

Divisions affected: Wheatley

**CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAY MANAGEMENT
27 APRIL 2023**

**FOREST HILL WITH SHOTOVER: OLD ROAD SHOTOVER –
PROPOSED 20MPH SPEED LIMIT AND ASSOCIATED SPEED LIMIT
BUFFERS**

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 a 20mph speed limit in the Shotover area of the Forest Hill with Shotover Parish as shown in **Annex 1**, which had been omitted from an earlier consultation for the parish.

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 the Shotover area of Forest Hill Parish by making them safer and more attractive.

Formal consultation

6. Formal consultation was carried out between 05 January 2023 and 03 February. 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, South Oxfordshire District Council, the local District Cllrs, Forest Hill with Shotover parish council, and the local County Councillor representing the Wheatley division.

Statutory Consultee Responses:

7. 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 had no objections.

Other Responses:

8. The sole other response was an online objection received 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

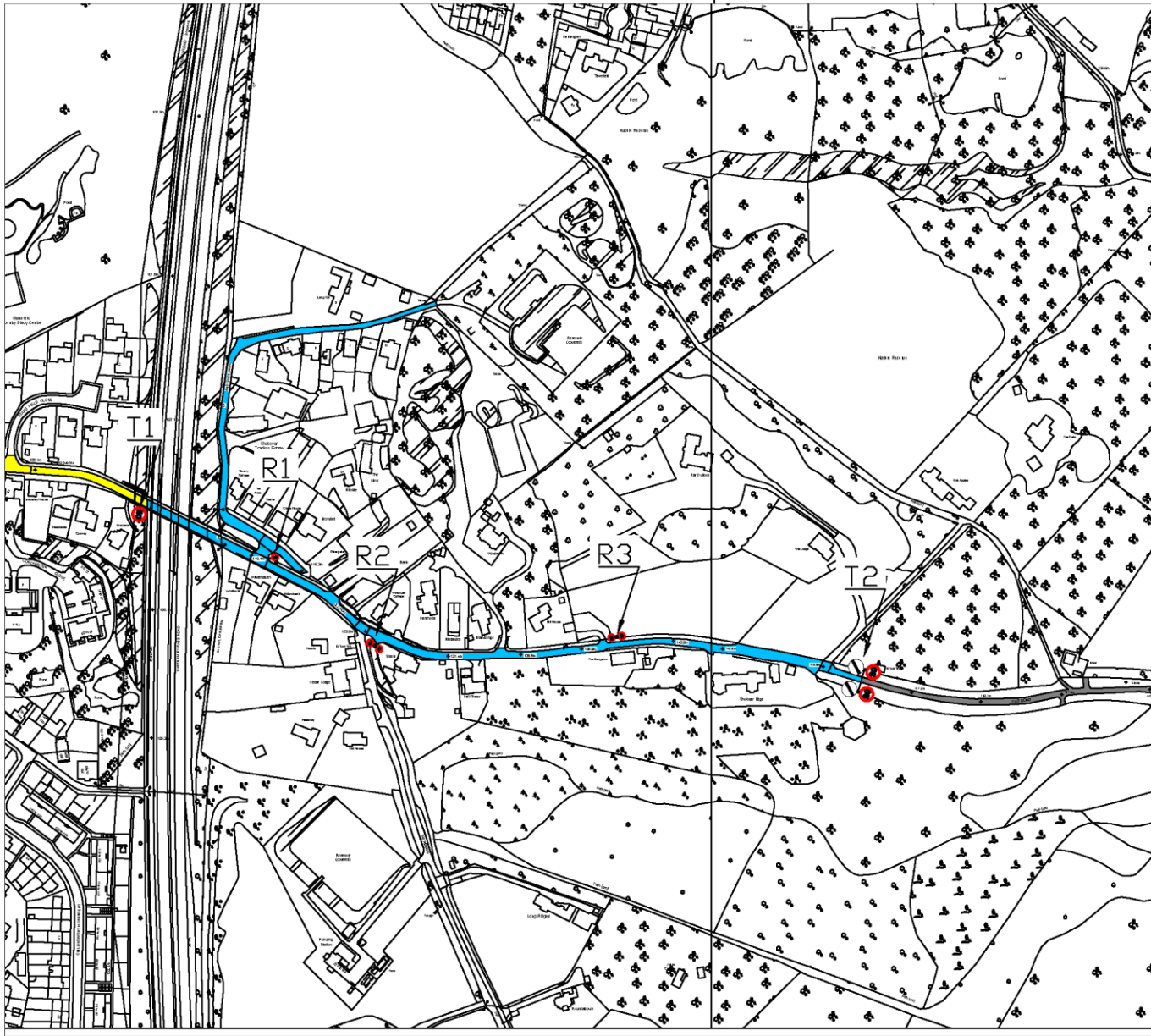
10. The main purpose of the scheme is to improve road safety and encourage greater use of active travel by reducing speeds; this will also reduce accidents. The aim of reducing speed limits is to change driver's mindsets to make speeding socially unacceptable and make more environmentally friendly modes 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 sole objection was unfocussed, raised no fresh pertinent points, and in essence challenged 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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April 2023



