

CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT – 29 JUNE 2017

PROPOSED 30MPH SPEED LIMIT FOXCOMBE ROAD SUNNINGWELL AND WOOTTON

Report by Strategic Director, Communities

Introduction

1. This report presents responses received in the course of a statutory consultation on a proposal to introduce a 30mph speed limit on Foxcombe Road, mainly within Sunningwell parish but including also a short length of the road within Wootton parish, in place of the existing 40mph speed limit.

Background

2. The above speed limit change has been requested by Sunningwell Parish Council in response to concerns over the dangers and disturbance caused by speeding traffic on Foxcombe Road. If approved, the full costs of implementing the requested change would be met by Sunningwell Parish Council. A plan of the proposal is shown at Annex 1, which as can be seen also includes reducing the speed limit from 40mph to 30mph on parts of Berkeley Road and Bayworth Lane as shown, to avoid having very short lengths of 40mph limits on these roads.

Consultation

3. The formal consultation on the proposal was carried out between 30 March and 28 April 2017. A public notice was placed in the Oxford Times newspaper, and an email sent to statutory consultees, including Thames Valley Police, the Fire & Rescue Service, Ambulance service, South Oxfordshire & the Vale of White Horse District Councils, Oxford City Council, Kennington, South Hinksey, Sandford, Littlemore, Sunningwell and Wootton Parish Councils and local County Councillors.
4. Five responses were received as summarised at Annex 2. Copies of all of the full responses received are available for inspection in the Members' Resource Centre.
5. Thames Valley Police objected to the proposal on the grounds that taking account of the character of the road, the limited reported accident history, and the observed speeds, the current 40mph speed limit was appropriate and that the proposed 30mph speed limit would be unrealistically low.

6. An elected member of the Vale of White Horse District Council representing this area also objected, on the grounds that if the proposal was approved, the speed limit changes on Fox Lane, Foxcombe Road and Hinksey Hill would be confusing, with (starting from the junction of Fox Lane) with the B4017 Lamborough Hill) a 40mph limit, a short section of national speed limit, then the 30mph speed limit as currently proposed, with then a 40mph limit through to the junction of Hinksey Hill with the A34/A423 Hinksey Hill interchange. The view was expressed that a 30mph speed limit on the entire route would be best, or alternatively a 40mph limit.
7. Officers from the Vale of the White Horse District Council planning department have not objected.
8. Two responses were received from members of the public supporting the proposed 30mph speed limit, but also requesting that this should be extended to the north east to include the remainder of Foxcombe Road to its junction with Hinksey Hill, and also Hinksey Hill, to its junction with the A34/A423 Hinksey Hill interchange, noting that there were a significant number of residential properties with accesses onto the road.

Review of responses

9. The response of Thames Valley Police is noted, and it is accepted that the current traffic speeds (which will to a significant extent reflect the perceptions of drivers as to the character of the road) are arguably more consistent with the 40mph speed limit than the proposed 30mph limit, and also that the reported accident history is modest, with only one slight injury accident recorded in the latest 5-years for which such data is available.
10. The response from the member of the Vale of the White Horse District Council is also noted, and it is also accepted that multiple changes in speed limit on a route can be confusing for drivers.
11. The expressions of support from two members of the public for the proposal but also requesting that the 30mph speed limit should also apply to the A34/A423 Hinksey Hill interchange are noted, and it is agreed that there are a significant number of residential premises adjacent to the length of Foxcombe Road east of the proposed 30mph speed limit, and on Hinksey Hill.

Criteria for setting local speed limits and their application to this proposal

12. The current speed limits reflect the outcome of extensive local consultation carried out in 2000 as part of a village speed limit project covering the whole county, although there was a subsequent amendment in 2014 when a short length of national speed limit north west of the Red Copse Lane junction was reduced to 40 mph.
13. In considering requests for speed limit changes, officers apply the guidance issued by the Department for Transport (DfT) on setting local speed limits (DfT Circular 1/2013). This guidance, in respect of more rural areas such as is

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the case here recommends that 30mph speeds are generally appropriate in village settings where there are a minimum of 20 properties over a 600 metre length, with 40 mph speed limits being potentially appropriate where there is a lower level of development.

