

Divisions affected: Eynsham

CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAY MANAGEMENT – 23 FEBRUARY 2023

SOUTH LEIGH: 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 South Leigh 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 South Leigh by making them safer and more attractive.

Formal consultation

6. Formal consultation was carried out between 14 December 2022 and 20 January 2023. A notice was published in the Witney & West Oxfordshire Gazette 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, West Oxfordshire District Council, the local District Cllrs,

Checkendon, and Stoke Row parish councils, and the local County Councillor representing the Eynsham division.

Statutory Consultee Responses:

7. Two responses were received from statutory consultees. Thames Valley Police re-iterated their views concerning OCC's policy and practice regarding 20mph speed limits; they consider their response as 'having concerns' rather than an outright objection. The local member supports the proposals.

Other Responses:

8. The parish council's engagement prompted 12 emailed responses from members of the public. Seven were supportive and four objected with reasons including the proposals not being necessary, a waste of money, the lack of realistic alternative transport options, and increasing urbanisation. One concerned respondent supported a 20mph limit but only where housing was in evidence and not in rural environments. One detailed objection not included in the above figures was subsequently withdrawn. A single online objection was received, this a routine one from a member of the public from Witney who railed against the proposal in principle suggesting it was a dark day for democracy and the start of a dystopian future with 20mph signs akin to the 'Z' sign displayed universally across Russia.
9. The responses are shown in **Annex 2**, and copies of the original submissions are available for inspection by County Councillors.

Officer response to objections/concerns

10. The main purpose of the scheme is to improve road safety and 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 County's carbon footprint. This forms part of a countywide programme of works that seeks to deliver 'a safer place with a safer pace'.
11. The 4 focussed objections make reasonable and detailed arguments. However, they are comparable to those expressed and considered in earlier similar schemes and were not seen as warranting a change in those previous proposals given the explicit intention of the County Council's 20mph limit policy. The unfocussed objection raises no fresh pertinent points, and in essence challenges much of the philosophy behind the democratically agreed policy to promote 20mph speed limits in communities; as such it merits no further consideration.

