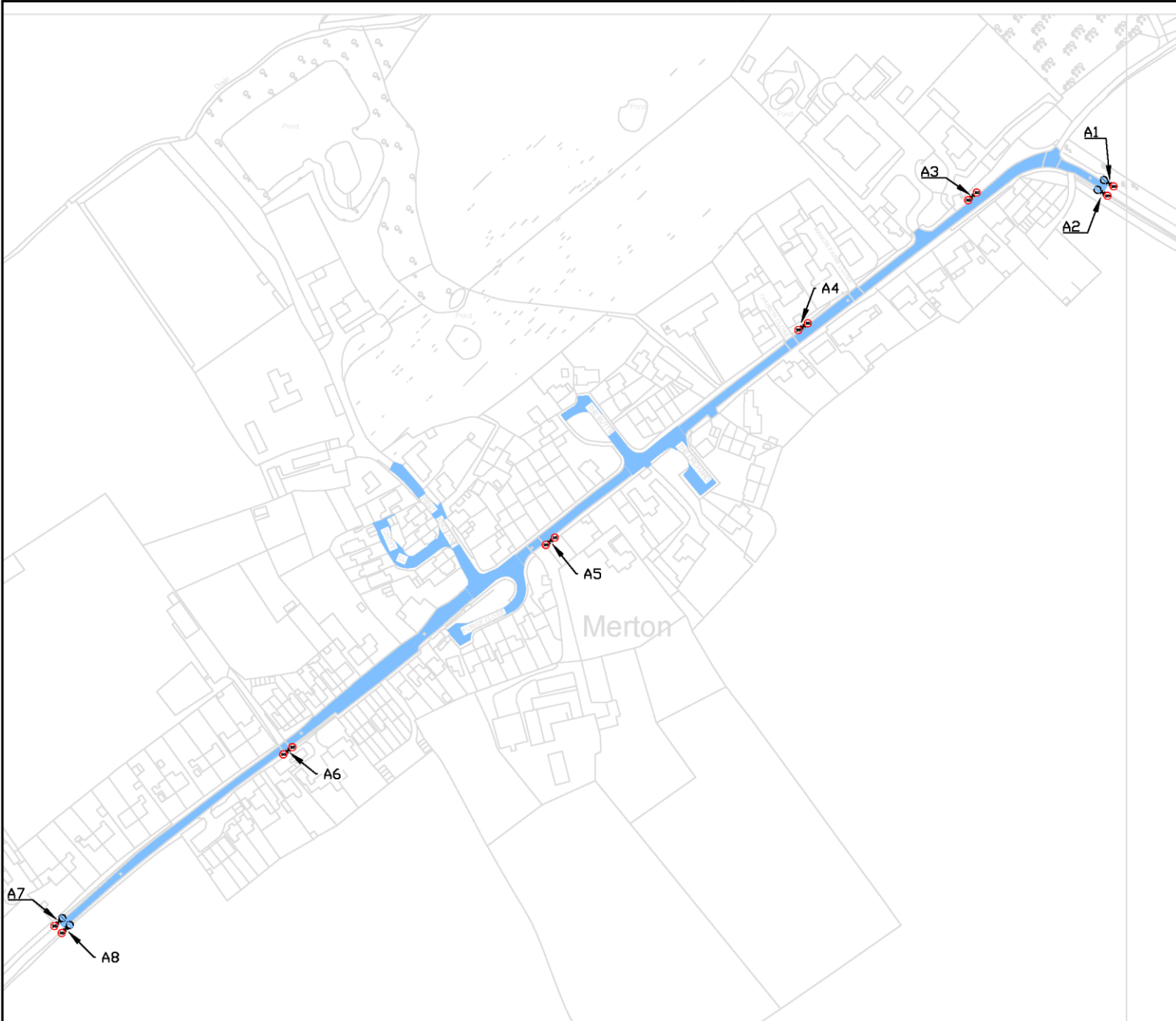
4. No implications in respect of equalities or inclusion have been identified in respect of the proposals.

Sustainability Implications

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

Consultation

6. Formal consultation was carried out between 15 September and 14 October 2022. A notice was published in the Bicester Advertiser 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, Cherwell District



Drawing No.		Revision			
Notes:					
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: #add8e6; margin-right: 5px;"></div> Proposed new 20mph </div>					
© Crown Copyright and Database rights 10023943 2017					
Rev.	Date	Purpose of revision	Drawn	Checked	Approved
<div style="display: inline-block; font-size: x-small; vertical-align: middle; margin-left: 10px;"> Bill Cotton Director of Communities Operations Oxfordshire County Council County Hall New Road Oxford OX1 1ND Tel: 0845 310 1111 </div>					
Project title					
Merton 20mph Limit					
Drawing title					
Sheet A					
Drawing Status					
Scale @ A3	Drawn by	ER	Checked by	Approved by	
	Date drawn		Date checked	Date approved	
Oxfordshire Project No. & File Ref					
Drawing No.		Revision			

RESPONDENT	COMMENTS
(1) Traffic Management Officer, (Thames Valley Police)	<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 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 (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) Stagecoach Bus Company, (Head of Strategic development & the Built Environment)</p>	<p>No objection – Stagecoach currently operates the H5 bus services through Merton, between Bicester and Headington. The route is partly supported by Oxfordshire County Council. The section south of Ambrosden is in effect a commercial venture, and intended to provide a regular direct link between Bicester and the Headington area, in particular the John Radcliffe Hospital. In so doing Merton benefits from the most regular bus service it has ever had both to Bicester and to the Oxford urban area, where there are a range of frequent connections throughout much of the city.</p> <p>The service is exceptionally precarious, as it is still in a developmental phase. Since the tail-off of Government support during COVID, greatly growing the level of patronage on the service will be critical to its continuation.</p> <p>The service is also relatively tightly timed. The imposition of this limit over an extensive stretch in Merton Village is of itself not sufficient to create a problem - perhaps a minute would be lost in each direction on around-trip - but in combination with similar measures in Ambrosden, and Islip, and conceivably elsewhere, it could well be. Since the service needs a regular clock-face timetable to be marketable, should it prove to no longer be reliably operable within the current level of vehicle resource, in line with the requirements of the Transport Act 1985 (as amended) we would have little choice but to abandon the route, certainly south of Ambrosden. We can barely justify sustaining current losses on the route, and adding another bus to the cycle would in effect increase the operating resource involved south of Ambrosden by 50%.</p> <p>Thus this response should be received as an informative rather than as an objection per se.</p>

	<p>In line with our wider correspondence with the Council in recent weeks and months, we urge the Council's officers to take a particularly careful view of the approach taken in other villages on the H5 route, and elsewhere buses regularly operate, especially the much more extensive village of Ambrosden, having regard to the full text of the Stockholm Declaration and applying proportionate evidence based principles, in particular about the amount and intensity of "planned mixing" of vulnerable road users with motorised traffic.</p> <p>It is important that the general approach to 20mph zones, which we broadly support, does not have the perverse outcome of leading to the substantial reduction of the scheduled rural bus network, or present the Council with the need to create a very substantial budget to back-fill these services with scarce public funding.</p>
(3) Member of public, (Oxford, Banbury Road)	<p>Object – 20mph is extremely slow and this change has not been adequately justified, nor can it be since the road is perfectly safe and adequate to support traffic at the current speeds. Again this is an unnecessary change proposed by an unfit council which is fundamentally anti-car.</p> <p>Travel change: No</p>
(4) Member of public, (Oxford, Home Close)	<p>Object – I support because I cycle through Merton, and a reduced speed limit should make it safer and more pleasant.</p> <p>Travel change: Yes - cycle more</p>