

Divisions affected: *Shrivenham*

**CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAY MANAGEMENT –
12 OCTOBER 2023**

WATCHFIELD: PROPOSED 20MPH SPEED LIMITS

Report by Corporate Director, Environment and Place

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Cabinet Member for Highway Management is RECOMMENDED to approve the introduction of 20mph speed limits in Watchfield as advertised.

Executive summary

2. The report presents responses to a statutory consultation on the proposed introduction of 20mph speed limits in Watchfield 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 Watchfield by making them safer and more attractive.

Formal consultation

6. Formal consultation was carried out between 17 August and 08 September 2023. A notice was published in the Oxford Times 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, Watchfield parish council,

Shrivenham parish council, and the local County Councillor representing the Shrivenham division.

Statutory Consultee Responses:

7. Thames Valley Police were the only statutory consultee respondent. They reiterated their views concerning OCC's policy and practice regarding 20mph speed limits, they consider their view as 'having concerns' rather than an objection.

Other Responses:

8. 28 online responses & one email were received, with 13 local residents in support - including two who had labelled their response as 'concerns'. There were three further expressions of concern, and 12 objections - one from a member of the public, another from someone who wished to remain anonymous, and the remaining ten from local residents. One respondent had no view either way.
9. The following table is a synopsis of the objections and concerns with the views of some respondents covering more than one category.

View/Opinion	Number of responses
Not necessary	10
Lower limit also required on Major's Road	3
No safety justification	4
No one will comply	2
Increased congestion	2
Increased pollution	1
Fear of loss of bus services – bus company view is paramount	1
Fear it will lead to 15 minute towns like Oxford initiative	1

10. The statutory consultee response is shown in **Annex 2**, and copies of the original responses are available for inspection by County Councillors.

Officer response to objections/concerns

11. The main purpose of the scheme is to encourage greater use of active travel by reducing speeds; this is also expected to 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 help reduce the Counties carbon footprint. This forms part of a countywide programme of works that seeks to deliver 'a safer place with a safer pace'.

12. The authority considers objections along the lines of it being unjustified, anti-car, a waste of money, not enforceable or pointless to not warrant amendments to a proposal. As such the authority has not addressed any specific comments made of this nature in this report.

13. The 29 public responses indicate an almost even split between support and objection, but only represent approx 0.5% of Watchfield's total population.

Bill Cotton
Corporate Director, Environment and Place

Annexes Annex 1: Consultation plan
 Annex 2: Consultation responses

Contact Officers: Phil Whitfield 07912523497
 Geoff Barrell 07392 318869

October 2023

Watchfield Overview

REVISION 1.0

Legend	
Proposed 20	
Existing 20	
Existing 30	
Existing 40	
Existing NSL	
Private Rd	

© Crown Copyright and Database rights 10023843 2017

Rev.	Date	Purpose of revision	Drawn	Checked	Approved
1.0	18.05.23	First Draft	C.R		

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
 Owen Jenkins
 Director for
 Infrastructure Delivery
 Communities
 Oxfordshire County Council
 County Hall
 New Road
 Oxford
 OX1 1HD
 Tel: 0845 310 1111

