

Division(s): Bicester West

## **CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT - 15 MAY 2014**

### **MIDDLETON STONEY ROAD, BICESTER: PROPOSED ROAD HUMPS AND PUFFIN CROSSING**

**Report by Deputy Director of Environment & Economy  
(Commercial)**

#### **Introduction**

1. This report presents the objections and other comments received during the course of the statutory consultation on two separate proposals: (1) for a series of road humps along Middleton Stoney Road, and (2) for a puffin crossing – plans showing both of these proposals are shown in Annex 1 and 2 respectively.

#### **Background**

2. The proposals arise from the development of land adjacent to the Middleton Stoney Road to the south as part of the South West Bicester Kingsmere Development. There will be 1,585 new homes and community facilities, including two new schools and a community hospital.
3. Separately to the statutory consultation for these measures under the Highways Act and Road Traffic Regulation Act being carried out by the County Council, these measures were also the subject of a planning application by the developers to Cherwell District Council under the Town and Country Planning Act. Approval (subject to conditions) for the measures was given by Cherwell District Council on 17 April 2014.
4. The proposal for traffic calming along Middleton Stoney Road comprises 16 pairs of road humps, (with each being: 2.5 metres long, 1.8 metres wide, with a maximum height of 75mm) placed in the centre of the traffic lanes; 5 pairs are proposed on the 540m length between Howes Lane and Shakespeare Drive, and a further 11 pairs on the 965m stretch between Shakespeare Drive and Oxford Road.
5. The traffic calming proposals also include the provision of advisory cycle lanes on both sides of the road throughout the length of the scheme.
6. The proposal for the puffin crossing on the Middleton Stoney Road is for a site approximately 305 metres east of its roundabout junction with Shakespeare Drive and Whitelands Way.
7. The works if approved would be funded by the developers of the above land.

## **Consultation**

8. The consultation on the proposals was carried out between 13th February and 11<sup>th</sup> March 2014. Details of the proposals were displayed generally along Middleton Stoney Road, at the proposed crossing site and in the Oxford Times and Bicester Advertiser. Supporting documentation and plans were deposited for public inspection at Bicester Library and at County Hall, Oxford
9. Objections were received from 11 individuals and groups, including the local member and another County Councillor as well as a local Residents Association. A summary of these responses, along with officer comments, can be found in Annex 3.
10. No objections were received from Thames Valley Police in respect of either of the proposals on the basis that they would fully comply with national regulations and standards, and that their operation (should approval be given to implement them) be closely monitored. The police commented that calming measures were needed to help achieve acceptable levels of compliance with the 30mph speed limit in on a road that would otherwise lend itself to higher speeds.

## **Objections to traffic calming proposals**

11. Objections to the proposals for speed cushions focussed on concerns over increased noise and pollution affecting local residents, and the potential damage to vehicles as they navigate the features.
12. Extensive experience of similar calming measures in Oxfordshire in a wide range of environments have showed good levels of speed reduction and improved safety where at locations where there was a prior accident problem. Similarly, such schemes have typically been well accepted by residents, with only a very small number of instances of noise concerns being raised, mainly in locations where houses are immediately adjacent to the features. Similarly very few concerns have been raised over air quality or pollution or damage to vehicles.
13. The Department for Transport (DfT) advice on traffic calming states that road humps (including speed cushions) are the most widely used form of traffic calming device because they have proved to be effective at controlling speeds and are generally applicable to most road layouts. The note goes on to outline the following advantages of cushions; they are an effective speed control device, they offer less discomfort than full width road humps to occupants of large buses and commercial vehicles and they also cause less delay to fire appliances and buses.
14. However the DfT also acknowledges that speed cushions can be unpopular with some local residents due to discomfort; concerns over the speed of motorcycles and large vehicles which are less affected by cushion layouts; fear of damage to vehicles; vehicles parking near the cushions; drivers

travelling in the centre of the road to avoid the cushions, and a perception of increased noise and vibration.

