

Divisions affected: *Hendreds & Harwell*

## **CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS MANAGEMENT – 3 JUNE 2021**

### **HARWELL: GROVE ROAD AND ADJACENT ROADS – PROPOSED 20MPH AND 40MPH SPEED LIMITS**

Report by Corporate Director, Environment and Place

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. The Cabinet Member for Highways Management is **RECOMMENDED** to approve the 20mph and 40mph speed limits as advertised.

#### **Executive summary**

2. This report presents responses received to a statutory consultation on proposed 20mph and 40mph speed limits at Harwell as shown at Annex 1. These proposals have been subject to a previous consultation and were approved at the Cabinet Member for Environment Delegated Decisions meeting on 17 September 2017 but the speed limit order was not made within the statutory 2-year period from the start of the previous consultation, thereby requiring this further consultation, although the speed limit signing itself has been installed.

#### **Financial Implications**

3. Funding for consultation on the proposals has been provided by the developers of adjacent land.

#### **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 facilitate the safe movement of traffic, particularly pedestrians and cyclists.

#### **Consultation**

6. Formal consultation was carried out between 17 March and 16 April 2021. A notice was published in the Oxfordshire Herald & Oxford Times newspapers and an email sent to statutory consultees, including Thames Valley Police, the Fire & Rescue Service, Ambulance service, South Oxfordshire District

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Council, Harwell Parish Council, Didcot Town Council and local County Councillors.

7. Eleven responses were received during the formal consultation. Two objections and nine in support. The responses are shown at Annex 2 with copies of the original responses available for inspection by County Councillors.
8. Thames Valley Police objected to the proposed 40mph and 20mph limit on Grove Road (though had no objection to the proposed 20mph limit proposed on the other roads) on the grounds that they did not consider that these limits would be consistent with guidance issued by the Department for Transport (DfT) and specifically in relation to the advice that 20mph limits should be self-enforcing. While accepting that average speeds close to the terminal of the 20mph limit are above the 24mph threshold recommended in the DfT guidelines, speeds will typically be appreciably higher than the posted speed limit close to a terminal sign and it is considered that this does not undermine the justification for a 20mph limit which otherwise is consistent with DfT guidance.
9. Notwithstanding the above, the developers have agreed in principle – and subject to a further consultation – to fund additional traffic calming measures on Grove Road with in the 20mph limit. It is anticipated that consultation will be carried out in the summer with the responses reported to a future decisions meeting in the early autumn.
10. Oxfordshire Cycling Network and Cycling UK – groups representing the interests of pedal cyclists - both supported the proposals, with the former, however, noting the importance of achieving compliance with 20mph limits.
11. One objection was received from a member of the public (a resident of the village) who cited concerns over the adequacy of the documentation - including the draft speed limit order - provided as part of the consultation. However, the consultation documents are considered to be clear on the scope of the proposals (noting that this consultation also included other speed limit changes in the area) and that, if approved, the made speed limit order will accurately reflect the limits being introduced on the affected roads. The objection did not cite any concerns over the specific proposals in Harwell or elsewhere.
12. Expressions of support were received from seven members of the public, with some of the responses also requesting additional measures including traffic calming and speed camera enforcement.

