

CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT – 11 JANUARY 2018
HARWELL LINK ROAD AND B4493 WANTAGE ROAD DIDCOT /
HARWELL – PROPOSED 50MPH AND 30MPH SPEED LIMITS

Report by Director for Infrastructure Delivery

Introduction

1. The report presents responses received to a statutory consultation on a proposal to introduce a 50mph speed limit on the new Harwell Link Road (due to be opened in mid-January 2018) and replace the existing length of 40mph speed limit between Didcot and Harwell by a 30mph speed limit.

Background

2. The above proposals have been put forward as part of the Harwell Link Road project; plans showing the proposals are provided at Annex 1 & 2; they were previously consulted on in November 2015. However, a further consultation is required due to the completion date of the project exceeding the two year expiration period from the start of the previous consultation on 4 November 2015.

Consultation

3. Formal consultation on the proposal was carried out between 21 June 2017 and 21 July 2017. A public notice was placed in the Didcot Herald & Oxford Times newspapers and sent to statutory consultees, including Thames Valley Police, the Fire & Rescue Service, Ambulance service, South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse District Councils, Didcot Town Council, Sutton Courtenay, Milton and Harwell Parish Councils and the local County Councillors.
4. Twenty-six responses were received, comprising three objections to the proposed 50mph speed limit and three objections to the proposed 30mph. These responses are summarised at Annex 3 with copies of the full responses available for inspection by County Councillors.
5. Thames Valley Police expressed no objection to either proposal but did request that speed data should be obtained following the opening of the link road. Didcot Town Council, while expressing no objection, did nevertheless question why a 50mph speed limit was required on the link road, give their expectation that the design of the new road should provide for the speed limit to be set at the National Speed Limit (60mph).

6. The remaining twenty-four responses were from members of the public, comprising three objections, seven expressions of support and fourteen 'no objections' to the proposed 50mph speed limit, and three objections, twelve expressions of support and nine 'no objections' to the proposed 30mph speed limit.

Response to objections and other comments

7. The response from Thames Valley Police is noted, and it is confirmed that a speed survey will be carried out on the link road following its opening. In respect of Didcot Town Council's comment that the new link road should have been designed to accommodate the national speed limit, land and other constraints relating to the alignment of the new road did not make this feasible.
8. The three objections from members of the public in respect of the 50mph included concerns that it would encourage speeding along the adjacent 30mph roads and, therefore, that a 40mph speed limit would be preferable; traffic problems are only observed during rush hour when it would in any case be difficult for traffic to travel at 50mph and that it was a waste of money, with it being preferable that resources would be better allocated to police enforcement to address bad driving that posed a risk to cyclists. One member of the public expressing support for the 50mph speed limit nevertheless commented that it would be preferable for this to commence approximately 100 metres south of the Harwell – Didcot road, to help ensure that speeds were reduced for the benefit of pedestrians cursing in the vicinity of the roundabout.
9. In respect of the above objections and comments, it is considered that the proposed 50mph speed limit is appropriate taking account of the alignment of the new link road and similarly that the terminal point just south of the new roundabout junction with the Harwell-Didcot road is consistent with normal practice.
10. The objections to the 30mph comprised one expressing the view that it was a waste of money, with it being preferable that resources would be better allocated to police enforcement addressing bad driving that posed a risk to cyclists; a further response also relating to cycle safety, but requesting a good standard of off –road cycle track provision, and finally a response expressing concerns over additional journey time for motorists.
11. The above objections in relation to cycling are noted, but while it's accepted that further measures to improve safety for cyclists are desirable, these objections are not considered a reason for not progressing the 30mph speed limit. Similarly the concern over additional journey time is noted but taking account of the extent of the proposed change, this is not considered to be a significant issue.

How the Project supports LTP4 Objectives

12. The proposals would help facilitate the safe movement of traffic.

Financial and Staff Implications (including Revenue)

13. Funding for the amended speed limit has been provided as part of Oxfordshire County Council's Harwell Link Road project.