Bill Cotton
Corporate Director, Environment and Place

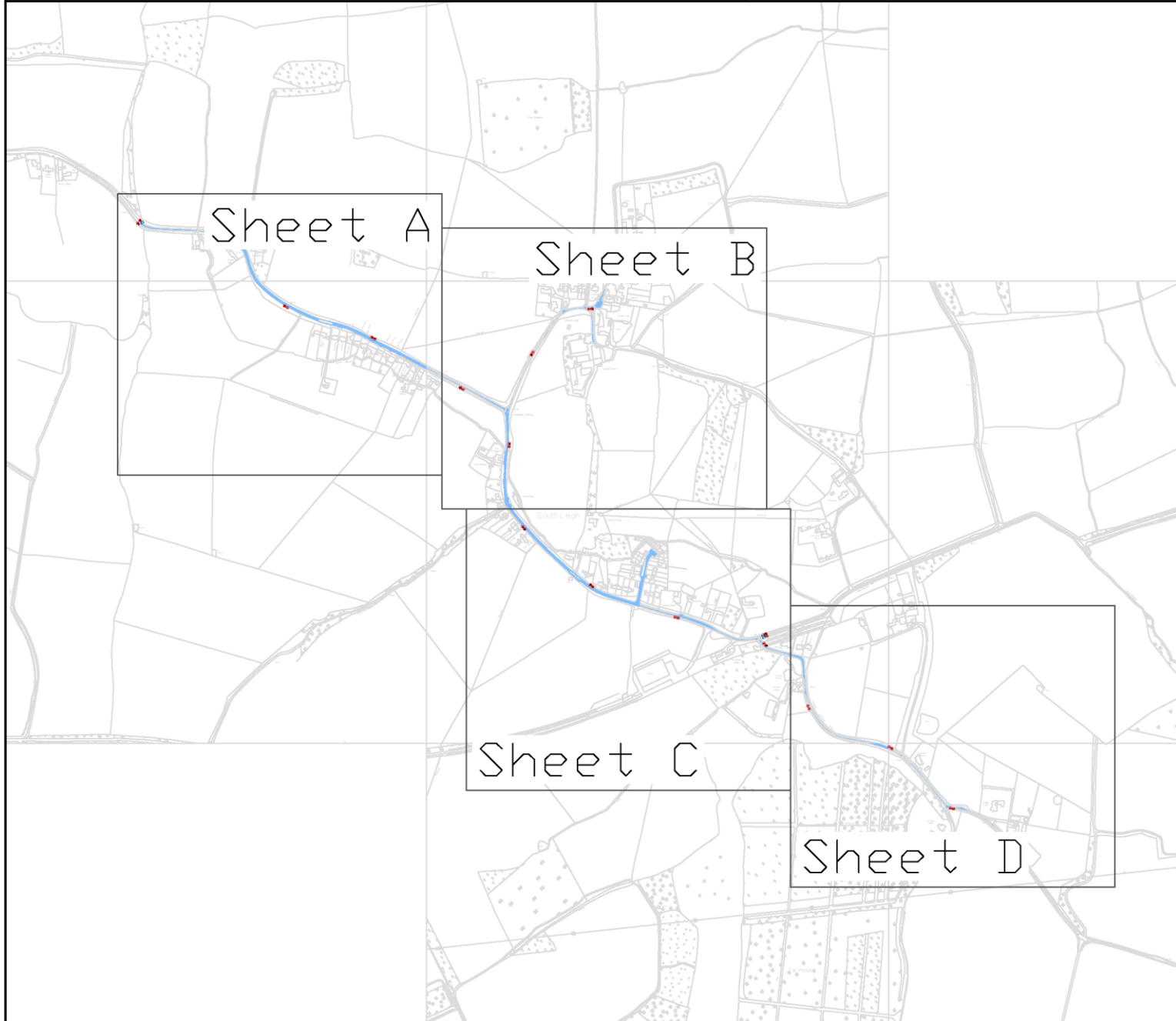
Annexes

Annex 1: Consultation Plan
Annex 2: Consultation responses

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February 2023



Drawing No.		Revision			
Notes:					
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #4a90e2; margin-right: 5px;"></div> Proposed new 20mph </div>					
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Rev.	Date	Purpose of revision	Drawn	Checked	Approved
OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL		Bill Cotton Director of Communities Operations Oxfordshire County Council County Hall New Road Oxford OX1 1ND Tel: 0845 310 1111			
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South Leigh 20mph Limit					
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RESPONDENT	COMMENTS
<p>(1) Traffic Management Officer, (Thames Valley Police)</p>	<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) Local County Cllr, (Witney North & East division)</p>	<p>Support – Other than local traffic or for access to homes and businesses, there should be little reason for vehicles to pass through South Leigh. As well as making the village safer, I hope this will deter vehicles from using this route as an alternative to more appropriate ones such as the A40.</p>
<p>(3) Local Resident/Member of public, (Witney, Oxford Hill)</p>	<p>Object – It is undemocratic, unethical, divisive and disrespectful for communities of whom can see no need to change the speed limits. Why is that? Because there is no such report advising that the road through the village for example is at 80% risk of death or serious injury if the speed limit is not changed. This consultation if anybody wants to call it that (clearly not) is going to undoubtedly ignore public opinion because the Councillors cannot kick the habit, they bitterly hate anybody that has to do an essential journey in a car.</p> <p>I visit the village and drive through regularly to get away from the dystopian 20 mph signs from a neighbouring town that look like Russian Z symbols you see in a Russian street every 100 yards where it made a walk locally at home an utterly bitter and depressing experience knowing that these 20mph signage changes are a political decision and not a road safety decision. I don't take it lightly to compare the Russian Z symbol to a 20mph sign but if the reader googles a Russian city or town what it looks like with the Z symbol in that county it is as comparable as the 20mph sign easily. It is regretful but the honest truth.</p> <p>Devastating to see South Leigh that despite seeing zero road incidents within the Village have such a change needlessly taking place that the Police cannot cope with enforcing especially when local Politicians pushing for these changes will undoubtedly carry on going past 20mph as will emergency service personnel when not on emergency calls. If its ok for them it is ok for the rest of us and I hope many residents and within Oxfordshire will come with me to</p>

