CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAY MANAGEMENT – 23 FEBRUARY 2023

STEVENTON: PROPOSED 20MPH & 40MPH SPEED LIMITS

Report by Corporate Director, Environment and Place

RECOMMENDATION

- The Cabinet Member for Highway Management is RECOMMENDED to <u>defer</u> a
 decision to approve the following proposals as advertised pending further
 discussions to assess the acceptability of reduced proposals that meet the
 needs of all parties:
 - a. Village wide 20mph speed limit, and
 - b. 40mph on the B4017 High Street

Executive summary

- 2. The report presents responses to a statutory consultation on the proposed introduction of 20mph speed & 40mph limits in Steventon as shown in **Annexes** 1 to 5.
- 3. The current temporary 20mph & 40mph speed limits in place on the B4017 High Street which were brought in due to ongoing structural issues with the bridge are proposed to be incorporated into the wider proposals as a permanent measure.

Financial Implications

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

Equality and Inclusion Implications

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

Sustainability Implications

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

Formal consultation

7. Formal consultation was carried out between 23 November and 30 December 2022. A notice was published in the Oxfordshire Herald Series 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, Vale of White Horse District Council, the local District Cllrs, Steventon, and Milton parish councils, and the local County Councillor representing the Hendreds & Harwell, and the Sutton Courtenay & Marcham divisions.

Statutory Consultee Responses:

- 8. Three 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. Stagecoach Bus Company do not operate services in Steventon and consider their comments as informative'; they consider 20mph limits to be appropriate in the central area but suggest the proposed extensions into areas with no housing do not meet the terms of the Stockholm Agreement.
- 9. Oxford Bus Company object to the proposals and support the arguments made by Stagecoach in their response. They support the proposed 20mph limits being applied for residential side streets and also support the proposal to extend the existing 20mph section over the rail crossing in Steventon through the High Street up to the junction with The Green.
- 10. However, they object to the proposed 20mph limit on Abingdon Road between the junction with Hanney Road and the Northern edge of the village as it is 600m with no active frontages and with a separate pedestrian footway. Many bus users along this route make relatively long journeys and so protecting and improving bus journey time is paramount, to ensure the service remains relevant and allows the high levels of development planned - and in many cases already happening - in South Oxfordshire to take place without leading to a corresponding increase in private motor traffic.
- 11. They also object to the proposed implementation of a 20mph limit more than 800m in length on Hanney Road which has no active frontages and has a separate pedestrian footway. The service on this route, made feasible by s.106 funding seeks to provide a faster bus link between Wantage and Didcot than was previously possible. There is a significant and growing flow from Wantage and Grove to Didcot for employment reasons, both for jobs at Milton Park and to access rail services to Reading and London, in which the rail operator has made great strides to speed up in recent years. It is therefore important to protect journey times on this corridor and to implement such an excessive length of 20mph restriction, which does not appear to be justified by the rationale as stated in the Stockholm Declaration. We believe that the current proposals would have an adverse impact on the attractiveness of the service

and reduce the possibility of it reaching commercial viability over the medium term, once s106 funds currently supporting the route have been exhausted. **Other Responses:**

12. Sixteen online responses were received during the course of the consultation, and these are summarised in the table below:

Proposal	Object	Concerns	Support	No opinion/ objection	Total
20mph	2 (12.5%)	2 (12.5%)	12 (75%)	-	16
40mph	3 (19%)	5 (31%)	8 (50%)	-	16

- 13.12 respondents expressing support, 2 with concerns and 2 objections. Negative comments included 20 limits not being required in the High St and the majority of major roads, congestion and pollution concerns, and the preference for better enforcement of existing limits. Also, that the proposals will not be effective in reducing speeds and will not prompt a change to more sustainable travel. A member of the public living a distance away submitted their standard objection wording that suggested the proposals to be unnecessary and potentially hazardous including the danger from cyclists overtaking cars adhering to the proposed limits.
- 14. Those who responded online, were also asked whether if the 20mph speed limit proposals were implemented, would it likely influence a change to their mode of travel in the area, the results of which are shown below:

Travel Change	Number
Yes – walk/wheel more	4 (25%)
Yes - cycle more	4 (25%)
No	8 (50%)

15. The responses are shown in **Annex 6**, and copies of the original responses are available for inspection by County Councillors.

