DELEGATED DECISIONS BY CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT

23 MAY 2024

BIX & ASSENDON: PROPOSED 20MPH SPEED LIMITS

Report by Corporate Director for Environment and Place

RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet Member for Transport Management is RECOMMENDED to:

a) Approve the introduction of 20mph speed limits at Bix village, Lower Assendon and Middle Assendon, as advertised.

Executive Summary

 The report presents responses to a statutory consultation on the proposed introduction of 20mph speed limits in Bix & Assendon as shown in **Annexes 1** to 3.

Financial Implications

2. Funding for consultation and the proposals themselves has been provided by the County Council's 20mph Speed Limit Project.

Equality and Inclusion Implications

3. No implications in respect of equalities or inclusion have been identified in respect of the proposals.

Legal Implications

4. No legal implications have been identified in respect of the proposals.

Sustainability Implications

5. The proposals would help encourage walking and cycling within Bix & Assendon by making them safer and more attractive.

Formal Consultation

6. Formal consultation was carried out between 15 March and 5 April 2024. A notice was published in the Henley Standard 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, Bix & Assendon Parish Council, and the local County Councillor representing the Sonning Common 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 view as 'having concerns' rather than a formal objection.
- 8. Oxford Bus Company offered no objection, confirming that as no changes were proposed to speed limits on the A4130, the operation of local services wouldn't be affected.

Other Responses:

9. 18 responses were received via the online consultation survey during the course of the formal consultation, and these are summarised in the table below:

Proposal	Object	Partially support	Support	No opinion/ objection	Total
Bix	6 (33%)	1 (6%)	8 (44%)	3 (17%)	18
Middle Assendon	6 (33%)	2 (11%)	10 (56%)	-	18
Lower Assendon	7 (39%)	1 (6%)	8 (44%)	2 (11%)	18

- 10. Additionally, a further eight emails were received from residents, comprising of one objection, five raising concerns, and two in support.
- 11. The responses are shown at **Annex 4** and copies of the original responses are available for inspection by County Councillors.

Officer Response to Objections/Concerns

12. The main purpose of the scheme is to encourage greater use of active travel by reducing speeds; this is also expected to 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 help reduce the Counties carbon footprint. This forms part of a countywide programme of works that seeks to deliver 'a safer place with a safer pace'.

- 13. The authority considers objections along the lines of it being unjustified, anticar, a waste of money, not enforceable or pointless to not warrant amendments to a proposal. As such the authority has not addressed any specific comments made of this nature in this report.
- 14. Two of the expressions of concerns cited the frequent use of the B480 by recreational cyclists including quite large groups, and that the proposed 20mph limits might cause difficulties mindful that such cyclists frequently travel at speeds greater than 20mph. While accepting these concerns and also noting that the 20mph programme has been flagged by cycle groups as impacting formal cycle events such as time trial events which require police approval, the comparatively short lengths of the proposed 20mph speed limits on the B480 a Lower and Middle Assendon will in part help allay these potential difficulties.