15. A number of objectors requested that traffic calming build-outs or chicanes as an alternative measure. However, officers have concerns about their appropriateness in this location. Speed reductions observed with such schemes are typically modest in the priority direction, and they can sometimes lead to vehicles speeding up to avoid the need to give way to oncoming traffic; for the non-priority direction they can introduce queuing and delays (and associated problems of pollution and noise). Typically build-outs are also not as convenient for cyclists, with bypasses often being difficult to maintain with debris etc. accumulating, and those cyclists choosing not to use bypasses feeling 'squeezed'. They can also introduce safety problems (for example shunts behind vehicles slowing to give way, head on conflicts, vehicles striking the physical build outs and loss of control accidents. A further consideration is that the maintenance required of signs, bollards and kerbing at build outs can be significant.
16. It is also worth noting that the 'build-outs' located in Buckingham Road and Banbury Road within Bicester have been the subject of complaint, and a number of injury accidents reported since their construction. These are single features rather than the series which would be required to achieve the same level of speed reduction as the proposed speed cushions.
17. Cllr Sibley, the local member, also requested that a shared use footway / cycletrack should be provided in preference to proposed advisory cycle lanes. While officers agree that in principle this would be a higher standard of provision for cyclists in comparison to the proposed advisory cycle lanes, it would not appear practical at present to progress this in view of the third party land requirements and cost.
18. In view of the above considerations, the officer recommendation is to approve this proposal.

### **Puffin crossing**

19. One objection was received on the grounds that a 'Pelican' style crossing would be preferable to a 'Puffin', especially to assist families, children and the elderly in crossing the carriageway.
20. However, it is the Department for Transport's intention that Puffin pedestrian facilities become the standard form of provision of signalled pedestrian crossings. Puffin pedestrian facilities have been developed to provide improved operation for pedestrians attempting to cross and also to reduce the delay experienced by both drivers and pedestrians. They have also been noted to improve mobility for many pedestrian groups including disabled and older people as well as mothers with young children.
21. Taking into account the lack of objection from the Police and the DfT's desire to see Puffin crossings as the 'standard' form, the officer recommendation is to approve this proposal.

### **How the Project supports LTP3 Objectives**

22. The proposals would help reduce the risk of accidents and improve road safety.

### **Financial and Staff Implications (including Revenue)**

23. The cost of designing and implementing the proposals will be met by the developers. Maintenance of the signs will be met from the highways maintenance budget.
24. The appraisal of the proposals and consultation has been undertaken by E&E officers as part of their normal duties.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

25. **The Cabinet Member for the Environment is RECOMMENDED to approve the implementation of proposals as advertised.**