RECOMMENDATION

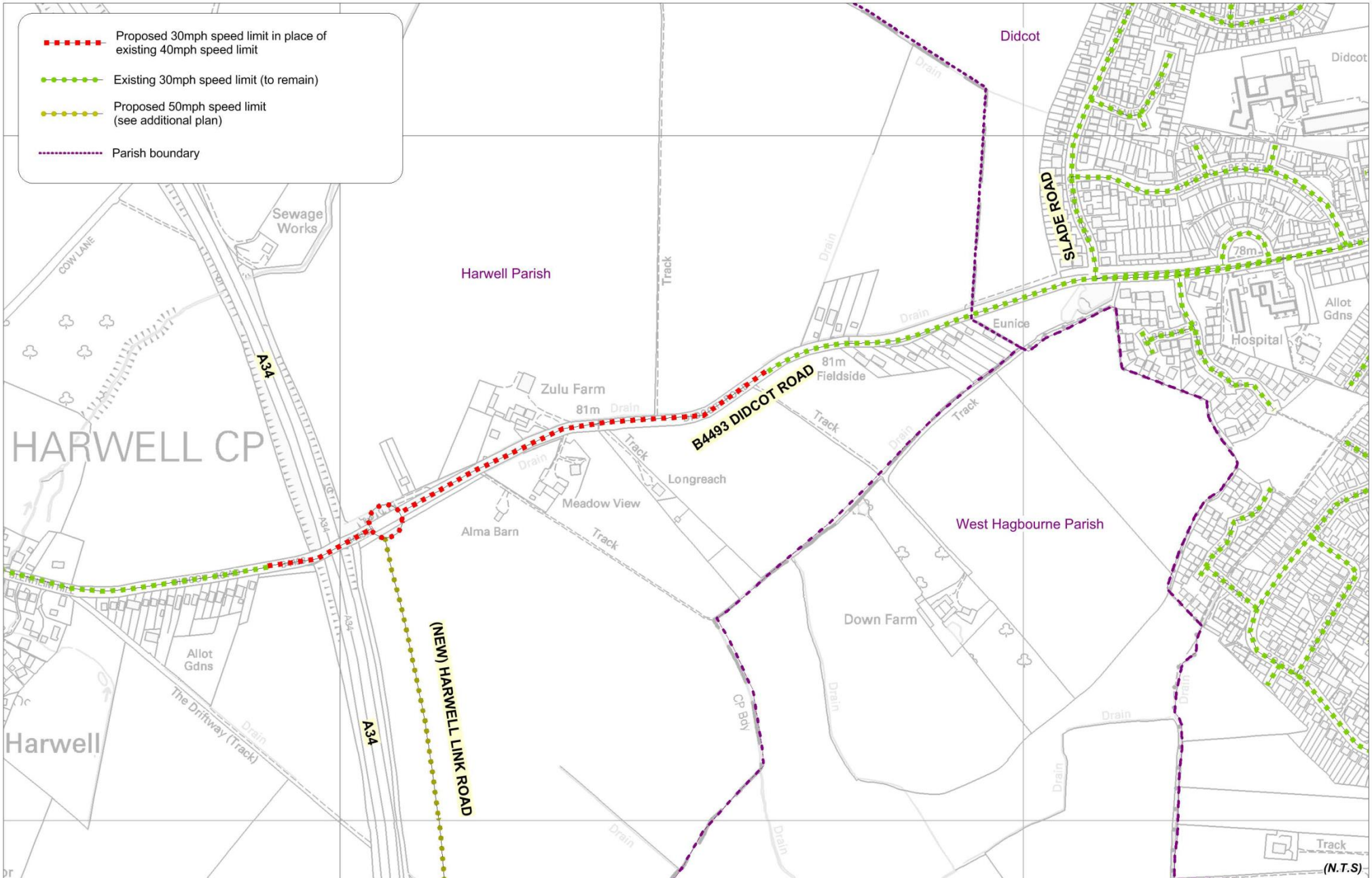
14. **The Cabinet Member for the Environment is RECOMMENDED to approve proposals to introduce a 50mph speed limit on the new Harwell Link Road (due to be opened in mid-January 2018) and replace the existing length of 40mph speed limit between Didcot and Harwell by a 30mph speed limit as advertised.**