Officer response to objections/concerns

- 16. 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'.
- 17. The objections and concerns from the members of the public 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 democratically agreed 20 mph limit policy. However, the nature of both major bus company's objection and concerns suggests they should be considered carefully. There may be merit in further discussions with the local council and member to assess the acceptability of reduced proposals that meet the needs of the bus operator.

Bill Cotton Corporate Director, Environment and Place

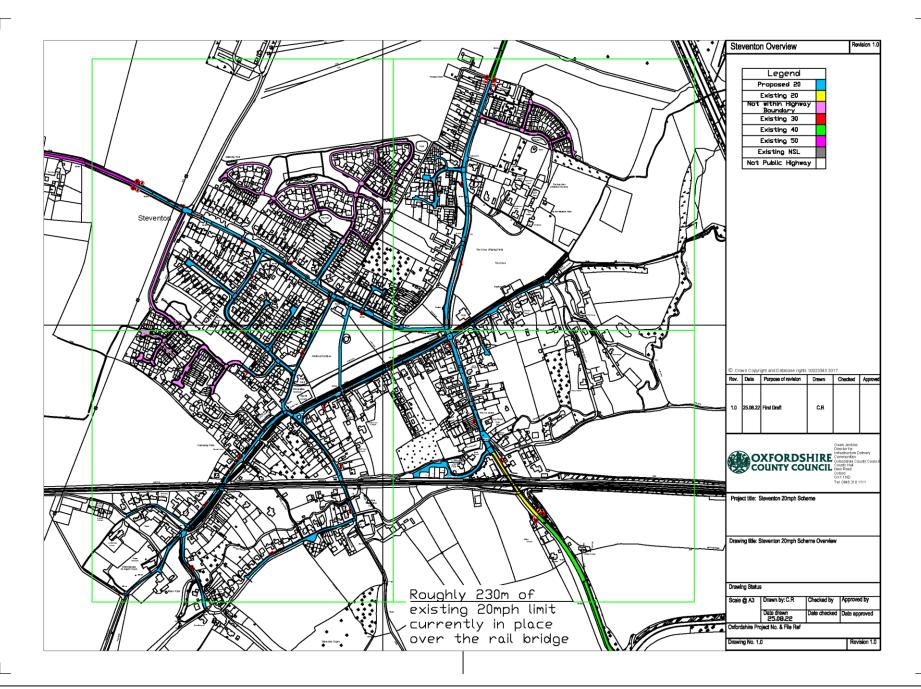
Annexes Annex 1-5: Consultation Plans

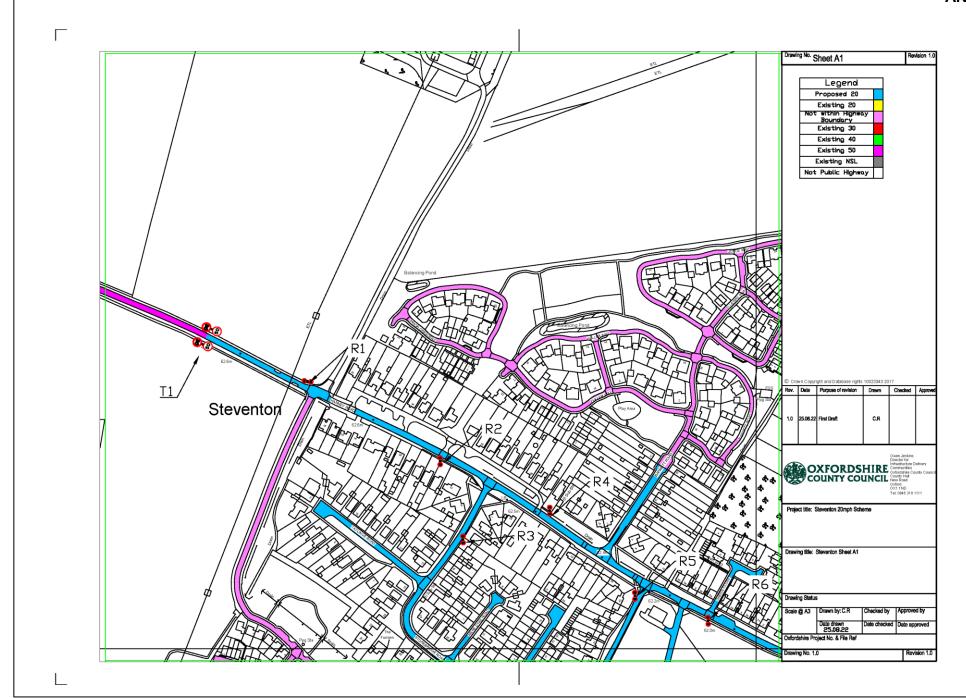
Annex 6: Consultation responses

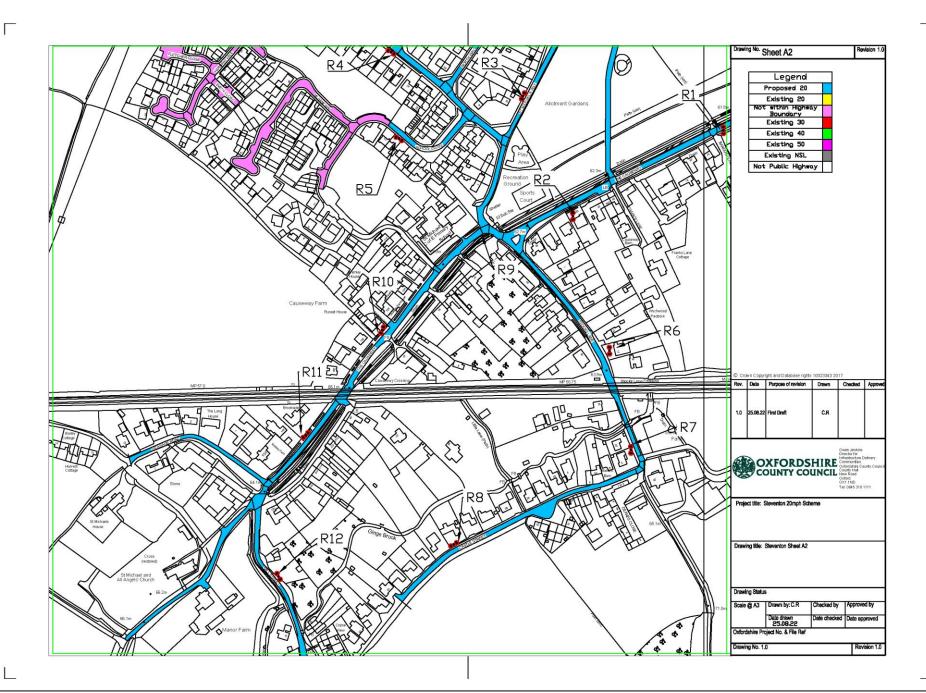
Contact Officers: Tim Shickle 07920 591545