Bill Cotton Corporate Director for Environment and Place

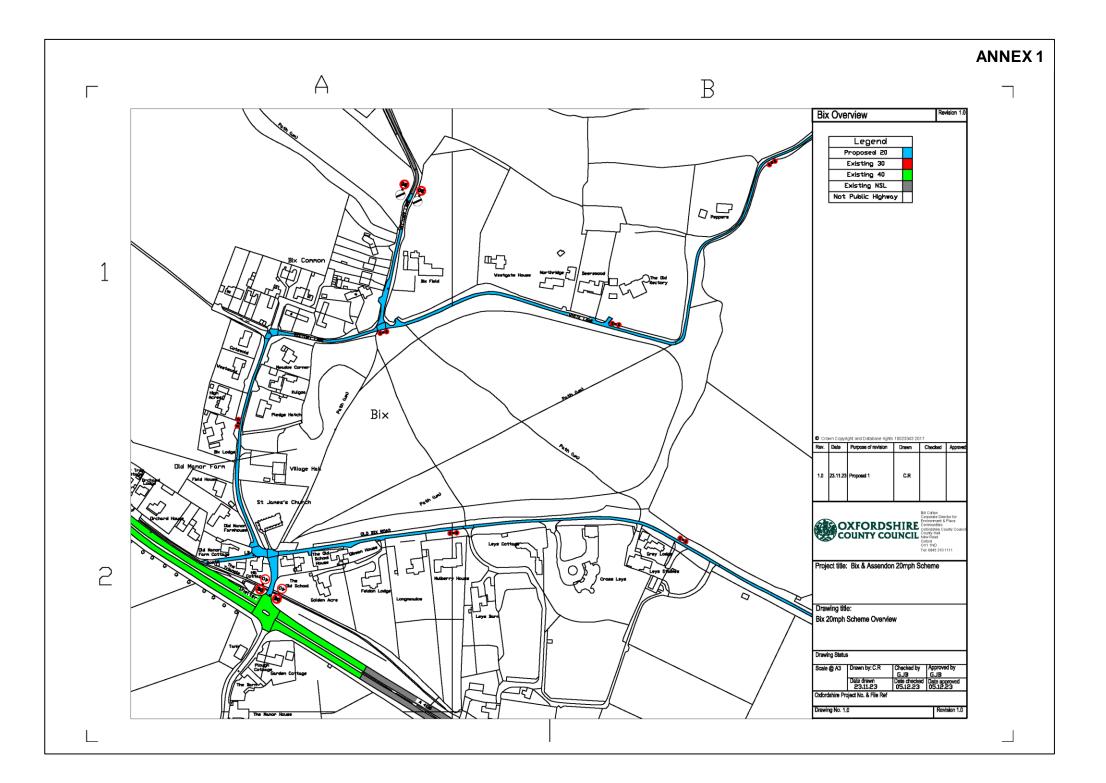
Annexes Annexes 1-3: Consultation plans

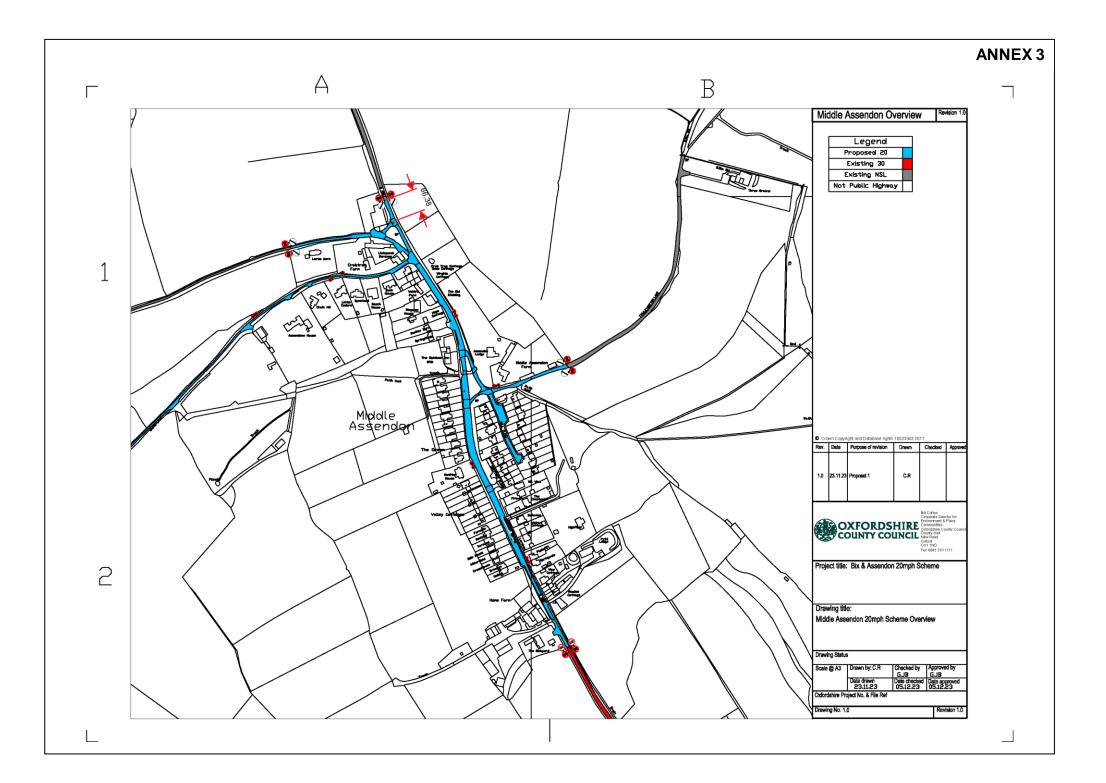
Annex 4: Consultation responses

Contact Officers: Anthony Kirkwood (Team Leader – Vision Zero)

Matt Archer (Portfolio Manager - Programme Delivery)