OWEN JENKINS
Director for Infrastructure Delivery

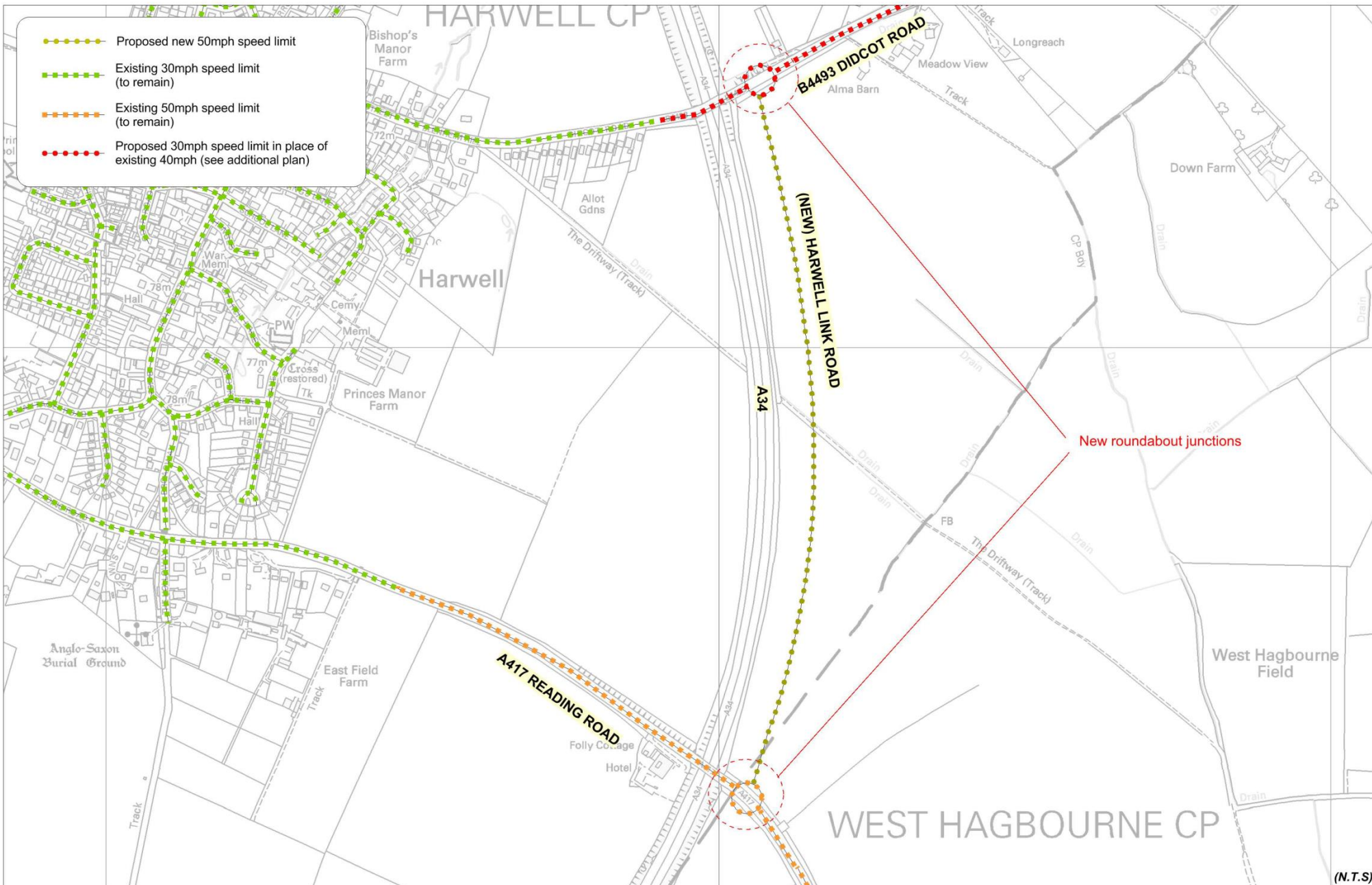
Background papers: Plan of proposed 50mph and 30mph speed limits
 Consultation responses