14. As Annex 1 shows, there is, over much of the length of the proposed 30mph speed limit, a level of road-side development that meets or exceeds the suggested 20 houses over a 600 metre length (although there is a gap in the development to the north east of the Berkeley Road junction) – although not forming part of the current proposals and therefore not shown at Annex 1, the same applies on Hinksey Hill and the north eastern part of Foxcombe Road.
15. However, it is also the case that the development does not present a very obvious ‘village’ character, with the housing being largely quite well set back from the road, and mostly being screened by high hedging or fencing, and it is accepted that the police observations of driver perception of the environment would likely - were the proposal to be approved – result in significant non-compliance with a 30mph speed limit, thereby resulting in ongoing requests for speed enforcement which would unlikely be able to be met given the already significant pressure on police resources.
16. Sunningwell Parish Council have been made fully aware of the above, and given that the proposal if approved would be funded by the council, and that the majority of the length of the proposed 30mph limit does nevertheless technically comply with DfT guidance, there would appear to be a case for its approval, notwithstanding the police objection, or the objection of the local Vale of the White Horse District councillor, noting that the proposal would result in a further speed limit change, but also that in respect of the request for a continuous 30mph speed limit, this would clearly not comply with the DfT guidance.
17. Should the proposal be approved, it is recommended that further speed surveys are carried out to assess its effect not only on the length where the speed limit is reduced, but also on the length of Foxcombe Road to the north east of the proposed change, and also Hinksey Hill, noting that in informal discussions with members of South Hinksey Parish Council (who are supportive of the proposal but have also asked for it to be extended to the Hinksey Hill interchange), some concerns were raised that drivers may increase speeds on these roads, having travelled at a lower speed on the 30mph section.
18. Given that – other than for the current proposal - there is no funding for any of the other speed limit changes requested in response to this consultation, no further action other than the above speed monitoring is considered possible at present.

How the Project supports LTP4 Objectives

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

Financial and Staff Implications (including Revenue)

- 20. The full costs of the speed limit change if approved would be met by Sunningwell Parish Council.