Project title: Watchfield 20mph Scheme

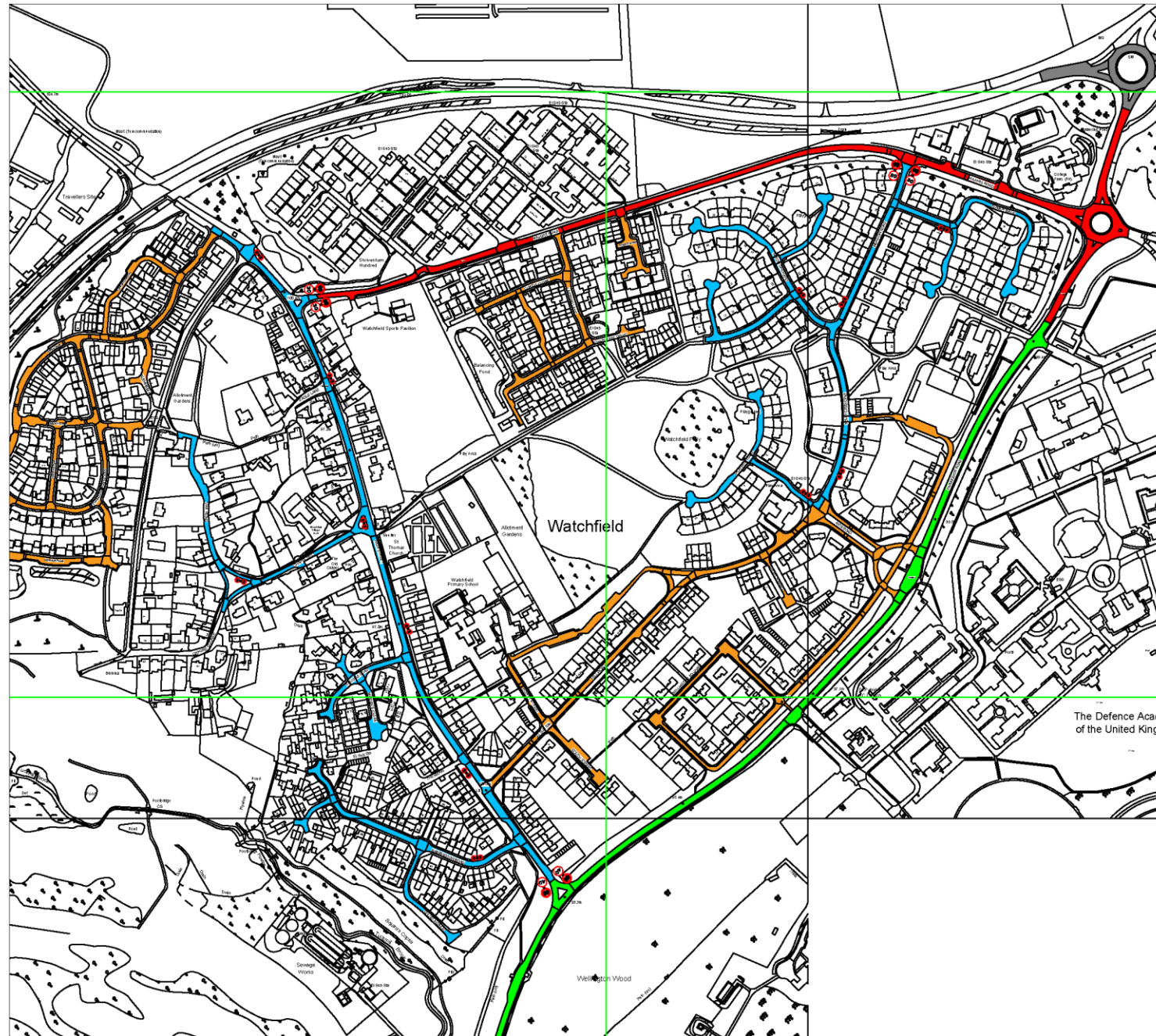
Drawing title: Watchfield 20mph Scheme Overview

Drawing Status

Scale @ A3	Drawn by: C.R	Checked by: GJB	Approved by: GJB
	Date drawn: 18.05.23	Date checked: 18.05.23	Date approved: 18.05.23

