

Divisions affected *Ploughley*

CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAY MANAGEMENT – 21 JULY 2022 FINMERE & MIXBURY: A421 – PROPOSED 50MPH SPEED LIMIT

Report by Corporate Director, Environment and Place

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Cabinet Member for Highway Management is RECOMMENDED to approve as advertised:
 - a. the proposed 50mph speed limit on the A421,
 - b. the administrative amendment to the legal documentation to update references of the 'A421' to read 'A4421'.

Executive summary

2. This report presents responses received to a statutory consultation on proposed 50mph speed limit on the A421. A plan showing the proposal is shown in **Annex 1**.

Financial Implications

3. The cost of the consulting on the proposal and its implementation if approved will be funded by the 'High Speed Rail 2' (HS2) 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 proposal will improve the safety of all road users including pedestrians and pedal cyclists.

Consultation

6. Formal consultation was carried out between 2 and 30 June 2022. A notice was published in the Bicester Advertiser newspaper and an email sent to statutory

consultees, including: Thames Valley Police, the Fire & Rescue Service, Ambulance service, Bus operators, countywide transport, access & disabled peoples user groups, Finmere Parish Council, Mixbury Parish Council, Newton Purcell with Shelswell Parish Meeting, Cherwell District Council and the local County Councillor responsible for the Ploughley division.

7. Six responses were received during the formal consultation comprising of: 2 objections, one expressing concerns, 2 in support, and one expressing no objection.
8. The individual responses are shown in **Annex 2**, and copies of the original responses are available for inspection by County Councillors.

Officer response to objections/concerns

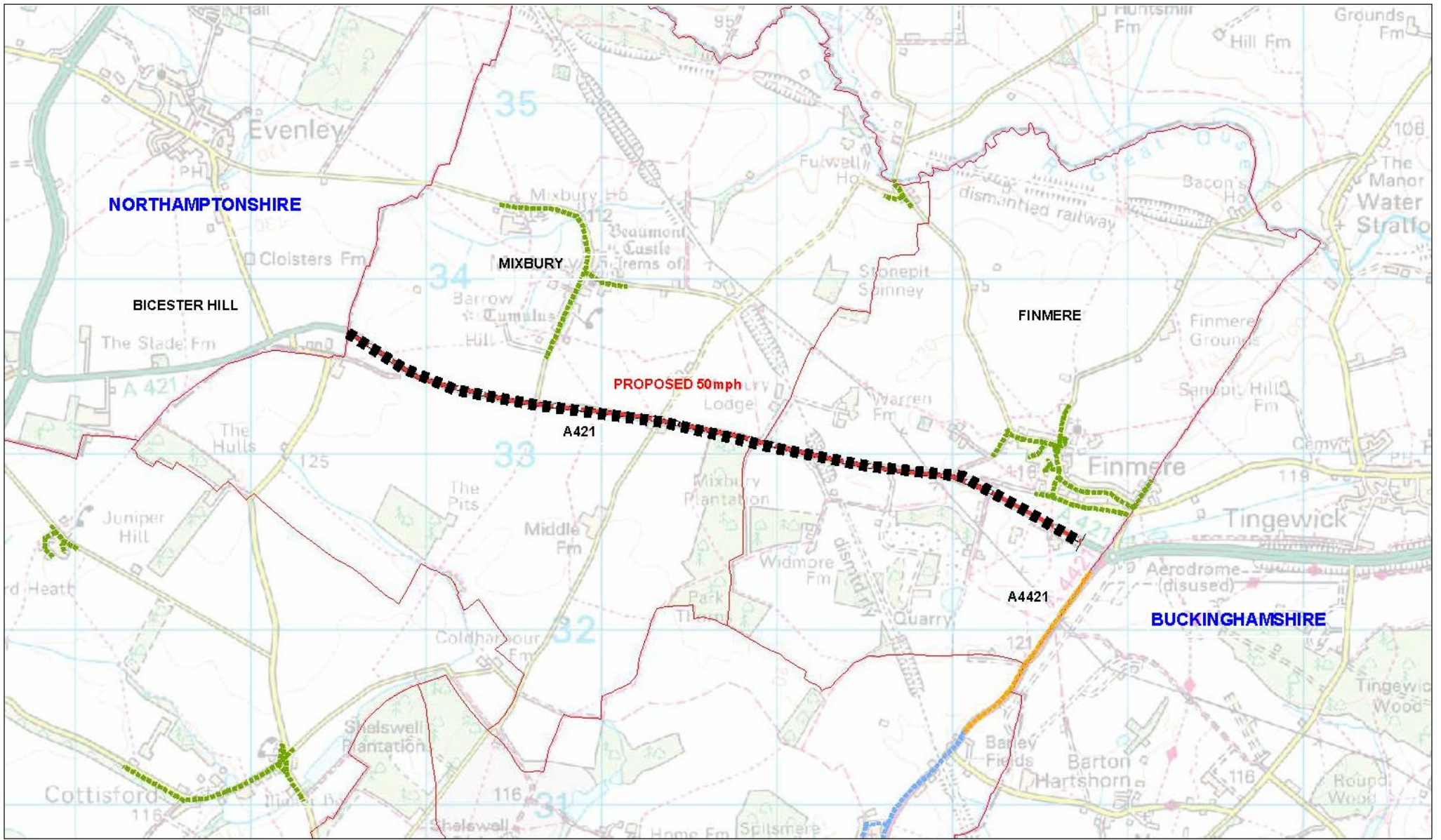
9. Thames Valley Police did not object to the proposals, and welcomed the changes to the road layout, however pointed out that further measures to assist with enforcement should not be dismissed in the future.
10. The two objections received queried the 'need' for the reduction in the speed limit, the reduced speed limit is required, for safety reasons on the immediate bridge approaches. This is because the alignment of the bridge design is constrained to the point that forward visibility over some sections is below National Highways standard at speeds of over 50mph. The bridge alignment should act as a speed control measure for that reason, but it is also a mitigation against any potential safety implications if the posted speed limit is also reduced.
11. HS2 were therefore encouraged to introduce the 50mph speed limit here, as it was agreed by Engineers & Officers within the Local Highway Authority that the reduced limit would be more effective and self-enforcing if it were extended for the entire length of the A421 that lies within Oxfordshire.

