

## **TRANSPORT DECISIONS COMMITTEE - 11 FEBRUARY 2010**

### **ABINGDON TOWN CENTRE – (VARIOUS ROADS) 20MPH SPEED LIMIT**

#### **Report by Head of Transport**

#### **Introduction**

1. This report considers the results of a public consultation on a Traffic Regulation Order for the introduction of a 20mph speed limit on various roads in Abingdon Town Centre and recommends implementation. Roads covered by the Order include Stert Street, High Street, Bridge Street, East and West St Helen Streets, Abbey Close and St Helens Wharf area. A reduced scale plan showing the extent of the 20mph speed limit is attached at Annex 1.

#### **Background**

2. Oxfordshire County Council's former Environmental Committee adopted an Integrated Transport Strategy for Abingdon on 27 June 2001. A design for the town centre scheme was progressed which led to a public exhibition in July 2004 and proposals for a 20mph zone were included in the scheme at that stage.
3. Results of the exhibition were reported to the Council's Executive in November 2004 who endorsed the scheme.
4. Oxfordshire County Council's policy for introducing 20mph zones (approved April 2005) requires the introduction of a mandatory amount of additional traffic calming in order for it to be as self enforcing as possible. Members of the AbITS members working group were concerned at the introduction of physical traffic calming features, such as road humps and chicanes and on 14 November 2008 a recommendation to proceed with a 20mph speed limit, requiring terminal and repeater signs only, was accepted. This change was reported, and approved, by the then Cabinet Member for Transport on 12 February 2009.

#### **Consultation**

5. Public consultation on the proposed 20mph speed limit was undertaken between 09 November and 04 December 2009.
6. Consultation was carried out with emergency services, members of the AbITS Working Group, local County Councillors, Vale of White Horse District Council, Abingdon Town Council, road user groups, residents and

businesses. Copies of public notices advertising the proposals appeared in the local press and were posted on street furniture along the affected roads.

7. Thames Valley Police have objected to the proposed limit on the grounds that any such proposals would need to be self enforcing. Concern was also raised that the limit would be introduced on a main traffic route and that they should only be considered on roads that have an average measured speed of less than 24mph. AbITS Working Group members have not raised any objections to the proposal. The Cyclists Touring Club has responded in favour of the proposal.
8. 13 letters from local residents have been received during the consultation period - 5 in support and 8 against. The main objections were based on the town centre roads already being subjected to congestion at peak periods with vehicles unable to travel through at speeds above 20mph, the costs of introducing the limit and that noise and air pollution would increase. Extending the limit to cover roads and approaches to schools was also requested. Numerous other issues were raised and these are summarised along with officer responses at Annex 2. Copies of correspondence are available in the Members' Resource Centre.

### **Officer Comment**

9. The proposal for a 20mph speed limit/zone has been a long time inclusion in the Integrated Transport Strategy for Abingdon and is seen as an important element in improving conditions for pedestrians, cyclists, tourists etc within Abingdon Town Centre.
10. Vehicle speeds have been measured on a number of the roads covered by the proposed limit and data shows that average speeds range from 16mph to 21mph although no measured data is available for High Street and Stert Street.

### **Financial and Staffing Implications**

11. The 20mph speed limit is included within the funding secured for the current town centre improvement scheme approved up to 2010/11.
12. Oxfordshire Highways staff will undertake construction supervision and project management of the scheme. The County Council's Legal Services will prepare the Traffic Regulation Order.

## RECOMMENDATION

13. **The Committee is RECOMMENDED to authorise implementation of the 20mph speed limit as detailed in Annex 1 to this report.**

STEVE HOWELL  
Head of Transport  
Environment & Economy

Background Papers :        Consultation documentation

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November 2009

### Summary of comments received during Consultation

Respondent	Support proposal	Comments	Officer Comment
Thames Valley Police	No	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 20mph should be self enforcing</li> <li>2. Such limits should not be implemented on roads with a strategic function or main traffic routes (such as the A415)</li> <li>3. DfT guidance suggests that where speed limits alone are introduced, reductions of only 2mph in 'before' speeds may be achieved. 20mph limits are therefore only suitable in areas where vehicle speeds are already low (mean vehicle speeds already below 24mph).</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Limit will be by signage only. Vehicle speeds are generally below 24mph.</li> <li>2. Proposal has been a long time inclusion in the Integrated Transport Strategy for Abingdon and is seen as an important element in improving conditions for pedestrians, cyclists, tourists etc within Abingdon Town Centre.</li> <li>3. Speeds have been measured on a few of the roads covered by the limit and data shows that average speeds are already less than 20mph.</li> </ol>
Resident, St Amand Drive	No	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Any further inconvenience for drivers will reduce the use of Abingdon's shops and businesses.</li> <li>2. Current speed limits are sufficient as speeds are low during busier pedestrian periods.</li> <li>3. Problems are from small number of excessive speeders</li> </ol>	All. Complaints have been received with respect to vehicle speeds outside of peak hours thus the proposed limit.