Oxfordshire Project No. & File Ref

Drawing No. 1.0	Revision 1.0
-----------------	--------------



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 .</p> <p>Compliance with new speed 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. 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 (Speed data received would support a lower speed limit) • 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>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) Rather not say, (Nailsea)</p>	<p>Object- I object to the proposed lowering of the speed limit. The entire premise seems to rely on the assumption that those who drive at unsafe speeds do so primarily due to a lack of signage instructing them otherwise. As far as I am aware, speed limits are in place to identify and penalize reckless driving in any situation.</p> <p>The determination of whether someone driving below 25 mph is driving recklessly should depend entirely on the prevailing conditions and factors such as sightlines ahead of the driver. Speed limits are designed to assume ideal conditions, and therefore, individuals driving well below 25 mph should not always be considered reckless. Speed limits should serve solely as a tool to address unsafe driving, not as an encouragement for any specific speed or alternative mode of transportation.</p> <p>It's worth noting that these speed limit reduction schemes often gain popularity based on the assumption that they will deter individuals who treat the road as a racetrack. I would also like to reference DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT CIRCULAR ROADS 1/80: THE EFFECT OF ALTERING LEVELS OF SPEED LIMITS: SUMMARY OF EXPERIENCE, which states, 'It is a common but mistaken belief that drivers allow themselves a set margin over the prevailing speed limit, and that if a limit is raised by 10 mph, they will travel 10 mph faster. In fact, an increase in an unrealistic speed limit rarely brings an increase in traffic speeds.'</p>
<p>(3) Local Resident, (Watchfield, Anson Drive)</p>	<p>Object - It makes no sense. It is a very quiet road with very few cars with lots of on the road parking that already slows down the traffic and zero accidents. Focus on more important things, like the junction of A420 and great coxwell. Very difficult to get out with cars going at 60mph especially in the morning and afternoon when schools and nurseries are opening and closing. That one is an accident waiting to happen.</p>

(4) Member of public, (Watchfield, Barrington Road)	Object - It seems unnecessary. I drive through that area frequently and there are never any children playing. .
(5) Local Resident, (Watchfield, Beverley Road)	Object - Absolutely no need - no excess speeding happens on these roads.
(6) Local Resident, (Watchfield, Lapwing Lane)	Object - The High Street in Watchfield is wide enough for a 30mph limit. Rarely do you see pedestrians on the High Street except around the school opening and closing times. It may be of more benefit to have a 20mph speed limit on the High Street close to the walk to and from school, between the hours of 8:30 to 9:30am and 2:45pm to 3:45pm. Any other times is completely unnecessary. I also note it is intended to keep the 40mph limit on Majors Road heading into the village from the Co-op, and alongside the Shrivenham 100 Business Park. In recent years there have been 2 small housing estates built opposite the Business Park, as well as the housing estate next to the A420 off Watchfield High Street. Accordingly, many more people including children, are walking down Majors Road to the shops, bus stops, College Farm pub, etc, including in the dark in the winter time. The path and this part of Majors Road can be quite narrow considering the number of cars parking along there at certain times of the day, with traffic driving considerably higher than 40mph. Traffic calming is required on this part of the road, as well as a reduction in the limit along there to 30mph.
(7) Local Resident, (Watchfield)	Object - It could not help to increase safety but cause congestion in the narrow streets only.
(8) Local Resident, (Watchfield, Queens Close)	Object - 30 is fine
(9) Local Resident, (Watchfield, Star Lane)	Object - More air pollution,busy roads
(10) Local Resident, (Watchfield, High Street)	Object - The 20mph zones make way for the 15min towns etc which I do not want
(11) Local Resident, (Watchfield, Oxford Square)	Object - I have never experienced speeding in Watchfield and drivers are sticking to the 30mph and lower where necessary. Obviously if these circumstances changed then this could be looked at again. In my opinion 'if it isn't broke don't fix it'!!
(12) Local Resident, (Watchfield)	Object - There hasn't been any occasions or accidents to support this. Majors road already has big speed bumps!