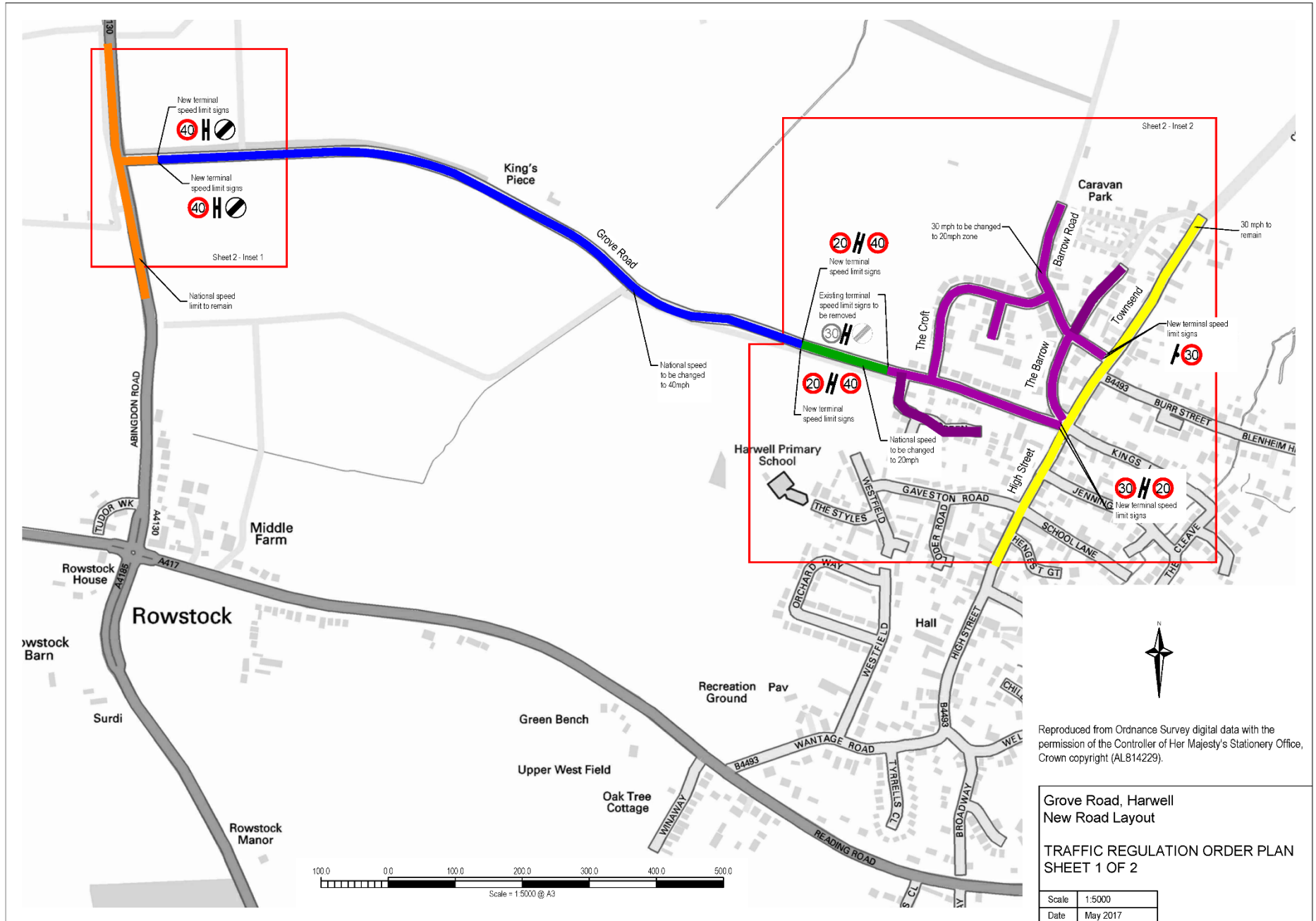
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Annexes                      Annex 1: Consultation Plan  
                                     Annex 2: Consultation responses

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Grove Road, Harwell  
New Road Layout

TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER PLAN  
SHEET 1 OF 2

Scale	1:5000
Date	May 2017

RESPONDENT	COMMENTS
<p>(1) Traffic Management Officer, (Thames Valley Police)</p>	<p><b>Object</b> – My response to this previous proposal dated 10th August 2017 remains in place (see below). I am also aware having received documents from a consultant working on behalf of OCC that the Grove Road 20 has poor compliance and should be further engineered or replaced by a more realistic speed limit .</p> <p>[10/08/2017] - 20 mph speed limits should be self-enforcing and current speeds already 24 mph or less.</p> <p>The policy of Thames Valley Police is to use sound practical and realistic criteria (Circular Roads 1/2013) 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 Speed Limit should not be used to attempt to solve the problem of isolated hazards, for example a single junction or reduced forward visibility.</p> <p>Experience shows that changing to a lower speed limit on its own will not necessarily be successful in reducing the speed of traffic by very much if the prevailing mean speeds are much higher than the proposed lower speed limit. If a speed limit is set too low and ignored, then this could result in the majority of drivers criminalising themselves and could bring the system of speed limits into disrepute. 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. It is also important to set reasonable speed limits to ensure consistency across the country.</p> <p>Therefore, 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>In principle I do not object to the lowering of the speed limit on the urban roads leading from Grove Road .</p> <p>I do object to the current speed limit proposals for Grove Road both 40 and 20. Imposing a standalone 20 limit might give unrealistic expectations to the vulnerable user that the road is more safe when it is not due to poor compliance of the lower limit.</p>