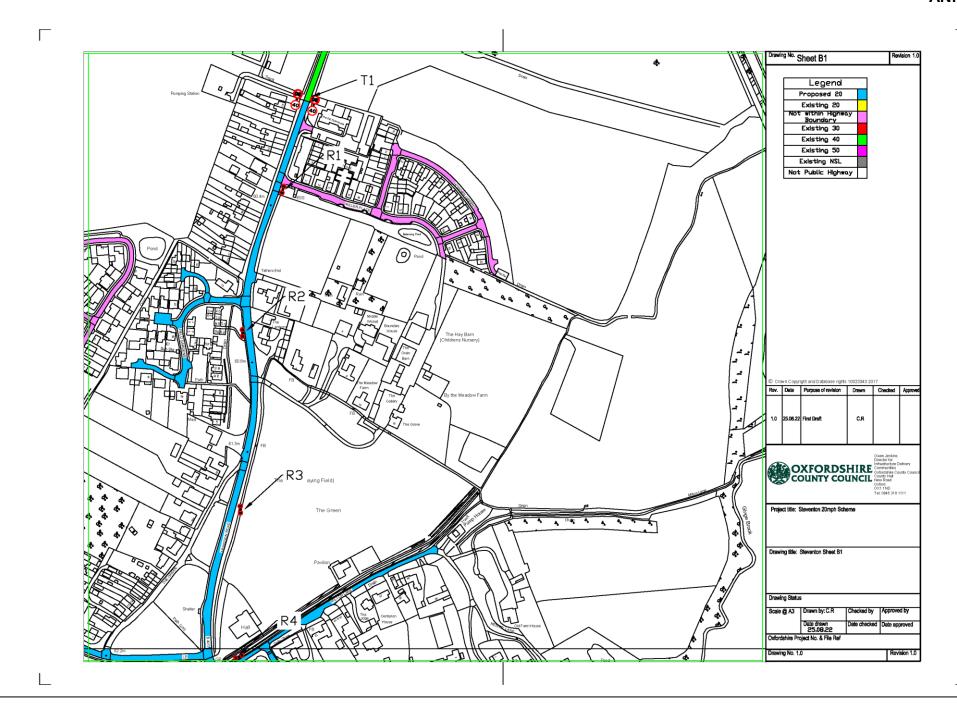
Geoff Barrell 07392 318869

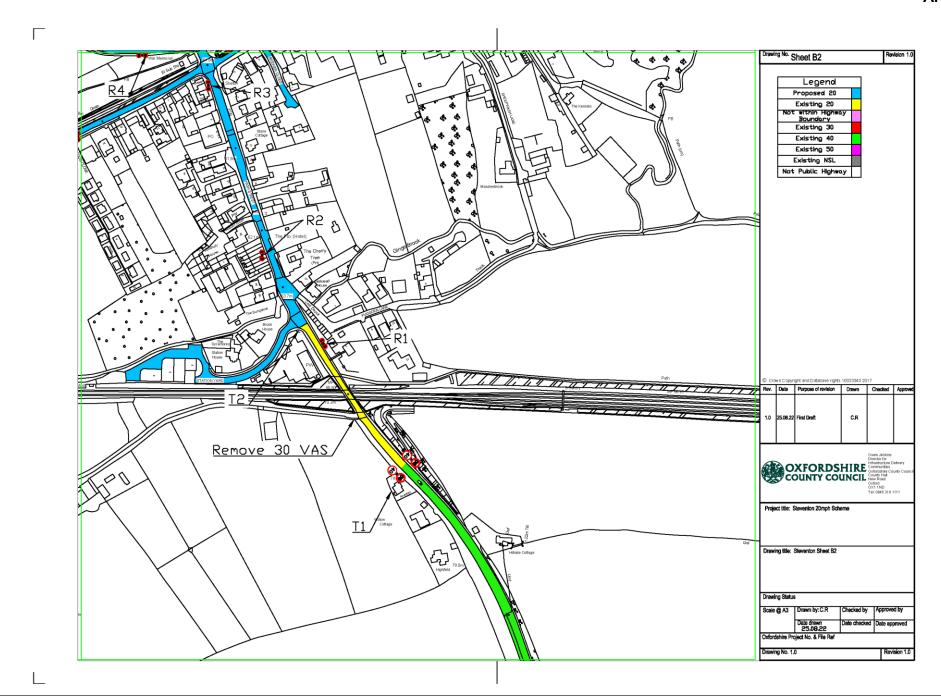
February 2023











RESPONDENT	COMMENTS
	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. 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.
(1) Traffic Management Officer, (Thames Valley Police)	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.
	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.
	The key factors that should be taken into account in any decisions on local speed limits are:
	 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

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 .

Our stance remains that primarily 20 mph speed limits and zones should be self-enforcing

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.

(2) Interim Managing Director, (Oxford Bus

Company)

Object – We understand that Stagecoach has already responded giving extensive context to bus services in Steventon and their development in recent years. We will not repeat these here other than to say that we support the arguments made.

We are supportive of the proposed 20mph limits being applied for residential side streets which are not bus routes.