May 2024





RESPONDENT	COMMENTS
	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. 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.
(1) Traffic Management Officer, (Thames Valley Police)	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. 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.
	The key factors that should be taken into account in any decisions on local speed limits are:
	history of collisionsroad geometry and engineering
	 road function composition of road users (including existing and potential levels of vulnerable road users) existing traffic speeds

	road environment
	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.
	Our stance remains that primarily 20 mph speed limits and zones should be self-enforcing
	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.
(2) Head of Built Environment and Infrastructure, (Go-Ahead	No objection – Thames Travel operates service 23 running hourly between Didcot, Wallingford and Henley, passing through the parish. The service operates along the A4130 serving two pairs of stops one at Bix, and the other at Lower Assendon serving Assendon.
Group)	There are no changes proposed to speed limits on the A4130, affecting the operation of this service.
(3) Local resident, (Middle Assendon, Mill Close)	Object – I support improving traffic safety and agree with a number of the proposals. However, I do have a number of objections.
	Objection 1 – A4130 I am aware that some local residents would like the existing 40 mph limit on the A 4130 to be changed to a 30 mph limit. I am NOT a supporter of this, but I believe that other traffic calming measures are urgently needed.
	In January, the "Bix and Assendon Roadwatch" group, a sub-committee of the Parish Council, reported back to the Parish Council with a number of proposals for this stretch of road.
	In our Parish in the last 15 years there have been eight major accidents including five fatal accidents on or near this part of the A 4130. Documentation about these accidents has also been passed to the Parish Council.

The Roadwatch group proposed a number of low cost actions to be taken on the A 4130. Yellow surrounds to 40 mph signs; count down signs to the 40 mph zone; rumble wave surfaces; improved / refurbished village gates. To this one could add sharks teeth road markings along with speed roundels where not already in place. The Parish Council are awaiting a reply from OCC. I understand that a traffic expert will visit the parish and advise which items are desirable, feasible and affordable.

In summary, I am content that Order 20 is satisfactory in maintaining the 40-mph limit on the A 4130, but more traffic calming measures are needed. I also believe that the history of fatalities does justify a speed camera to be positioned on the A 4130 in Bix, probably near the small crossroads and the school bus pick up and drop off stops.

Objection 2 - B480

I am not concerned about the various side roads off the B 480, where it would actually be difficult to exceed 20 mph on much of the roads in question.

My objection is to the proposal to reduce the speed limit on the B 480 main road from 30 mph to 20 mph.

I recognise that there is indeed a problem with speeding on the road. I have a copy of the survey made in 2018 and from the 13 days of data available, I note the following. Going south, an average of 715 cars per day used the road and 16% of them exceeded 40 mph. Going north, the figures are 822 cars and 8%.

Unfortunately, according to the Department of Transport Local Transport Note 1/07 - Traffic Calming, Section 3.2.9, 20 mph signs on their own are not effective at reducing speed, achieving just a 1 mph reduction.

Instead of a speed reduction, we need a number of speed calming measures to be placed on the B 480. The Roadwatch group has already proposed a number of items. We wish to re-furbish / replace / add village gates. We would also like add rumblewave surfaces plus sharks teeth road markings to accompany existing roundels. In particular, we would like to add chicanes. One at the each end of the 30 mph and one in the middle, between Middle Assendon and Lower Assendon, where motorists tend to increase speed.

We were initially advised that chicanes were not possible without street lighting. However the Roadwatch group provided the Parish Council with a number of local examples (e.g. Gillotts Lane in Henley on Thames) where there are chicanes without street lighting.

I believe that 20 mph zones are suited to busy shopping streets or densely packed housing estates or outside a school. I think that most motorists would agree with such speed reductions. They will not respect 20 mph "on an open country road".

At the north end of Middle Assendon, the proposal is for traffic to slow from 60 mph to 20 mph immediately. I believe that this is unrealistic and would require count down markings to the reduced speed area or a "buffer zone" of 30 mph.

The B480 is a main road between Henley and Watlington and on to the M 40. Although the housing density is significant in part of Middle Assendon much of the 1.7 Km length is open country road.

There are no schools in the parish. Children do not cycle to school as the nearest schools are between 2.0 and 4.3 miles away and they would have to use the A 4130 beyond the safety of the A 4130 cycle path in some cases. They use the school buses provided by either the council or their schools or are taken by car. I am not aware of any accident history on the B 480 in our parish.

In summary, I believe that the B 480 should continue to have a 30 mph limit, but reinforced with traffic calming measures and policed sufficiently to deter speeding.

Objection 3 - B480

I understand that the Parish Council, when making the request for Order 20, recognised the concerns of residents who did not want a 20 mph zone, as well as the wishes of the residents who wanted the entire 1.7 Km length of the B 480 30 mph zone to become a 20 mph zone.

The result was a compromise where the least densely populated area between the villages, a road length of approximately 400 metres, would remain 30 mph, whilst the remainder of the 1.7 Km would become a 20 mph zone.