	<p>make a stand and that is to say no. No to such depressing road signs and money wasted taking away our future generations common sense. We will be ashamed of what horrid path this Council has chosen, the decision to ignore public opinion and rule within minuit management by edict with no supportive evidence of this change and one that has no loyal compliance even after that. This will undoubtedly depress many residents seeing how needless this was, how robbed their community is of having common sense as per the Highway code and is depressing for passionate motorists that can see that even the study Belfast University did to show that slower speeds don't reduce road incidents either, link here if the individual or senior management are interested in reading. Some will laugh and some will take back these genuine points. www.transportxtra.com/publications/local-transport-today/news/72511/university-study-questions-impact-of-20mph-limits-in-belfast-city-centre</p> <p>South Leigh has great access for cycling and walking safely so does not make sense and urge all residents to write to MPs, maintain pressure on Councillors and the County Council that for as long as those in charge have one rule for themselves it is ok for the rest of us to decide to drive near to 30mph with competent common sense.</p> <p>Lets not forget either that this is the same Council of whose senior official said to the Sunday Traffic Filters in Oxford is going to happen definitely implying the scheme would go ahead whether public opinion opposed or unopposed leading me to my point that this is the same with the speed limit changes.</p>
<p>(4) Local Resident/Member of public, (South Leigh), Church End</p>	<p>Object – The reasons given for this proposed reduction have been given by the County Council and the Parish Council as to improve safety and encourage alternative forms of transport.</p> <p>Safety :- The use of the safety word is invariably to play on peoples fears, usually totally unfounded. In the 30 plus years I have lived in South Leigh there have not been any serious road traffic accidents in the village, thus there would appear to be no safety grounds for the introduction of this reduction in speed. In addition the existing 30mph restriction has sufficed for many years during which time vehicle technology has improved dramatically with improved braking systems, more efficient engines emitting less pollution, head up displays reducing the need for a driver to take their eyes off the road, and increasingly smart hazard avoidance detection. So exactly what risk assessments have been carried out before this proposal was suggested? Risk assessments usually look at the potential risks, ranking of risks identified, a review of relevant historical data and having done that consider appropriate risk mitigation to keep the risk “ as low as practically possible “. I doubt this sensible, professional and reasonable exercise has been carried out, rather it being an emotionally based proposal by those with some limited authority incapable of leaving well alone.</p> <p>Alternative Means of Transport : Exactly what are these magic alternative means of transport? Walking?, Cycling ?. We have no buses, we have no trains. Are we supposed to walk to work. For instance my work places are currently 35</p>

	<p>miles, 50 miles and 136 miles away. We have plenty of footpaths which i have used perfectly happily for the last 30 plus years and besides I could not walk all the way to work. Cyclists (mostly recreational) seem to get on fine and our narrow roads mean car drivers have to be patient before passing cyclists (this apart from the latest Highway Code requirements) who insist on riding two and three abreast. Just why is it that councils are hell bent on bringing the country to a standstill ? I use the train whenever I can, but no public transport could efficiently get me to my current work places of Silverstone, Milton Keynes and RAF Waddington. alternative means of transport dot exist in towns and cities such Oxford or London, but they simply do not exist in village communities. Look at Kirtlington who have a 20 mph speed limit throughout the village and are currently fighting to try and save the one bus service they have whilst the majority of villagers continue to use their cars for the journeys. Beyond using cars for commuting to work, we have no shops, no post office, no bank etc in our village and so cars are necessary for getting anywhere sensibly. I would ask again just what are these “alternative means of transport” which would be sensible, practical , user freindly and economical that are being encouraged to adopt????</p> <p>Other reasons given for this proposal include reduction of road noise, from 30 to 20 mph when most road noise is tyre noise, such a benefit is negligible.</p> <p>How is this proposal going to be policed ? There is currently no effort to police the existing 30 mph limit so what changes are there going to be in future? My journey to my work places takes me through a couple of 20 mph zones, there has been no attempt to enforce the new lower limit in these villages, in fact I believe it is true to say there have been NO prosecutions for drivers in 20 mph zones in Thames Valley in 2022.</p> <p>The Parish Council says having a 20mph zone will increase the chance of us having traffic calming in the village. Why would we want that ? we do not live in an urban environment where such things as 20mph limits and traffic calming may be beneficial (and I can see very reason why such measures are sensible in roads such as North Parade in Oxford). Both the imposition of the 20mph limit and traffic calming are further examples of unwanted creeping urbanisation into rural communities.</p>
<p>(5) Local Resident/Member of public, (South Leigh)</p>	<p>Object – Whilst we all have an interest in improving safety, particularly where there is risk is in our own environment, the benefit of this measure is unsubstantiated and the actual evidence, to date from installed systems, shows it to be ineffective as a safety measure.</p> <p>It would seem logical to start the process of considering a speed limit reduction with regard to the reason for doing so against the reasons for not.</p>

