

CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT – 21 MAY 2020

OXFORD – B4495 WINDMILL ROAD– PROPOSED EXTENSION OF 20MPH SPEED LIMIT

Report by Interim Director of Community Operations

Recommendation

1. The Cabinet Member for the Environment is RECOMMENDED to approve the proposals as advertised but to include also the adjacent signalled junction of Windmill Road with The Slade and Old Road.

Executive summary

2. The Access to Headington project includes a package of measures aimed at:
 - a. encouraging greater use of more sustainable modes of transport - buses, cycling and walking
 - b. easing congestion on the route
 - c. improving bus journey times so buses have an advantage over general traffic
 - d. providing a safer, more continuous and attractive route for cyclists and pedestrians
 - e. reducing vehicle emissions and improve air quality.
 - f. Unlocking economic growth and job creation opportunities by benefiting development sites with improved access and additional capacity.
3. Following the first formal consultation on the project in 2016, a request to extend the 20mph speed limit – which currently applies only to the northernmost part of the road - to include the whole road was accepted, resulting in a formal consultation in 2017. That was then approved at the Cabinet Member for Environment meeting on 7 September 2017. However, due to delays in progressing the project a re-consultation is required due to it now being beyond two years since the first formal consultation.

Consultation Summary

4. Formal consultation of the proposal was carried out between 23 January and 21 February 2020. A public notice was placed in the Oxford Times newspaper and sent to statutory consultees, including Thames Valley Police, the Fire & Rescue Service, Ambulance service, Oxford City Council and local County Councillors. Notification (via email) was also sent to all of those who responded to the original consultation.
5. Twenty-eight responses were received. 6 objections (21%), 21 expressions of support (75%) and 1 raising concerns. The responses are recorded at Annex 2 with copies of the full responses available for inspection by County Councillors.

Response to objections and other comments

6. Thames Valley Police objected to the proposals on the grounds that current measured speeds on the relevant part of Windmill Road are above the threshold (24mph) indicated by national guidelines issued by the Department for Transport for setting 20mph speed limits without supporting traffic calming measures.
7. A response from the Oxford City Council traffic team suggested that a very minor extension of the speed limit to include the signalled crossroads with Old Road would be helpful, noting that a 20mph speed limit already applied on both arms of Old Road and the suggested amendment would simplify the signing of the speed limits here.
8. Expressions of support were received from Cycling UK Oxfordshire a local group representing cyclists, the Oxford Pedestrian Association, OXTRAG, a local group representing the mobility impaired, the University of Oxford Estates Services Sustainable Transport, Oxford Health and sixteen members of the public.
9. Objections were received from five members of the public on need for and appropriateness of a 20mph speed limit taking account of the character and function of the road and citing concerns on its likely effectiveness given the lack of enforcement of 20mph speed limits elsewhere.
10. While accepting the concerns of Thames Valley Police that the current average speeds fall slightly outside the threshold cited in national guidance for a 20mph speed limit not supported by traffic calming measures, the overall balance of the responses is clearly supportive.

How the Project supports LTP4 Objectives

11. The proposals would help facilitate the convenient and safe movement of all users, including pedestrians, cyclists and bus users leading to the encouragement of more use of public transport and improved air quality.

Financial and Staff Implications (including Revenue)