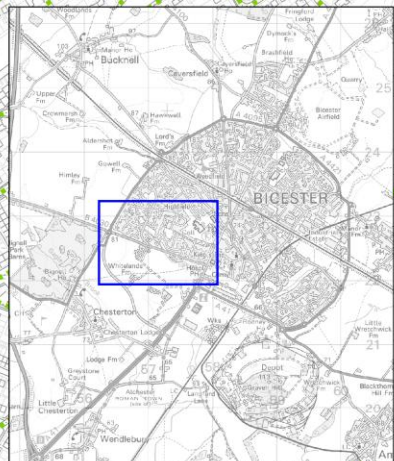
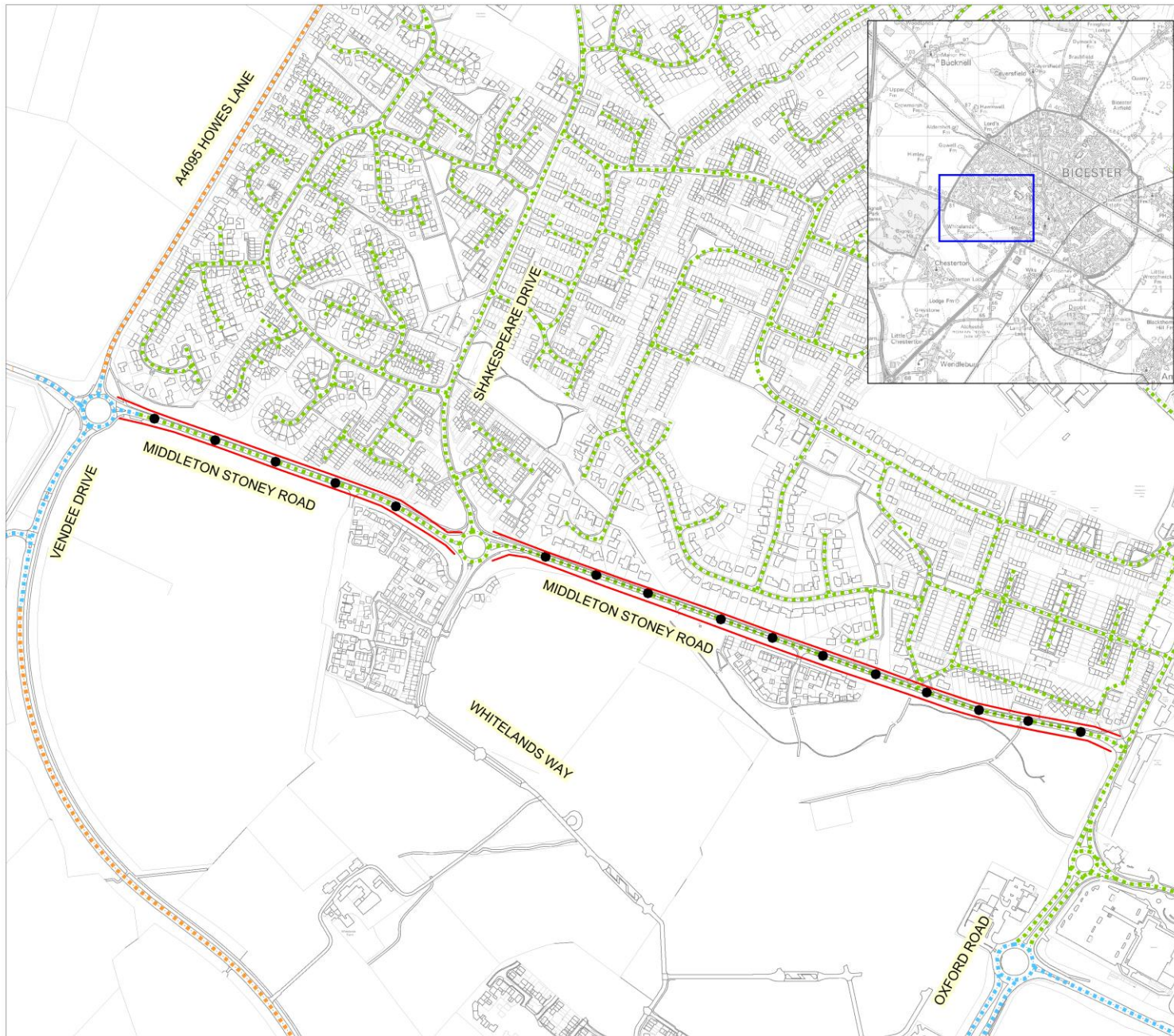
MARK KEMP

Deputy Director of Environment & Economy (Highways & Transport)

Background papers:            Consultation responses  
   DfT advice notes on Traffic Calming and pedestrian crossings

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April 2014



- Proposed location of pair of road humps
- Proposed advisory cycle lane on carriageway
- Existing 30mph speed limit
- Existing 40mph speed limit
- Existing 50mph speed limit