We are also supportive of the proposal to extend the existing 20mph section over the rail crossing in Steventon through the High Street up to the junction with The Green. There are a number of active frontages in this area such as the Co-Op store and two public houses, which increase the level of mixing between motorised traffic and more vulnerable road users. Therefore, we support the proposed implementation of a 20mph limit in this area.

However, we wish to object to the proposed implementation of a 20mph limit on Abingdon Road between the junction with Hanney Road and the Northern edge of the village. This is a long section of road some 600m long, with no active frontages and with separate pedestrian footway in place. This road is served by 3 buses per hour in the form of the X2 route, one of the fastest growing bus routes in Oxfordshire and one which forms a key role in supporting the science vale economy in south Oxfordshire, linking Abingdon, Steventon and Drayton to the rail heads at Oxford and Didcot and to the major employment centres at Oxford city centre and Milton Park. Many users of this route make relatively long journeys and so protecting and improving bus journey time is paramount, to ensure the service remains relevant

and allows the high levels of development planned - and in many cases already happening - in South Oxfordshire to take place without leading to a corresponding increase in private motor traffic.

We also wish to object to the proposed implementation of a 20mph limit more than 800m in length on Hanney Road. Again this section of has no active frontages and has a separate pedestrian footway in place. After a gap of almost a decade, we successfully re-established a bus service on this road in early 2021 with the commencement of the half hourly X36 service between Wantage and Didcot, a development that was made possible by the use of s106 funds by Oxfordshire County Council. One of the key aims in establishing this service was to provide a faster bus link between Wantage and Didcot than was previously possible using pre-existing bus services, as generally these diverted via Harwell Campus and so did not offer attractive end-to-end journey times against private motor vehicles. There is a significant and growing flow from Wantage and Grove to Didcot for employment reasons, both for jobs at Milton Park and to access rail services to Reading and London, in which the rail operator has made great strides to speed up in recent years. It is therefore important to protect journey times on this corridor and to implement such an excessive length of 20mph restriction, which does not appear to be justified by the rationale as stated in the Stockholm Declaration. It is our conjecture that proceeding to implement the 20mph scheme as proposed would have a material adverse impact on the attractiveness of the X36 and would materially reduce the possibility of this route reaching commercial viability over the medium term, once s106 funds currently supporting the route have been exhausted.

(3) Head of Strategic Development and the Built Environment, (Stagecoach Bus Company) **No objection** – These comments should be read as an informative.

Steventon is a substantial settlement that has seen significant consolidation in recent years. It benefits from a relatively high level of bus service both in terms of the level of connectivity, journey time and frequency on offer - a rather privileged position. In line with the County's own policies and the Science Vale Transport strategy - which places substantial weight on improving the options to reduce the exceptionally high car dependence of this fast-developing part of the County - these services have been progressively improved, partly with County Council financial support.

This is a part of the County where the Council can point to some of the best outcomes of policy seeking to create a substantial improvement in bus services. Indeed, we would say that the Science Vale area ought to be considered a national exemplar of coordinated bus network improvements in support of high levels of employment and population growth, with a view to damping dependency on car use and achieving wider mode shift.

Stagecoach is not an operator of any of the services in Steventon itself since Jan 2022. However, we are keen to ensure that the Council as a matter of principle, pays full regard to the way in which this policy is implemented across

the County with a view to ensuring that there are no unnecessary or undue negative impacts on the ability of bus operators to provide relevant bus services that can be economically sustained in the future. We trust that the Council will pay particular regard to representations made by the current operator of the bus services in Steventon.

We would say that the proposals are extensive. Relatively long stretches of bus route are involved. These routes operate regularly, magnifying the potential impact as buses pass through the area multiple times per hour on a given route.

While the historic core of the village has an intimate form and is already in part subject to a 20mph limit, this contrasts strongly with the settlement form and character further north. There are extensive stretches proposed for 20mph limits that do not even involve direct frontage access to properties, which are set well back from the carriageway. The roads are straight an in the case of Abingdon Road in particular relatively wide (it was a former trunk road). Forward visibility is therefore generally very good.