12. Funding for the proposed measures has been provided from the Access to Headington programme.

JASON RUSSELL

Interim Director of Community Operations

Background papers: Plan of proposed speed limit and Consultation responses

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May

2020

| RESPONDENT | SUMMARISED COMMENTS |
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| (1) Traffic Management Officer, (Thames Valley Police) | Object – My objection to previous consultation remains unless considerable engineering is included in order to combat the high numbers of motorist in excess of 24mph. |
| (2) Oxford City Council Traffic Officer | <p>Concerns – It seems that the current proposal might end up being more confusing if the signs are positioned where Steve indicated that they might be placed.</p> <p>Wanted to put forward the suggestion that the entire junction, plus the top end section of the Slade would be 20mph. This would mean simply two set of signs (either side of the Slade) prior to the junction.</p> <p>There have been issues with drivers as they exit old road, see the 30mph sign, and miss the 20mph sign on the other side of the junction.</p> |
| (3) Local Group, (Cycling UK Oxfordshire) | <p>Support – Windmill Road is a major cycling route across Headington, connecting on from The Slade to Headington centre. There are many hazards on the road, most of all parked cars that cyclists have to negotiate. But, unlike The Slade, cyclists do not have the protection of a separate stepped lane.</p> <p>To provide some safety, the best alternative is to reduce traffic speeds to 20mph.</p> <p>We think it is essential that this is an actual 20mph. 84% of drivers break 20mph speed limits, putting pedestrians and cyclists at risk. Single point speed cameras will be ineffective on long roads like Windmill Road, so we would like to see average speed cameras in place.</p> |
| (4) Local Group, (Oxford Pedestrian Association) | Support – OxPA has long campaigned for 20mph limits to be extended to so-called 'arterial' routes, all of which in Oxford are residential streets, degraded in living terms by their designation over many years are thought motorised traffic routes. Therefore we warmly support measures to extend the 20mph limits as outlined, with the following comments: |

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| | <p>Roads which are intended to be kept safe for vulnerable road users and residents should have some form of calming or narrowing applied as drivers will often ignore speed limits where they can.</p> <p>Failing this some other means of enforcement should be in place.</p> <p>We would wish to see 20mph limits set and enforced throughout the whole of Oxford, with a maximum 15mph limits set on roads where children play or outside schools.</p> |
| <p>(5) Local Group, (OXTRAG)</p> | <p>Support - the lower speeds will make crossing Windmill Road safer for slow walkers and wheelchair users. This will be particularly helpful to people visiting the Nuffield Hospital, as most of those using cars but without blue badges park in side-streets on the far side of Windmill Road.</p> <p>Also, many children attending Windmill Primary School in Margaret Road have to cross Windmill Road on their way to and from the school. A 20mph speed limit might encourage some parents to escort their children on foot rather than take them by car. Reduction in traffic, and more exercise for children and their escorts, will be beneficial all-round.</p> |
| <p>(6) University of Oxford, (Estates Services Sustainable Transport)</p> | <p>Support – The team also supports the proposals to lower the speed limit on Windmill Road, Headington from 30mph to 20mph which should be expected to improve safety for vulnerable road users, especially the adjacent primary school and the Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre.</p> |
| <p>(7) Local Group, (Oxford Health)</p> | <p>Support – Oxford Health has several bases in Headington in particular (Warneford Hospital, The Slade etc) as well as a significant number of staff travelling in on Botley road.</p> <p>As a health organisation and progressive employer, we strongly support anything to make the roads safer / less polluted, and which encourages our staff and patients to take healthier, more environmentally-friendly travel options such switching from driving cars to cycling.</p> |
| <p>(8) Local Resident, (Wantage)</p> | <p>Object - Unnecessary and a waste of money</p> |

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| <p>(9) Local Resident, (Oxford)</p> | <p>Object - There is no good reason why Windmill Road should be 20mph. Traffic currently flows perfectly well as is.</p> |
| <p>(10) Local Resident, (Oxford)</p> | <p>Object - There is no need to reduce the speed limit to 20 mph. This would be especially true if all the on-street parking is retained as this slows the traffic naturally. Headington residents have been really disadvantaged by the (No) Access to Headington scheme and this just adds to the inconvenience. There are very few, if any, accidents along Windmill Road so I do not understand the justification for a speed limit reduction. There is already a Pelican crossing so that children going to and from Windmill School can cross the road safely.</p> <p>The main breakers of the speed limit as it stands are ambulances and other emergency service vehicles for which this is a major route and all residents suffer from the excessive use of sirens along this route. This will be made worse if these vehicles are further delayed by slower traffic.</p> |
| <p>(11) Local Resident, (Oxford)</p> | <p>Object - Windmill Road is a major arterial road within Headington. My comments regarding the Botley road apply to Windmill road, but in addition, the roads approaching Windmill Road will rightly remain 30mph limits (e.g. the Slade). There is sense in maintaining the major routes through Headington at 30mph to facilitate consistent flow of traffic.</p> |
| <p>(12) Local Resident, (Oxford)</p> | <p>Object - I live in the Headington area on London Road. This has 20 mph speed limit but signs stating speed limits are poor. Recently the one markings were repainted and the Council could have painted 20 mph on road surface. When 20 mph speed limits were originally proposed the Police said they would NOT enforce them. That is still the case in Headington.</p> |
| <p>(13) Local Resident, (Oxford)</p> | <p>Support - <i>No comments.</i></p> |
| <p>(14) Local Resident, (Oxford)</p> | <p>Support - This is essential; in quieter times, cars and especially motorcycles travel at very high speeds here. I suspect speed cameras will need to be deployed more frequently.</p> |