□ Site Location

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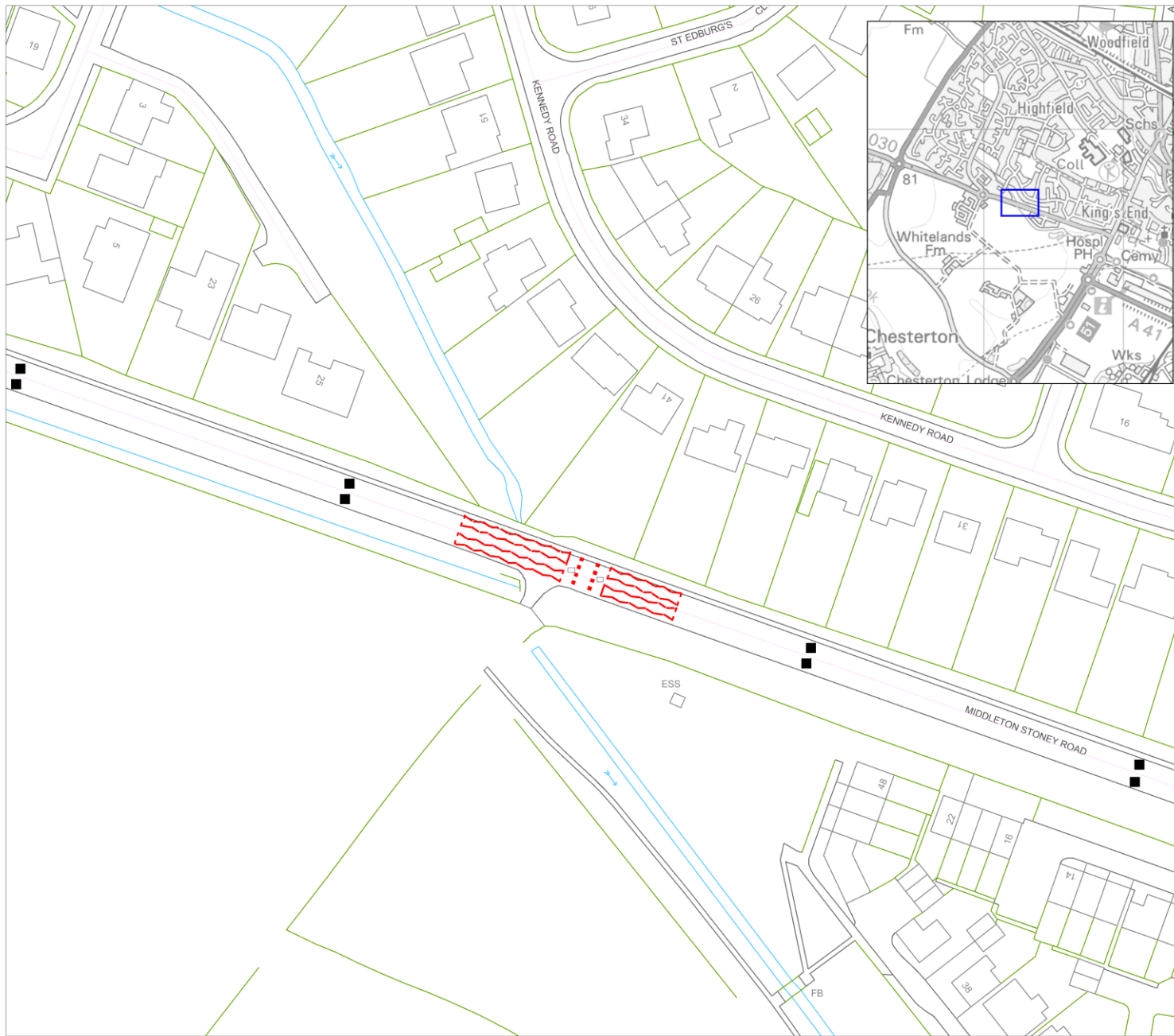
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CABINET MEMBER  
 FOR ENVIRONMENT  
 15 MAY 2014

MIDDLETON STONEY ROAD (BICESTER)  
 PROPOSED TRAFFIC CALMING

Drawing Status		
Drawn by:	Checked by:	Approved by:
CJM		
Date drawn:	Date checked:	Date approved:
28/04/2014		





- Approximate schematic location of proposed road hump
- Proposed location and general layout of proposed puffin crossing

□ Site Location

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**CABINET MEMBER  
 FOR ENVIRONMENT  
 15 MAY 2014**

**MIDDLETON STONEY ROAD (BICESTER)  
 PROPOSED PUFFIN CROSSING**

Drawing Status		
Drawn by:	Checked by:	Approved by:
CJM		
Date drawn:	Date checked:	Date approved:
22/04/2014		

RESPONDENT	SUMMARISED COMMENTS	OFFICER COMMENTS
Cllr. Les Sibley (OCC Local Member)	<p>Strong objection to the use of speed cushions on grounds of potential damage to vehicles, nearby buildings and road surface, danger to cyclists, and delays to emergency vehicles.</p> <p>Would prefer to see 'build outs' with priority traffic signs but would query need for physical calming measures, and would strongly support the provision of a segregated footway / cycletrack as an alternative measure, together with improved signing including the use of vehicle activated signs.</p>	<p>Speed cushions have been widely used in the county and have been found to reduce speeds and improve safety, without impacting on bus or emergency services. Build outs can introduce safety problems and delays / queuing, and have been found to be typically less effective in reducing speeds as compared to speed cushions.</p> <p>It is agreed that a continuous shared use footway / cycletrack would in principle be desirable but this is not considered viable at least in the short to medium term, and the proposed advisory cycle lanes are considered the only viable way of providing for cyclists at present. The police consider that traffic calming measures are essential to help ensure adequate compliance with the 30mph speed limit (see below)</p>
Cllr Lawrie Stratford (OCC member – Bicester North)	Objection to use of speed cushions	See officer comments in response to Cllr Sibley's comments on speed cushions
Thames Valley Police	No objection to proposals for traffic calming and crossing. Consider that traffic calming is essential to reduce speeds on a road that lends itself to higher speeds, but recommend that the scheme is monitored closely to confirm that it is operating satisfactorily.	If approved, the scheme will be closely monitored, including a review of speeds and any injury accidents that may be reported.