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Respondent	Support proposal	Comments	Officer Comment
		who will be unlikely to obey a 20mph limit.	
Resident, Golafre Road	No	Referred to the 20mph limits recently introduced in Oxford and that drivers were too busy watching the speedo rather than concentrating on the road ahead etc.	There is no evidence to support this is the case but the situation will continue to be monitored.
Resident, Wootton Road	Yes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fully support the proposals as they believe that town centre priority should generally be given to pedestrians over traffic to both improve the pedestrian environment and reduce the risk of accidents.</li> <li>2. Would like 20mph speed limits extended to cover areas outside all of Abingdon's schools.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Noted.</li> <li>2. Discussions are ongoing between schools and the county councils road safety and travel plans teams with respect to safety measures outside and on routes to schools.</li> </ol>
Resident, Bridges Close	No	Limit not necessary and would discourage both motorists and cyclists. Even when High Street is not held up the limit would only be another source of aggravation.	<p>Proposal has been a long time inclusion in the Integrated Transport Strategy for Abingdon and is seen as an important element in improving conditions for pedestrians, cyclists, tourists etc within Abingdon Town Centre during peak periods and when traffic flows are low.</p> <p>The project was always aimed at controlling the flow of traffic through the town centre with the result of enhanced environment for other road users.</p>

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Resident, Pytenry Close	No	Reducing speed limits is not the answer. Abingdon is gridlocked most of the time and it would be of more benefit to introduce road safety awareness programmes, particularly aimed at cyclists.	County Council already undertakes education, training and publicity.
Resident, Lay Avenue, Berinsfield	No	Impossible to reach 20mph for majority of the day. The A415 towards Culham etc has always suffered with nothing done to improve the situation.	<p>Proposal has been a long time inclusion in the Integrated Transport Strategy for Abingdon and is seen as an important element in improving conditions for pedestrians, cyclists, tourists etc within Abingdon Town Centre during peak periods and when traffic flows are low.</p> <p>The project was always aimed at controlling the flow of traffic through the town centre with the result of enhanced environment for other road users.</p>
Resident, The Chestnuts	Yes	Fully supports the proposals but would like it extended to include Bath Street up to the Faringdon Road/Wootton Road roundabout and also include a pedestrian crossing on Bath Street at its intersection with the footpath from Fitzharry's Road. (Important link to local schools).	Discussions are ongoing between schools and the county councils road safety and travel plans teams with respect to safety measures outside and on routes to schools.
Resident, Shaw's Copse, Lower Radley	No	A daytime limit on roads such as High Street, Ock Street and Stert Street might be a good idea. However to extend it beyond the shopping area would not be acceptable or	Proposal has been a long time inclusion in the Integrated Transport Strategy for Abingdon and is seen as an important element in improving conditions for pedestrians,

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		warranted. (Increased congestion and pollution, pedestrians taking greater risks by crossing away from controlled crossings).	cyclists, tourists etc within Abingdon Town Centre during peak hours and when traffic flows are low.  The project was always aimed at controlling the flow of traffic through the town centre with the result of enhanced environment for other road users.
Resident,	No	Stationary traffic most of day, this proposal will not change that. Costs of introducing the limit could be better spent on other projects to help the town.	Proposal has been a long time inclusion in the Integrated Transport Strategy for Abingdon and is seen as an important element in improving conditions for pedestrians, cyclists, tourists etc within Abingdon Town Centre during peak periods and when traffic flows are low.  The project was always aimed at controlling the flow of traffic through the town centre with the result of enhanced environment for other road users.
Resident, Sweet Briar, Marcham	Yes	Would like 20mph speed limits extended to cover St John's Road outside Our Lady's Convent School.	Discussions are ongoing between schools and the county councils road safety and travel plans teams with respect to safety measures outside and on routes to schools.
Resident, Baker Road	Yes	Generally welcomes efforts to reduce traffic speeds in such areas but has concerns over a couple of streets in particular that they suggest would benefit from a 'shared space' environment.	Provision of 'shared space' environments on two of the roads would be costly and are beyond the current brief of AbITS.

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Respondent	Support proposal	Comments	Officer Comment
		Concerns over enforcement, clutter by signs and drivers concentrating on speedometer rather than the road.	Signage will be kept to a minimum with existing street furniture used where possible. There is no evidence to support drivers attention is drawn to their speedometer but the situation will continue to be monitored.
Transport for All	Yes	Support any move to reduce speed limits particularly on roads/areas which are busy and heavily populated such as these.	Noted.
Address Withheld	No	Very much against physical features, including road humps, that have been installed around the County.	No road humps are proposed in this instance.
Cyclist Touring Club	Yes	Proposal will improve conditions for cyclists and pedestrians in the Centre of Abingdon.	Noted.