RECOMMENDATION

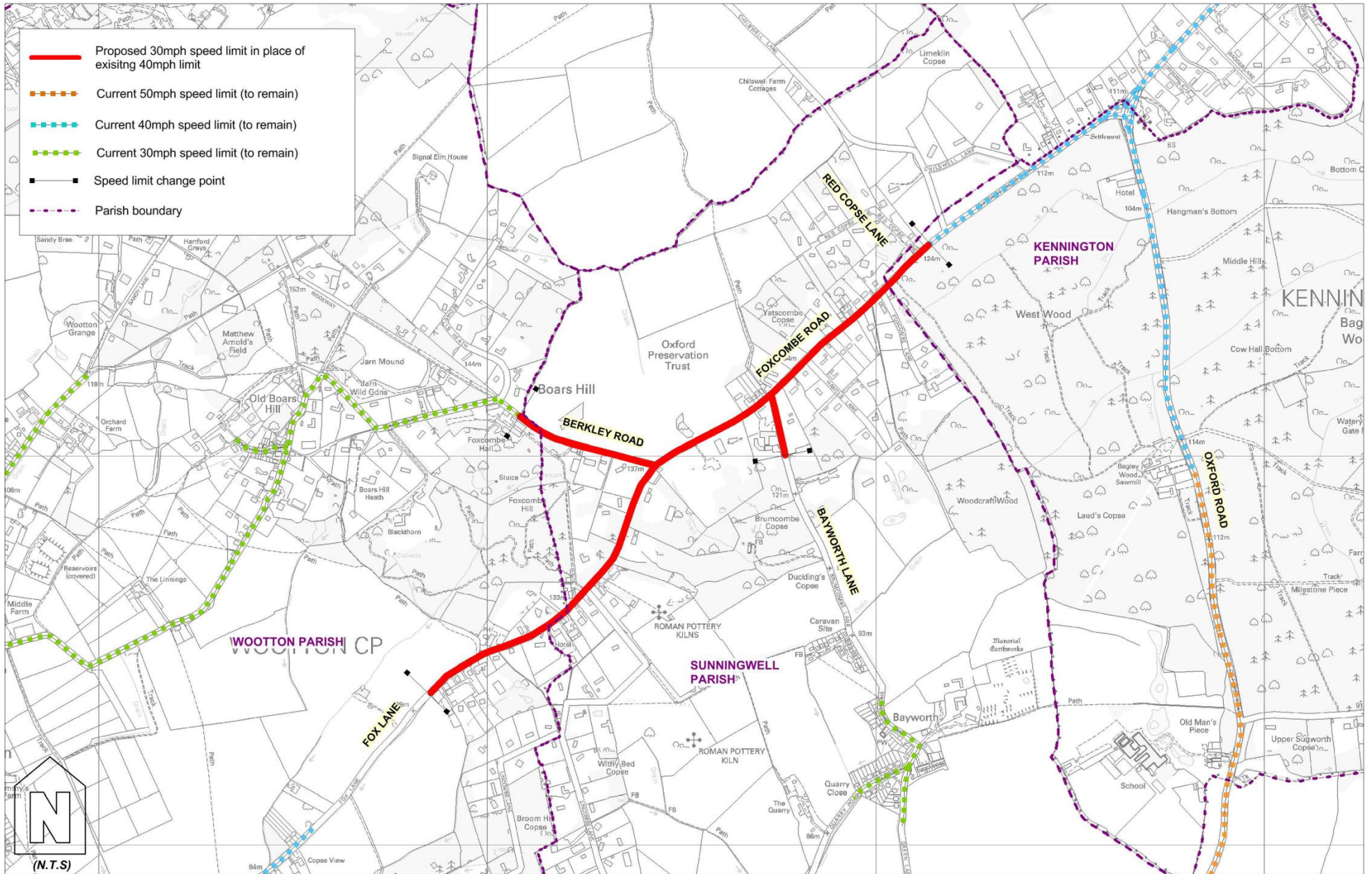
- 21. **The Cabinet Member for the Environment is RECOMMENDED to approve the proposal as advertised**

OWEN JENKINS
Director for Infrastructure Delivery

Background papers: Plan of proposed restrictions
 Consultation responses

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Date drawn: 24/02/2017
 Drawn by: CJM

Map centre:
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RESPONDENT	SUMMARISED COMMENTS
(1) Thames Valley Police	Object – having taken into account: collision history, speed of existing traffic, road environment, enforcement, road character and driver perception etc.
(2) Vale of White Horse District Councillor	Object - support a consistent speed limit over the boundary between Boars Hill and Hinksey Hill. 30mph would be best, but 40mph everywhere is better than 40mph, national speed limit, the proposed 30mph speed limit and then 40mph again as one drives towards Hinksey Hill.
(3) Vale of White Horse District Council Planning	No objection.
(4) Online response	Support - It would seem sensible to have a 30mph limit right from the top of Boars Hill and all the way down Hinksey Hill (the latter at present being 40mph). This would be more consistent than leaving the Hinksey Hill stretch at 40mph. Could this be added in? I suspect that traffic surveys have been done on Hinksey Hill in the not too recent past when the 40mph was adopted.
(5) Online response	Support - Please consider making all of Hinksey Hill (from the roundabout to Foxcombe lane) 30mph too. This is a residential area and children and elderly residents frequently cross the road to use the bus stops etc. Cars using it as a cut through off the ring road regularly drive at high speed along this road, and traffic calming measures and/or a reduced speed limit would greatly enhance the safety of the residents of this road.