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<p>Kingsmere Residents Association</p>	<p>Formal objection to proposals and raised concerns over extent of consultation. Would prefer to see build outs, pelican crossings, improved signage (including repeaters), speed cameras and a separate cycle track on south side of road.</p>	<p>See officer comments in response to Cllr Sibley's comments on speed cushions, build outs and a separate footway / cycle track. Speed cameras are unlikely to be an option at present, and repeater 30mph signs are not permitted on roads with street lighting (currently only part of the road has street lighting, but the remainder will be installed as part of the traffic calming scheme). The consultation was carried out in accordance with the statutory requirements.</p>
<p>Member of Public (via website)</p>	<p>Strong objection on grounds of potential for damage to vehicles and noise, and obstruction to HGV's and emergency vehicles - suggests roundabouts and traffic signals with pedestrians crossing via a footbridge or 'chicane' type calming as an alternative.</p>	<p>See officer comments in respect of Cllr Sibley's comments on speed cushions, build outs. Additional roundabouts, or traffic signals or a footbridge would be very expensive to install.</p>
<p>Member of Public (resident of Mallards Way)</p>	<p>Strong objection to the use of speed cushions and the advisory cycle lanes; considers cushions would introduce safety problems &amp; prefers additional enforcement with VAS, altering of the road line, build outs, and a segregated footway / cycletrack..</p>	<p>See officer comments in respect of Cllr Sibley's comments on speed cushions, build outs and a separate footway / cycle track.</p>
<p>Member of Public (resident of Coleridge Close)</p>	<p>Objection on grounds of increased noise from vehicles, increase in air pollution, damage to vehicles and future development leading to more vehicles causing delays to traffic.</p>	<p>See officer comments in respect of Cllr Sibley's comments on speed cushions.</p>
<p>Member of Public (resident of Medina Gardens)</p>	<p>Objection on grounds of increased noise from vehicles, delays to emergency vehicles, increase in air pollution, damage to vehicles, traffic diverting to alternative residential roads, increased cost to drivers due to changing of driving required and damage to existing damaged road surface.</p>	<p>See officer comments in respect of Cllr Sibley's comments on speed cushions.</p>
<p>Member of Public (Resident of Isis Avenue)</p>	<p>Objection to the use of speed cushions on grounds of increase in noise and air pollution, damage to vehicles, delay to emergency vehicles, discomfort to bus users,</p>	<p>See officer comments in respect of Cllr Sibley's comments on speed cushions and build outs.</p>



CMDE5

	diversion of traffic to alternative residential roads and potential risk of accidents due to driver frustration. Would prefer to see chicane style build outs as an alternative.	
Member of Public (resident of Tweed Crescent)	Raised concerns on potential for damage to vehicles, increase in noise pollution, damage to already poor road surface and diversion of traffic to alternative residential roads. Would prefer to see chicane style build outs with alternating traffic priority as an alternative.	See officer comments in respect of Cllr Sibley's comments on speed cushions and build outs.
Member of Public (resident of Eden Way)	Objection to speed cushions on grounds of the diversion of traffic to alternative residential roads (Shakespeare Drive), increase in noise and damage to vehicles. Would prefer to see speed cameras, gateway features, build outs or increased signage.	See officer comments in respect of Cllr Sibley's comments on speed cushions, build outs. Speed cameras are unlikely to be an option at present, and additional signing is unlikely to significantly reduce speeds.
Member of Public (via website)	Objection to the use of 'speed cushions -would prefer use of a speed camera with fines funding maintenance of the road.	See officer comments in respect of Cllr Sibley's comments on speed cushions. Speed cameras are unlikely to be an option at present, and if provided, none of the income from enforcement is received by the County Council.