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RESPONDENT	SUMMARISED COMMENTS
(1) Didcot Town Council	<p><u>Proposed 50mph</u> – Neither - As a new road, Didcot Town Council does not see a need for the speed limit to be set below 60mph.</p> <p><u>Proposed 30mph</u> – No objection – Although Didcot Town Council wishes to raise a wider concern about Oxfordshire County Council’s priorities regarding road safety. It would prefer that the County Council not pursue ad hoc reductions in speed limits and instead agree to implement necessary road safety measures outside of Didcot’s schools.</p>
(2) Traffic Management Officer, (Thames Valley Police)	<p><u>Proposed 50mph</u> – No objection - I accept the Harwell by Pass is still under construction.</p> <p><u>Proposed 30mph</u> – No objection – In principle I do not object to your other proposals providing the necessary speed data has already been gathered. And that data fully supports these speed limits.</p>
(3) Local Resident, (The Cleave, Harwell)	<p><u>Proposed 50mph</u> - Support – The northernmost 100 metres of the link road should be part of the 30mph limit for the B4493, rather than having the limit change to 30mph at the roundabout itself. This would help pedestrians who will need to cross the link road at the roundabout when using the footpath along the B4493 to/from Harwell.</p> <p><u>Proposed 30mph</u> - Support – (Same as above)</p>
(4) Online response, (unknown)	<p><u>Proposed 50mph</u> - Neither – <i>No comment.</i></p> <p><u>Proposed 30mph</u> - Neither – <i>No comment.</i></p>
(5) Local Resident, (Barrow Lane, Harwell)	<p><u>Proposed 50mph</u> - Object – Having a 50mph limit on this section of road, directly adjacent to the 30 limit on the Didcot-Harwell Road will simply encourage speeding along the other sections. This also applies to the exit into the new</p>

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	<p>development at Valley Park from the link road; expecting traffic to jump from 50mph to 30mph with no other modifications to the 30mph section is fantasy land. 40mph would be a far more sensible limit for the link road.</p> <p><u>Proposed 30mph</u> - Support – Please look at narrowing the road along this section to better fit the reduced speed limit and allow for natural enforcement. This could be achieved via some nice wide segregated cycle tracks.</p>
(6) Local Resident, (Park Drive, Milton Park)	<p><u>Proposed 50mph</u> - Support – <i>No comment.</i></p> <p><u>Proposed 30mph</u> - Support – <i>No comment.</i></p>
(7) Local Resident, (Olympic Avenue, Milton Park)	<p><u>Proposed 50mph</u> - Neither – <i>No comment.</i></p> <p><u>Proposed 30mph</u> - Neither – <i>No comment.</i></p>
(8) Online response, (unknown)	<p><u>Proposed 50mph</u> - Neither – <i>No comment.</i></p> <p><u>Proposed 30mph</u> - Support – <i>No comment.</i></p>
(9) Local Resident, (Park Drive, Milton Park)	<p><u>Proposed 50mph</u> - Support – <i>No comment.</i></p> <p><u>Proposed 30mph</u> - Support – <i>No comment.</i></p>
(10) Online response, (unknown)	<p><u>Proposed 50mph</u> - Object – I am a frequent cyclist, and a slower speed limit will do nothing to stop cars / HGVs behaving aggressively to cyclists. Instead cyclists need to be aware of their rights and attend training courses if they feel they are being intimidated by cars / HGVs to improve their confidence. Wasting public money on providing lighting and lowering the speed limit is overkill, as the cyclist anyway has to be able to cope with the next road junction where the speed limit increases once more and the lighting disappears. Police should be stationed to observe aggressive driving against cyclists, with stiff on the spot penalties enforced, and with training provided to offenders of what rights a cyclist has.</p>