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<p>(2) Local Group, (Oxfordshire Cycling Network)</p>	<p><b>Support</b> – Reduced speeds have proven safety benefits and will make the streets safer for people walking and cycling, encouraging active travel and more active lifestyles, which is better for health in the long-term. 20mph is considered the right speed for residential areas, as set out in Manual for Streets, the accepted best practice for street design in the UK. It is completely appropriate to adopt these for the residential areas of Harwell and Dudcote Field, and in fact any higher limit should be considered anomalous.</p> <p>We are concerned about compliance with 20mph speed limits - evidence shows 82% of HGV, 85% of LCV and 86% of car drivers break these limits. However the limits do reduce speeds, and although the median is only reduced by 1mph, ""Vehicles travelling at higher speeds before the introduction of the 20mph limit have reduced their speed more than those already travelling at lower speeds"". <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/vehicle-speed-compliance-statistics-for-great-britain-2019">https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/vehicle-speed-compliance-statistics-for-great-britain-2019</a></p> <p>Grove Road is narrow and twisty with blind bends. Many motorists travel fast on this road and we have had some scary encounters while both cycling and driving. Reducing the speed on this road should be considered a priority and 40mph looks very appropriate. Additional calming measures at the pinch points (e.g. a 'Bend' sign or a painted SLOW) may be useful.</p>
<p>(3) Local Group, (Cycling UK, Wantage)</p>	<p><b>Support</b> – The 20mph limits proposed for Dudcote Fields and Harwell are appropriate for residential areas and will make those places safer for people walking and cycling, encouraging healthier lifestyles.</p> <p>I am the Chairman of Cycling UK Wantage and we often use Grove Road for leisure rides. Grove Road is narrow and twisty and is often used by people walking and cycling, and there is not always enough room for two vehicles to pass safely. Many drivers travel too fast to react safely to what is round a blind corner. The 40mph limit will make this road safer for all users.</p>
<p>(4) Local Resident, (Harwell)</p>	<p><b>Object</b> – I wish to object to the proposals as they lack the clarity required of such documents and should never have made it past whatever checking system OCC has in place before putting proposals to public consultation, particularly as it's the 2nd attempt at this.</p>

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	<p>Perhaps a pre-consultation with local councils would have been advisable if OCC no longer has people able to check the data or the consistency and accuracy of the documents. There are a number of errors of details such as road names and numbers, some of which would have come into force if the 2018 order had been implemented, so it should have been quite easy to check. Some suggest a lack of knowledge about the boundary between the Vale WHDC and SODC in GWP.</p> <p>Plus in Chilton Parish there is a length of the A4185 on both the 30 and 40 mph lists. It seems there is some division between roads in Harwell Parish - in the 'Harwell and various parishes' document and roads in Didcot town - in the Didcot document – but the latter seems ignorant of the fact that some roads have name changes at the District boundary.</p>
<p>(5) Local Business, (Milton Park)</p>	<p><b>Support</b> – The 20mph limits proposed for Dudcote Fields and Harwell are appropriate for residential areas and will make those places safer for people walking and cycling, encouraging healthier lifestyles.</p> <p>Grove Road is narrow and twisty and is often used by people walking and cycling, and there is not always enough room for two vehicles to pass safely. Many drivers travel too fast to react safely to what is round a blind corner. The 40mph limit will make this road safer for all users.</p>
<p>(6) Local Resident, (Harwell)</p>	<p><b>Support</b> – These measures are necessary to accustom road users in Harwell to a low speed limit throughout the village. The High Street has numbers of residential Lanes off it which have poor visibility both from and onto the High due to vehicles parked all the way along it, often very tight to junctions in contravention of the Highway Code. Householders in Church Lane, Harwell, met the County Roads Technician in March 2014 to explain how we felt sight lines could be improved. We were simply told to involve the police each time so that a record was built up of near misses caused by fast driving or inconsiderate parking on the High Street. The more traffic calming the better to encourage safe walking to school!</p>
<p>(7) Local Resident, (Harwell)</p>	<p><b>Support</b> – All villages and residential streets should have a 20 mph limit a) to help prevent accidents and b) very much in the case of Harwell Village, to encourage the use of the Harwell link road and reduce the main village road, especially Grove Road, being used as a rat run from Didcot to the Milton Park Roundabout. This becomes even more essential when Valley Park is built.</p>

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<p>(8) Local Resident, (Harwell)</p>	<p><b>Support</b> – I live on Barrow Road. This area has young children playing in their gardens, walking on the paths and sometimes using scooters on the road. We were looking at the road signs regarding speed limits, and it really wasn't clear what the speed limit is for Barrow Road. When you leave the road, there is a 30mph signpost to join the High Street, therefore, we are assuming that Barrow Road is 20mph!</p>
<p>(9) Local Resident, (Harwell)</p>	<p><b>Support</b> – "As a resident of Harwell village, a 20mph speed limit through the village is very much needed. Cars, vans and motorbikes often speed through the village which is very dangerous.</p> <p>We also need speed cameras or average speed limit cameras on the Reading Road through Harwell as cars do not slow down to 30 mph."</p>
<p>(10) Local Resident, (Abingdon)</p>	<p><b>Support</b> – These are routes often used by pedestrians and cyclists and there is a tendency for some car drivers not to recognise the vulnerabilities of these people. Encouraging walking and cycling is both good for the individual's health but also has a positive impact on the environment and all our lives by reducing vehicle travel and so reducing pollution and CO2 emissions.</p>
<p>(11) Local Resident, (Milton Park)</p>	<p><b>Support</b> – All residential areas should have a speed limit of 20mph</p> <p>In addition to this I cycle regularly from Didcot Station to Milton Park as part of my commute. Reducing the speed limit will make the roads safer for people on bicycles and walking. This will help encourage more people to leave their cars at home.</p> <p>Reducing vehicle on the road will help road safety and reduce emissions.</p>