The stated reasons are:

1. Increase in road safety
2. Promotion of alternative forms of transport

Other suggest reasons

3. Reduction of harmful emissions
4. Eligibility for traffic calming schemes

Reasons to not reduce the speed limit

5. Where safe to do so, motorists should be able to expect to make due progress without unnecessary constraints.

1/ South Leigh has no existing problem with road safety. There is almost no record of road safety related incidents in South Leigh. The last record I have found (2018) was of 2-3 reported incidents in Church end and 1-2 incidents in High Cogges – neither of which fall on the main route through the village and are both dead-ends, and unlikely to be related to speed (supposition). It would appear that there is no need for a maximum speed adjustment.

2/ Promotion of alternative forms of transport through this mechanism would seem to be aimed at making driving conditions worse for motorists. As South Leigh has 1 bus a week and is sufficiently “off the beaten track” to make cycling an impractical choice for the majority of road users, it is hard to see how this is a benefit. The reduction in maximum speed limit reduces the ability to be able to overtake cyclists quickly and safely, as the overtaking speed differential is reduced. The provision of better cycle routes would be a much better incentive, rather than imposing the negative measures to penalise drivers.

3/ It is unclear that reducing the maximum speed limit improves emissions – most cars are optimised for best performance at 57mph. Driving at lower speeds can only be achieved in lower gears and, whilst drag is reduced, efficiency is typically worsened.

4/ Some traffic calming schemes are only permitted in “street lit” areas. South Leigh has a “Dark Skies” policy in its Neighbourhood Plan which excludes it from these schemes. It is suggested that imposing a lower limit may permit some schemes to be installed however this is a poor cause, an undesirable objective and an unproven outcome. Most traffic calming schemes impede normal traffic flow and some deliberately introduce extra hazards. Most schemes cause extra noise and pollution and some cause damage to historic and emergency vehicles. We should not have ambitions to introduce traffic “calming” schemes nor impede traffic beyond causing them to comply with safe limits.

	<p>5/ It is extremely hard to manage in rural areas without a car. Motorists should be able to expect to make reasonable progress on roads where it is safe to do so. Where a speed limit is imposed it is usually a maximum and all drivers are required to drive safely within that limit. Setting an arbitrary limit misses the point that every driver is required to drive at a speed that safe for the conditions, vehicle, traffic and the environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there was a need to address a road safety issue would a twenty mile an hour be an effective method of producing an improvement? The only published study, from the University of Belfast (Investigating the impact of a 20 miles per hour speed limit intervention on road traffic collisions, casualties, speed and volume in Belfast, UK: 3 year follow-up outcomes of a natural experiment — Queen's University Belfast (qub.ac.uk)), on the effects of a reduction in speed limit from 30 to 20 concluded that there is no perceivable difference in accident rates or outcomes. • There is anecdotal evidence that drivers concentrate less and fail to assess hazards as well. • There is anecdotal evidence that pedestrians and cyclists fail to anticipate the risk from traffic, with an expectation that vehicles will be able to stop. • It is suggested that the wide spread adoption of the 20mph speed limit reduces the effectiveness of the safety that was formally afforded to specific high risk areas, such as at school entrances. • It is also recognised that imposition of “unnecessary” speed limits reduces the compliance with all speed limits. It is unlikely that the new speed limit will be adequately enforced (as with the existing limit) • Compliance with the existing speed limit would address most concerns over traffic through the village. It seems excessive reduce the speed limit for safe drivers because some drivers fail to observe the existing limits.
<p>(6) Local Resident/Member of public, (South Leigh)</p>	<p>Object – Your undated proposal for a 20 mph blanket speed limit in the village of South Leigh refers in which you state that road safety will be improved following concerns by the South Leigh and High Cogges Parish Council (SLHC).</p> <p>The SLHC may have concerns, as do others, about road safety but what is the hard evidence and democratic mandate from the residents presented by the Parish Council to OCC that would justify the imposition of a blanket 20 mph and improve road safety in the locality.</p> <p>I have lived in the area for 12 years and in that time I have never heard or read about collisions ,injuries and fatalities caused by road traffic accidents in South Leigh. So what road safety needs improving?</p> <p>My experience through driving regularly in and about the village is that over the course of a year narrow lanes, general road surface conditions, parked vehicles, walkers, cyclists, snow ice and flooding dictate the general speeds usually</p>