Looking at the adopted "Stockholm Declaration" on which the Council's policy is based, it is unclear that large amounts of "planned mixing" take place along these stretches as there are few if any commercial premises or major services accessible along them. Indeed, there are not even formal pedestrian crossings. This is strong circumstantial evidence that the Council has not to date been of the view that managing conflicts between significant numbers of active travel modes and vehicular traffic has been a high priority. It is also not clear how easy the limits would be to self-enforce. Speed cushions on Hanney Road to help maintain a 30mph limit in place today indicate this strongly. Thus, the effectiveness of the proposals along these stretches raises some questions.

Especially when considered in combination with Abingdon, Grove, Drayton and other settlements through which these longer-distance bus services pass, in our analysis the cumulative impacts of this approach if replicated elsewhere would be likely to have a material impact on bus operating economics.

We operated through Steventon until Jan 2022. Were we still operating we would urge that 30 mph limits were retained on Abingdon Road and Hanney Road north and west of the junction of Abingdon Road and Hanney Road.

We recognise that pred and cycle facilities are relatively poor, though footways do exist. It is regrettable that despite substantial residential development consented since 2012 the opportunity was not taken by the Council to seek upgrades to off-carriageway pedestrian and cycle provision along these roads. However it is evident that space exists for improved facilities to be delivered. That said key walking and cycling routes to the Primary school cross rather than pass along Hanney Road, and on Abingdon Road for a significant distance it would be more logical to take the shortest road along the edge of the Green west of Abingdon Road.

	In line with these comments, we therefore would urge the Council to pay especially careful regard to the representations made by the bus operators directly concerned to ensure that an appropriate balance is achieved, and that the policy is effectively achieved, without disproportionate negative impacts on the future delivery of bus services on the corridors concerned, undermining the achievement of national and County Council policy concerning public transport.
(4) Local Resident/Member of public, (Moulsford, Ferry Lane)	20mph - Object The 20mph proposals are in nobody's interest. As a motorist I always strive to strictly observe 20mph limits just as I observe other limits, but it usually leads to a very unpleasant driving experience owing to tailgaters, and often leads to dangerous overtakes by less patient drivers. As a pedestrian, when stepping into or crossing a road I certainly won't simply assume that oncoming traffic is crawling along at 20mph, just because there's a 20mph sign. Most traffic will be going much faster and therefor there is absolutely no benefit to the pedestrians - we still have to treat all traffic as travelling at similar speeds to a 30mph limit. Even worse, just occasionally, a vehicle will turn out to be actually driving at 20mph thereby causing me to wait longer for it to pass, before I can safely cross behind it. Regarding speed limit TROs, they have no legal significance for cyclists, yet many reasonably fit cyclists often exceed 20mph. This will give rise to the bizarre situation whereby those few motorists who actually observe the limit could find ourselves tailgated by impatient cyclists and when assisted by a slight gradient, perhaps even overtaken by cyclists -which is highly unlikely to be a safe manoeuvre. It may also give rise to a further temptation for cyclists to illegally ride on the footway, if it allows them to get past 20mph traffic more easily. Travel change: No 40mph - Object This proposals for 20mph limits are in nobody's interest. As a motorist I always strive to strictly observe 20mph limits just as I observe other limits, but it usually leads to a very unpleasant driving experience owing to tailgaters, and often leads to dangerous overtakes by less patient drivers. As a pedestrian, when stepping into or crossing a road I certainly won't simply assume that oncoming traffic is