<p>(13) Local Resident, (Watchfield)</p>	<p>Object – Please do not reduce the speed limit to 20 mph; as far as I know the only RTA fatality was due to a child running across the Shrivenham > Watchfield Road from behind a bus, thus giving the driver no chance to avoid him.</p> <p>The point being is that, apart from the above, which is not in village, we haven't had any RTAs. We don't need a 20 mph limit which would likely cause driver frustration. We haven't had any accidents.</p> <p>What would be far better for all motorists is if OCC cleaned the road signs, cut the foliage away where necessary & in particular cut the plants, trees etc on the roundabout outside the Defence Academy. This is now so overgrown that reportedly a (foreign ?) D.A. student drove the wrong way round it. Approaching from Shrivenham the directional sign is totally hidden due plant etc growth. None of the directions signs on the base of this roundabout have been painted in years.</p> <p>This r - about is a genuine hazard - as are various foliage hidden road signs, whilst the existing 30 mph limit is only seen as a hazard, despite there being no accidents. Would OCC please attend to that which needs attention rather than inventing new ways to spend our money on politically topical & feel good schemes.</p>
<p>(14) Local Resident, (Watchfield, Queens Close)</p>	<p>Concerns - I live off Majors Road (Queens Close). Majors Road is one of the most dangerous roads in Watchfield. The amount of traffic generated by the business park, but especially as the 'blind' hill coming up from College Farm and the no of parked cars on the road, make it quite dangerous. Motorists do not stick to the 30 mph limit, would they stick to 20, I doubt it, but it might slow traffic down. Could it be reconsidered to make Majors Road 20 mph?</p>
<p>(15) Local Resident, (Watchfield, Queens Close)</p>	<p>Concerns - Majors Road is a 30 speed limit and is used as a race track now. Very few people stick to that speed and no one actually does anything about it so there is no way they will adhere to 20mph unless there are speed cameras or speed traps.</p>
<p>(16) Local Resident, (Watchfield, Queens Close)</p>	<p>Concerns - Majors Road needs to be 20mph</p>
<p>(17) Local Resident, (Watchfield, Barrington Road)</p>	<p>Concerns - I feel 30 mph is a safe enough speed.</p>

(18) Local Resident, (Watchfield, Curtis Close)	Concerns- I feel it is vital that the bus service to the village (along the High Street and Majors Road) is maintained. There is already an over-long stretch of 20mph in Shrivenham so, for me, the bus company's view is of paramount importance.
(19) Local Resident, (Shrivenham, Sand Hill)	Support - Speed limit needs to be lowered
(20) Local Resident, (Watchfield, Barrington Road)	Support - Why not it's a no brainer for the heart of the village
(21) Local Resident, (Watchfield, Barrington Road)	Support - To make it safer for my children to cross the road to school
(22) Local Resident, (Watchfield, Charlesby Drive)	Support - I feel Major's Road from the roundabout to the business park needs to be 20 also! This is where cars pick up speed and often come past Lapwing Lane at 40+ mph! It is an accident waiting to happen. People also park along it, with the view being blocked when pulling out of Lapwing Lane, mostly from lack of parking from the business park. If you are thinking of keeping the speed as it is, then consider double yellows to make it safer then please, as the people that work at the business park drive faster than 30mph! Rush hour it is crazy here!
(23) Local Resident, (Watchfield, Curtis Close)	Support - Roads would be better suited to 20mph - may encourage faster drivers to slow down, especially along the high street and majors road
(24) Local Resident, (Watchfield, High Street)	Support - For much of the time, down to the proliferation of privately owned vehicles parked on the side of the road, the roads are effectively single track.
(25) Local Resident, (Watchfield, Lysander Crescent)	Support - To force people to slow down in the village and make it safer
(26) Local Resident, (Watchfield, The Mews)	Support - Dye to cars parked on roads and children playing, would be better to have a 20 in the High Street.

(27) Local Resident, (Watchfield, Barrington Road)	Support - A crossing on the highstreet road so children can access a safer way to travel to and from school would be good
(28) Local Resident, (Watchfield, Curtis Close)	Support - Safer roads for children. Too many people drive far too fast through the village
(29) Local Resident, (Watchfield, Lysander Crescent)	Support - The village needs to keep everyone safe, some drive far too fast as it is .
(30) Local Resident, (Watchfield, Hill Road)	No opinion - Watchfield is congested, you can barely get above the 15mph which we abide by on the military estate. However there will be those who take no notice and will do as they wish, so in a sense it's pointless - much like the extension of the 20mph in Shrivenham which has seen a few close calls - safe drivers will follow rules and take due care!