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| <p>(15) Local Resident, (Oxford)</p> | <p>Support - <i>No comments.</i></p> |
| <p>(16) Local Resident, (Oxford)</p> | <p>Support - As a local resident who walks regularly (with and without children) speed limits and drivers' approach to Windmill Road must be tempered. The recent speed test apparatus was located where it was blatantly obvious it would give a lower average speed than most sections of the road. (It was located on one of the pinch points, where the residents parking bays are and cars naturally slow for this tighter section)</p> <p>The southbound traffic drives incredibly close to the kerb, which is barely 2 inches high, with a narrow pavement on long sections on the east side. A number of the Windmill Road residents also leave their wheelie bins out on the pavement regularly/permanently.</p> <p>A work colleague in High Wycombe lost a child in a very similar situation - one moment she was holding his hand, walking him home from school, the next moment he was 20m down the road because a car mounted the pavement. Very sadly he did not survive.</p> <p>The objection of the police is daft. A speed limit display would be very useful, as per Sunderland Road (which incidentally currently has the same speed limit as Windmill Road - the difference being that residents on Sunderland Road walk some 20m away from the 30 mph traffic; on Windmill Road the proximity is say 1ft from a car wing-mirror, separated by a 2 inch high kerb!)</p> |
| <p>(17) Local Resident, (Oxford)</p> | <p>Support - <i>No comments.</i></p> |
| <p>(18) Local Resident, (Oxford)</p> | <p>Support - <i>No comments.</i></p> |
| <p>(19) Local Resident, (Oxford)</p> | <p>Support - As a resident on Windmill Road, it is clear that some vehicles travel at excessive speed at quieter times (especially later evenings) down the road. Motorcyclists are of particular concern, often travelling much faster than 30mph. Given the desire of the council to promote cycling on the road, a slowing in speed to 20mph is to be welcomed from the perspective of safety.</p> |

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| (20) Local Resident, (Abingdon) | Support - <i>No comments.</i> |
| (21) Local Resident, (Oxford) | Support - <i>No comments.</i> |
| (22) Local Resident, (Oxford) | Support - Cycling along this stretch of road is dangerous, with the combination of the current speed limit and the on-street parking. I'd like to see the speed limit reduced and street parking limited further as well. |
| (23) Local Resident, (Oxford) | Support - <i>No comments.</i> |
| (24) Local Resident, (Oxford) | Support - <i>No comments.</i> |
| (25) Local Resident, (Oxford) | Support - Similar reasons; slower motor traffic makes life better for cyclists, and I think makes sense in built-up areas. |
| (26) Local Resident, (Oxford) | <p>Support - Please also put speed cameras on this road and actually prosecute people who drive above 20mph. Without this, drivers will just ignore the new speed limit like they do pretty much everywhere else in Oxford.</p> <p>Please also put more pedestrian crossings on this road and make them zebra crossings which prioritise pedestrians. The waiting times to cross this road and the danger involved in doing so is unacceptable.</p> <p>Please also put mandatory, segregated cycle lanes along this road. The planned removal of on-road parking spaces will help make this road safer for cyclists, but without a proper dedicated cycle path which car drivers are not able to drive/park in, I still won't feel it is safe enough to let my children cycle on the road here.</p> <p>Please also make the pavements wider. The current pavements are inadequate for the pedestrian traffic and put pedestrians way too close to moving cars. It is particularly bad where there are bus stops and crossings.</p> |

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| (27) Local Resident, (Oxford) | Support – As a resident of Headington who walks along Windmill Road daily, and who sometimes uses Botley Road, I strongly support the proposals to extend the 20mph speed limit on both roads. |
| (28) Local Resident, (Oxford) | Support – I fully support the implementation of 20mph speed limit on Windmill Road. |