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	<u>Proposed 30mph</u> - Object – (Same as above)
(11) Online response, (unknown)	<u>Proposed 50mph</u> - Neither – <i>No comment.</i> <u>Proposed 30mph</u> - Neither – <i>No comment.</i>
(12) Resident, (Swindon)	<u>Proposed 50mph</u> - Neither – <i>No comment.</i> <u>Proposed 30mph</u> - Neither – <i>No comment.</i>
(13) Local Resident, (Brunstock Beck, Didcot)	<u>Proposed 50mph</u> - Neither – <i>No comment.</i> <u>Proposed 30mph</u> - Neither – <i>No comment.</i>
(14) Local Resident, (Roebuck Court, Didcot)	<u>Proposed 50mph</u> - Neither – <i>No comment.</i> <u>Proposed 30mph</u> - Neither – Increased cycling capacity is a good thing, but things will grind to a halt in rush hour if capacity for road traffic isn't simultaneously improved.
(15) Online response, (unknown)	<u>Proposed 50mph</u> - Support – <i>No comment.</i> <u>Proposed 30mph</u> - Neither – <i>No comment.</i>
(16) Resident, (Maidenhead)	<u>Proposed 50mph</u> - Neither – <i>No comment.</i> <u>Proposed 30mph</u> - Support – Cycle path needs maintaining more to support use. Entry / exit at station side is not optimal.

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(17) Online response, (unknown)	<p><u>Proposed 50mph</u> - Support – <i>No comment.</i></p> <p><u>Proposed 30mph</u> - Support – <i>No comment.</i></p>
(18) Online response, (unknown)	<p><u>Proposed 50mph</u> - Neither – <i>No comment.</i></p> <p><u>Proposed 30mph</u> - Neither – <i>No comment.</i></p>
(19) Resident, (Bristol)	<p><u>Proposed 50mph</u> - Support – <i>No comment.</i></p> <p><u>Proposed 30mph</u> - Support – <i>No comment.</i></p>
(20) Local Resident, (High Street, Milton)	<p><u>Proposed 50mph</u> - Neither – <i>No comment.</i></p> <p><u>Proposed 30mph</u> - Object – I would suggest a better strategy for improving the cycle network would be an investment in designated cycle paths like the excellent ones running beside the new developments in that area of Didcot. This stretch of road has wide verges where a small extension to the road width or a specific separate cycle path running alongside would surely be a better solution for all users. I'd suggest looking for the best not the easiest solutions (if lowering speed limits would in fact have any benefit whatsoever) to improving cycling in the region.</p>
(21) Local Resident, (Westwater Way, Didcot)	<p><u>Proposed 50mph</u> - Neither – <i>No comment.</i></p> <p><u>Proposed 30mph</u> - Neither – <i>No comment.</i></p>

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<p>(22) Local Resident, (Western Avenue, Milton Park)</p>	<p><u>Proposed 50mph</u> - Object – What is the point of reducing the speed limit full time when the only problems are during rush hour and then you cannot achieve the speed limit anyway.</p> <p><u>Proposed 30mph</u> - Support – This road is now becoming part of Didcot and therefore should be reduced in the near future.</p>
<p>(23) Local Resident, (Merton Close, Didcot)</p>	<p><u>Proposed 50mph</u> - Neither – <i>No comment.</i></p> <p><u>Proposed 30mph</u> - Support – <i>No comment.</i></p>
<p>(24) Local Resident, (Abbott Close, Didcot)</p>	<p><u>Proposed 50mph</u> - Neither – Seems reasonable, seeing as it is in-line with the speed limit of the Reading road. But equally, visibility will be very good (I assume), seeing as the road is roughly straight. I also assume it will be reasonably wide seeing as there is nothing around it. This road could (possibly should?) be a national speed limit seeing as there is no housing nearby.</p> <p><u>Proposed 30mph</u> - Support – This is a no-brainer with all of the additional housing and the nearby college. The consistency of a solid 30mph speed limit along this length of road also means that there is potentially less confusion/lax driving.</p>
<p>(25) Local Resident, (Slade Road, Didcot)</p>	<p><u>Proposed 50mph</u> - Neither – <i>No comment.</i></p> <p><u>Proposed 30mph</u> - Object – Please keep the traffic flowing at a higher speed, don't slow the traffic further causing yet more traffic meaning fewer vehicles being able to get through the Milton interchange. e.g. slower speed less vehicles</p>
<p>(26) Local Resident, (Innovation Drive, Milton Park)</p>	<p><u>Proposed 50mph</u> - Support – <i>No comment.</i></p> <p><u>Proposed 30mph</u> - Support – <i>No comment.</i></p>