	crawling along at 20mph, just because there's a 20mph sign. Most traffic will be going much faster and therefor there is absolutely no benefit to pedestrians - we still have to treat all traffic as travelling at similar speeds to a 30mph limit. Even worse, just occasionally, a vehicle will turn out to be actually driving at 20mph thereby causing me to wait longer for it to pass, before I can safely cross behind it. An even more nightmarish outcome will be that 20mph limits instil a sense of entitlement to pedestrians, especially children, who may be unaware of the Highway Code. Contrary to urban myth, HC never confers 'right of way' to anybody, even to pedestrians crossing in front of traffic subjected to specific speed limits. In the event of conflict the driver may be prosecuted, but the pedestrian will still be injured, or worse. Regarding speed limit TROs in general they have no legal significance for cyclists, yet many reasonably fit cyclists often exceed 20mph. This will give rise to the bizarre situation whereby those few motorists who actually observe the limit could find ourselves tailgated by impatient cyclists and when assisted by a slight gradient, perhaps even overtaken by cyclists - which is highly unlikely to be a safe manoeuvre. It may also give rise to a further temptation for cyclists to illegally ride on the footway, if it allows them to get past 20mph traffic more easily.
(5) Local Resident/Member of public, (Drayton, Steventon)	20mph - Object This limit is too slow for the main road. I think it will cause extra congestion and pollution. I understand and agree with the lower limit for side/estate roads from a safety point of view. Travel change: No 40mph - Support It slows the traffic before it gets to the village
(6) Local Resident/Member of public, (Steventon, The Causeway)	20mph - Concerns 20 in the residential is ok but not on the high Street 30 is fine. Travel change: No 40mph - Object The national speedlight is fine going up the hill. Your spending millions to speed up buses at the top of the hill during rush hours so why slow them down in other places?

20mph - Concerns I think the 30mph limit is adequate for the majority of the main village roads - reducing the speed limit is unlikely to alter the behaviour of motorists passing through who drive far too fast already (better enforcement of the current speed limit would be more effective for this) and I fear it will make traffic congestion even worse. I can't see how altering the speed limit is going to have any impact on the use of public transport. My experience in living or working in other areas is that reducing the speed limit to 20mph has little positive impact. Travel change: No 40mph - Concerns I think this is too fast a speed limit and support the speed limit remaining at 30mph for the majority of Steventon's main roads
20mph - Support As a long term resident of Steventon (over 35 Years), I am concerned about the steadily increasing volume of traffic, particularly the extraordinary high number of HGVs using village roads - made more significant due to the location of the major logistics depot on the Hanney Road on the outskirts of Steventon. These commercial vehicles are of a such a size and the weight that they are damaging the structure of road surfaces, which is turn is causing: - Potential/actual damage to private cars (tyres/ suspension etc.) - Trip hazards for pedestrians when crossing roads, as well as danger for cyclists from potholes - Increased pollution/ deteriorating air quality, which is particularly noticeable at the road junctions - Difficulty in crossing extremely busy roads for parents with buggies and toddlers, the elderly and dog walkers, particularly in rush hour/during school runs These problems are exacerbated, whenever there are delays /accidents on the A34 and vehicles attempt to by-pass the incident by driving through the village. Furthermore the excessive speed of vehicles driving through the village is a significant problem, with drivers failing to keep to the existing 30mph limit. The impact of above is clear and evidenced by the pressing need for a major structural overhaul of the road bridge

	spanning the railway - itself a gateway to the West and South West and an arterial route, which is an important part of the UK's national transport infrastructur. Travel change: Yes – walk/wheel more 40mph - Object Because evidence shows that drivers regularly 'drift' above the statutory speed limit whatever that is, so that means in our village they are actually driving at 45+ over the limit and as evidence shows higher speeds translates to higher incidents and life changing impacts to all parties, including serious injury and fatalities
(9) Local Resident/Member of public, (Steventon, Mere Dyke Road)	20mph - Support Will hopefully create a much nicer and safer environment to encourage active travel Travel change: Yes - cycle more 40mph - Concerns Would much rather see it reduced to 30mph - speeds coming in from Steventon Lights (and Hanney Road although this is currently 50mph I think) are very high so would be much safer to reduce to 30mph.
(10) Local Resident/Member of public, (Steventon, Steventon Hill)	20mph - Support The danger & noise from speeding vehicles consistently disturbs and threatens the lives of the residents of Steventon. The HGVs that drive through the village are noisy - more so, the faster they go. Cars and motorcycles regularly speed through the village- changing the speed limit won't stop these, but will hopefully make them think. Lowering the speed limit will reduce pollution & will improve the lives of residents. Please take a very close look at the number & size of the LGVs & HGVs that use Steventon's roads in high numbers. There needs to be action taken to reduce the size & number of vehicles allowed to use Steventon - the pathways are narrow & lives are endangered on a daily basis. Steventon should not have to put up with the big heavy, dangerous lorries travelling through it. We have had enough. Travel change: No 40mph - Concerns