Drawing No. Forest Hill Old Rd Revision 1.0

Legend	
Proposed 20	█
Existing 20	█
Existing 30	█
Existing 40	█
Existing 50	█
Existing NSL	█
Not Public Highway	█

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Rev.	Date	Purpose of revision	Drawn	Checked	Approved
1.0	19.12.22	Final Draft	C.R		

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Project title: Forest Hill 20mph Scheme

Drawing title: Forest Hill 20mph Scheme - Old Rd

Drawing Status

Scale @ A3	Drawn by: C.R	Checked by	Approved by
	Date drawn 19.12.22	Date checked	Date approved

Oxfordshire Project No. & File Ref

Drawing No. 1.0 Revision 1.0

ANNEX 2

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

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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) Head of Strategic Development and the Built Environment, (Stagecoach Bus Company)</p>	<p>No objection – In line with our general practice, I am again happy to confirm that Stagecoach has no comments or observations to make and offers no objection to these proposals.</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 Villages, Cities or Towns 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 like Witneys because the Councillors cannot kick the habit, they appear to bitterly hate anybody that has to do an essential journey in a car. There are other ethical and more sensible approaches to cycle and walk more. For example, increasing public path space to signal where a pedestrian and cyclist can have their own lane including encouragement notices on local notice boards.</p> <p>I visit the Village of Forest Hill sometimes to have a walk and drive through within the current speed limits when safe to do so to get away from the distress of the dystopian 20 mph signs from a nearby Town that are as comparable as 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. A political decision that has no public support and resistance (civilly making the points why they should be changed back are taking place as I write this). I don't take it lightly to compare the Russian Z symbol to a 20mph sign</p>

but if the reader googles a Russian City or Town and what it looks like with the Z symbol in that county it is as comparable as the 20mph sign easily shown every 100 yards or less. It is regretful but the honest truth especially as these 20mph signs are within even dead-end streets that have no through roads as well making it even more frustrating.

Devastating to see Forest Hill 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 highlighting a hidden hypocrisy that will take place when the consultation ignores public opinion. 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 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 minuet 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 sadly ignore this objection to the proposal but some I hope will take back these genuine points to senior bosses of whom are trying to fight against this nonsensical anti-car movement. www.transportxtra.com/publications/local-transport-today/news/72511/university-study-questions-impact-of-20mph-limits-in-belfast-city-centre

Forest Hill when visiting 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 just as seen over the decades when even our Grandparents drove safely. No card can be played to ignore this as hope to explain further.

Let's not forget either that this is the same County Council of whose senior official said to the Sunday Times, "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. This Council and their staff should ask this, is it worth continuing this ruinous scheme that will create further political distrust toward local authorities. Is it worth creating distress to residents living there to see these signs every 100 yards as comparable as propaganda? Future generations will be unfortunately robbed of sensible common sense and will see this for what it is. The Highway Code officials do not see a need to amend speed limits so cannot understand this political movement against the motorist. Why have we got a Council that has been voted in attack the Motorist?

Is this healthy for a car and the pedestrian to remain at 20mph? No because it does not matter if you're driving 20mph or 30mph the emissions remain the same, the air does not get any cleaner in fact because you are slowing down traffic you are simply making the air worse. At 30mph emission fumes retreat a lot quickly especially on a straight road where somebody does not need to drive slower especially when there is no obstacle to hit. Even Councillors know that despite pushing for this 20mph crusade (apparently prioritising signage instead of road surfacing improvements from what I been advised within the industry).

I do not oppose 20mph signs by a School, Town Square or Retirement Community within the road, but I am deeply against a blanket speed restriction across a Town, City or Village when the public opinion is ignored for political purposes. This creates mistrust in local politics where even sensible people will be asking like they did in other national scandals "Why should the public listening to their Council or on the News do things when people working within their Council are not prepared to listen to their communities?"