Bill Cotton
Corporate Director, Environment and Place

Annexes Annex 1: Consultation Plan
 Annex 2: Consultation responses

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July 2022



RESPONDENT	COMMENTS
(1) Traffic Management Officer, (Thames Valley Police)	<p>No objection - Thames Valley Police welcome the opportunity to engage on plans for road safety improvement</p> <p>Compliance with Speed 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.</p> <p>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 • road environment

	<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>With this scheme I welcome that changes to the road layout are included and further measures should not be dismissed if your aim detailed in the Statement of Reason are to be achieved.</p>
(2) Finmere Parish Council	Support - The PC feels that given the changes to the road system due to HS2 works a lower speed limit would be safer for residents.
(3) Member of the public, (Oxford, Rymers Lane)	Object – Presence of HS2 traffic is not a reason to reduce a speed limit below national guidelines. This is a spurious reason.
(4) Member of the public, (Hanborough, Main Road)	Object – Why ? There is no reason to cut the speed limit on this road. It is wide and fairly straight. With the HS2 bridge you will have a natural method of slowing down traffic. You will just be slowing journey times for the sake of it.
(5) Member of the public, (Mixbury, Fulwell)	<p>Concerns – In principal I support the propose speed limit on the A421. However, I do have concerns that changes in the speed limit may have unintended consequences for the local, rural roads round the A421.</p> <p>Rat running is an increasing problem on the rural roads. The roads are not able to cope with volume of traffic, and the lack of maintenance is seeing significant degradation of the road surface. Sat navs indicate the road is national speed limit, and encourage inappropriate speed for the width, surface, and sight lines, coupled with a lack of local road knowledge by the driver.</p> <p>Trying to explain further, my concern relates to the newer generation of ""connected Sat-Nav"" systems, and the algorithms they use to determine ""fastest routes"". During the recent weekend closures of the A4421 for HS2 work we have seen significant traffic using the rural roads to divert round the closures rather than following the posted diversions. We also see more and more instances of significant traffic when the A43 at Brackley is slow. The rural roads are not capable of supporting the volume of traffic diverting on to them.</p>

	<p>I propose that the current (National speed limits) on the rural roads around the A421 reviewed and reduced to a more appropriate 30MPH. While there is no hope of enforcement, it would have a significant effect of the sat-nav algorithm, and would reduce the instances when the rural roads are calculated as the fastest route.</p>
<p>(6) Local Cllr, (Mixbury, Main Street)</p>	<p>Support – Any reduction in speed limits on our roads is to be welcomed as it will increase safety and fuel efficiency</p>