	It should be 30. Slow the drivers down before they get to the 20. Drivers regularly speed down the hill. Signs are needed to warn about the speed limit change.)
(11) Local Resident/Member of public, (Steventon, The Hill)	20mph - Support I walk along the pavements of Steventon every single day. They are narrow in places and I would feel much safer if the speed limit was lowered. The roads through Steventon are inappropriately used by Heavy Goods vehicles, tipper trucks, scaffolding lorries - very few of these are travelling slower than the high 20s and above. Everyone will be safer if the speed limit gets reduced to 20mph. Something should also be done about the high number of HGVs etc using a village's roads. Their continued use of the roads is endangering the lives of the residents of Steventon. Travel change: Yes – walk/wheel more 40mph - Concerns I think it might be better if the speed limit was 30mph coming down the hill into Steventon. You would have more chance of people slowing down before the bridge to 20mph. We also really need signs that say "New Speed limit ahead" or similar to warn people that the speed limit is going down to 20
(12) Local Resident/Member of public, (Steventon, High Street)	20mph - Support Excellent and welcomed plan of action. There is far too much speeding in the village. Heavy speeding vehicles on the High Street cause my house to vibrate. Travel change: Yes - cycle more 40mph - Concerns Should only be 30mph. 40mph is too fast for a small village.
(13) Local Resident/Member of public, (Steventon, Field Gardens)	20mph - Support There is a material need to reduce the speed of drivers passing through the village. Drivers passing through the village at a slower pace will be more inclined to stop for pedestrians at the zebra crossing. They routinely do not. Travel change: No

	40mph - Support The higher speed trevelled down the hill towards the village certainly influence the rate at which people enter the village, especially when there is little traffic. A reduced speed limit will help mitigate risks
(14) Local Resident/Member of public, (Steventon, High Street)	20mph - Support * To slow down the speed of traffic generally through Steventon and particularly along the High Street where there is a pedestrian crossing at which motorists frequently don't stop for pedestrians. * To make it safer for pedestrians and cyclists through the village. * To slow down the large number of HGVs which pass through the village going to and from the storage depot in the Hanney Road. Travel change: Yes - cycle more 40mph - Support 40 mph on Steventon Hill would slow down traffic coming into the village and combined with 20 mph through the village make Steventon a safer and more pleasant place for all road users and residents.
(15) Local Resident/Member of public, (Steventon, Milbank Way)	20mph - Support Traffic through the village is very heavy. Pavements are narrow, and large vehicles (HGVs and buses) cause quite a side draft to pedestrians and cyclists. There is currently an issue with speeding in the village - as a member of the community speed watch group, I regularly record vehicles at well over the current 30mph speed limit, including near to the 2 zebra crossings. Travel change: Yes – walk/wheel more 40mph - Support The temporary 40mph currently on the hill has seen traffic slow down better before entering the village at the bridge. This should be made permanent
(16) Local Resident/Member of	20mph - Support

public, (Steventon, Prior Crescent)	Too many idiots speeding/ hurtling down Steventon Hill - dangerous to everyone as they approach the zebra crossing by the Co-Op Travel change: Yes - cycle more 40mph - Support 40mph is perfectly fine, and readies drivers for 20mph zone further along
(17) Local Resident/Member of public, (Steventon, Castle Street)	20mph - Support There are a lot of inconsiderate drivers who do not observe the current 30mph, ignore speed signs and have no respect for pedestrian crossings. In addition there are a large number of HGV movements through the village. Travel change: No 40mph - Support The current 40mph entry to the village is working.
(18) Local Resident/Member of public, (Steventon, High Street)	20mph - Support Excessive noise and vibrations from cars and HGVs in particular Travel change: No 40mph - Support It will reduce the speed of vehicles entering the village
(19) Local Resident/Member of public(Steventon, Oxfordshire, Hanney Road)	20mph - Support I live and work on the Hanney Road in Steventon of which people think is a race track. I would love to see this road reduced to a 20mph speed limit. Travel change: Yes - walk/wheel more 40mph - Support

The road is to fast for more than 40 mph. People use it way to fast
The road is to last for more than 40 mph. Feople use it way to last