	<p>nowhere near 20 mph. Over the years I will admit to seeing the odd dead squirrel or two but this hardly constitutes hard evidence for further speed restrictions.</p> <p>No doubt this year we will see substantial rises in our council tax and I am totally and strongly opposed to my money being wasted on erecting some pointless 30 new speed limit signs and road painting which will have no effect whatsoever on the road safety in South Leigh.</p> <p>I ask therefore that common sense prevails and these restrictions are not imposed.</p>
(7) Local Resident/Member of public, (South Leigh)	<p>Concerns – Whilst I am not against the reduction in the speed limit I think that it should only apply on roads with significant housing density immediately adjacent to the road - the extents of the proposed 20mph zone up Chapel Road and down Stanton Harcourt road extend significantly into areas where there is very limited residential occupation and thus even a 30mph limit would seemingly be hard to justify.</p>
(8) Local Resident/Member of public, (South Leigh, Chapel Road)	<p>Support – I wish to SUPPORT the proposed 20 mph limits for the following reasons:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Slower traffic speeds will make our streets safer. 2. This may deter some commuters from using our streets as rat runs, thus reducing traffic and increasing highway safety. 3. While some may defy limits and go faster than 20mph in places, they already do this with 30mph. In other words, it's still safer if vehicles are driven around 25 in some cases, than around 35mph (and in many cases well over 40mph – I've been part of traffic speed surveys and have witnessed this). 4. The number of children in Chapel Road under 5 years old, is now the greatest since the 1960s – another reason for more safety achieved through lower overall traffic speeds.
(9) Local Resident/Member of public, (South Leigh, Chapel Road)	<p>Support – I would like to add my full support to the proposed 20 MPH speed limit being proposed in South Leigh.</p> <p>As a small village our narrow roads are the only form of access to the village facilities - village hall / playground playing fields / church / pub / neighbours / access to footpaths and we should be able to walk / cycle safely with children / the elderly / people with disability/ dogs / horses etc. The roads are not just for motor vehicles and the village should provide safe routes for those not in motor vehicles.</p>

	<p>The current situation is not safe, as a regular walker / cyclist through the village cars often have no respect for people on foot and drive in excess of 30MPH.. this has been proven time and again through the speed watch data.</p> <p>Our villagers and visitors should be able to move safely around the village without the fear of being hit by a speeding motor vehicle.</p> <p>The current situation in the village it is not safe and the move to a lower limit as per other villages and towns is a welcome proposal. We need to protect the fabric of the village and safe easy movement is key to that.</p> <p>With more and more developments threatened in the wider area more traffic will be tempted to use the South Leigh roads adding further danger to our villagers and visitors. A lower limit will deter these "Rat Run" drivers.</p>
<p>(10) Local Resident/Member of public, (South Leigh, Church End)</p>	<p>Support – The village has been trying to address the issue of speeding motorists for a number of years - we have particular problems when the A40 is blocked and have been urging some imaginative solutions to solve the problems, not just of speed but rat running.</p> <p>We realise that this scheme will not solve the problem but is one of the legitimate tools that OCC have to try and address the issues.</p> <p>I know the Parish Council will be approaching OCC and WODC for a holistic solution.</p> <p>In any event and in the meantime I support the proposed 20mph limit.</p> <p>I should say I have seen the submission of another villager saying "As a small village our narrow roads are the only form of access to the village facilities - village hall / playground playing fields / church / pub / neighbours / access to footpaths and we should be able to walk / cycle safely with ... children / the elderly / people with disability/ dogs / horses etc. The roads are not just for motor vehicles and the village should provide safe routes for those not in motor vehicles. The current situation is not safe, as a regular walker / cyclist through the village cars often have no respect for people on foot and drive in excess of 30MPH.. this has been proven time and again through the speed watch data."</p> <p>I agree</p> <p>With more and more developments threatened in the wider area including an Anaerobic Digester more traffic will be tempted to use the South Leigh roads adding further danger. A lower limit will reduce that.</p>

<p>(11) Local Resident/Member of public, (South Leigh, Chapel Road)</p>	<p>Support – I would like to add my support to the proposal for a 20mph limit through South Leigh. As a couple whose house stands on one of the affected roads, my wife and I know only too well exactly how busy it can be, and how fast some drivers come through, particularly when they're trying to avoid the frequent delays elsewhere. These are usually down to problems on the A40, but issues on roads further afield can have knock-on effects. To echo a point made by others, our roads are also footpaths and, while many drivers show consideration, there are those who feel their need to get to their destination rapidly outweighs everything else. I have been shouted at by an irate driver for having the temerity to delay him by slowing to turn into my own drive! From my roadside point of view, anything which helps to make our village less attractive as a rat-run is to be welcomed.</p>
<p>(12) Local Resident/Member of public, (South Leigh, Chapel Road)</p>	<p>Support – Further to your request for comments for a reduction in speed limits in designated areas in South Leigh I am fully supportive.</p> <p>Having set up Speed Watch in South Leigh I have first hand knowledge of the flagrant disregard by a considerable number of motorists when it comes to speeding through the village.</p> <p>South Leigh is a close knit community that has key hubs, which all involve walking along the roads as residents. Whether going to the Church, the Village Hall, recreation pitch or indeed walking to the bus stop just off the A40 slip road speeding cars are not conducive to ensuring residents can do this safely. The village also attracts a large number of walkers, cyclists and horse riders and our roads need to have a speed limit that will assist in everyone doing this safely.</p> <p>Whilst I recognise the scheme will not resolve the issue in its totality it will at least make motorists more aware and will also enable speed watch to reinforce awareness to those motorists that either don't care about the speed they are doing or unconsciously speed.</p> <p>Having looked at speeding over the last three years it is really important that we try and educate drivers to respect the village and whilst I appreciate reducing the limit to 20mph won't stop speeding entirely it will assist in reducing the speed of cars like it has already proven in Witney and it is another tool we can use to educate and more importantly ensure that everyone using the roads does so safely.</p> <p>When the A40 has been closed and accidents have happened the increased traffic through the village is considerable and the roads are not safe to be travelling at speed. (Closing the Barnard Gate Road junction into South Leigh would benefit the village greatly!)</p>

	<p>As I sit here writing this email I have observed 15 cars doing way and above the 30mph speed limit so I am totally supportive of the scheme as whilst I know of no pedestrian injuries plenty of household pets and wildlife have been killed and in my opinion it is only a matter of time before a pedestrian could be hurt especially along Chapel Road and Station Road where we have a higher population including children.</p> <p>With continuing developments in the wider area and the possibility of an Anaerobic Digester in the village, South Leigh will need to look at all solutions they can to stop rat running and speeding and this is a good starting point to reduce those dangers before perhaps needing to be more creative.</p>
<p>(13) Local Resident/Member of public, (South Leigh)</p>	<p>Support – I wish to record my support of a proposal to introduce 20 MPH in South Leigh, as set out in the relevant documents.</p> <p>As a member of our village SpeedWatch, I can attest that vehicles drive through or village at irresponsible speeds and there will, inevitably, be a nasty accident one day.</p> <p>We have narrow roads, some single track, blind corners and elderly and very young residents. In addition, horses often come through the village.</p> <p>The reduced speed limit will go some way to making or village a little safer.</p>
<p>(14) Local Resident/Member of public, (South Leigh)</p>	<p>Support – We support the proposed 20mph through the village as indicated on the plan. However we are not in favour of traffic calming. Don't feel it is necessary, but would support more consideration being given to walkers through the village. There are few footpaths and it is not always possible to walk on the verges.</p>