I welcome the compromise. If there were to be overwhelming support in the villages for its adoption, then I would accept the view of the majority, but would have the following objections that I would hope make the speed reduction more achievable and also more acceptable to most motorists, who are not consulted in this plan.

I would propose 30 mph "buffer zones" are added to give motorists more notice and a more gradual reduction to 20 mph. (As seen in Nettlebed). I would also propose that the 30 mph area between the villages is slightly enlarged, because the 20 mph proposal still covers some open country road.

	This is all assuming that the traffic calming measures outlined in Objection 2 have already been installed – in other words, other measures have been tried before considering the reduction to 20 mph.
(4) Local resident, (Not specified)	Concerns – Traffic here doesn't just exceed 40 it often exceeds 60.Motor bikes are making residents lives a misery especially in the summer. Their noise can be heard for miles around. Over the last few years the number of houses on the main road has tripled. These houses are on the single carriageway of the road. The junction at the entrance to Bix village is particularly vulnerable with children crossing for school buses etc. Unfortunately, very few cars stick to the 40 mile limit unless they see the police van in the lay-by. I am speaking for many when I say I believe this section of the road should be 30 with a camera at the junction. Only a camera will prevent more lives being lost as it's the only deterrent speeding drivers will take notice of. Even many of the drivers who do slow down to 40 going south towards Henley speed up again before they get to the junction as the 40 sign comes to early
(5) Local resident, (Bix)	Concerns – There is already a de facto speed limit on the Old Bix Road as it is impossible to drive safely at more than 20 without potentially damaging your vehicle, due to potholes and degraded road surfaces. As for A4130, having lived adjacent to it for 30 years. The volume of traffic is greatly increased in recent years, the number of fatal and life devastating accidents has increased, and the number of homes facing onto the A4130 has quadrupled. There are more children in the village catching buses on each side of the carriageway at the crossroads and the new cycle path ends at the crossroads, forcing cyclists to cross.
	Therefore I suggest funds should be used to reduce the speed limit to 30mph with calming measures coming up to and through the village on A4130. If this is not possible then finding means to reduce the speed of vehicles passing through to 40 mph, as at present it is highly dangerous and more lives will be lost, with motorbikes and vehicles speeding through our village!
(6) Local resident, (Middle Assendon)	Concerns – We live on the B480 at the lower end of Middle Assendon village and our house is probably the closest to the road in the whole villageso we get a first-hand view of traffic that uses the road. We moved here many years ago, shortly after the 30mph speed restriction was introduced. Traffic has got much heavier since then and has definitely speeded up.

	However, my wife and I believe strongly that the speed limit itself is not the real issue -30 mph is perfectly reasonable on this stretch of road which is straight and wide with good visibility. The issue is one of obeying the existing speed limit with vans and parents on the morning school run being the worst culprits. The 20 mph limit will similarly be ignored by many drivers without enforcement measures. So our belief is that the introduction of the 20mph restriction on the B480 in Middle Assendon is a colossal waste of money and the money would be far better spent on enforcement and/or traffic calming measures.
	Moreover, the 20mph limit will actually make matters worse. Sports cyclists use the B480 on a very regular basis, particularly at weekends for high speed/timed runs, often in groups of 15 or 20. They will not obey the limit and furthermore will try to overtake cars travelling at around 20mph (they already get frustrated with cars travelling at 30 mph). The proposed restriction will cause a major safety hazard for cyclists and may even force responsible drivers to react aggressively.
	We would therefore like to register our concern about the proposals and strongly suggest that alternative measures should be considered.
(7) Local resident	Concerns – My view is that 30 is perfectly safe in this environment (Assendons). I walk and cycle these roads constantly and see no issue with cars safely driven at 30. Inattentive driving and use of phones when driving is a genuine issue but is I suppose harder to police than a simple number so does not get any attention. That is where the focus should be. Driving at 20 on these relatively quiet and open roads will make people less attentive and more likely to be watching their speedo than the actual road and occasional people on it. 20 limits are in the same bracket as smart motorways when it comes to research and evidence as far as I can see having researched. Especially absurd would be 20mph between Middle and Lower Assendon - I think this would just lead to a complete loss of faith in the speed limits locally.
	I understand this is complex and appreciate the effort to make our roads safer
(8) Local resident, (Lower Assendon)	Concerns – Whilst I understand the overall objectives of the OCC, I have the following observations relating to the proposals.

I fear that there will be no meaningful reduction in the speed of vehicles (from current levels), merely by posting a lower limit. This particularly applies to traffic going northwards on the B480 through Lower Assendon, which will have come directly from an NSL environment.

The B480 is a popular route for cyclists, often in large groups. A reduced speed limit of 20mph would make it even more hazardous to overtake a cyclist or group of cyclists due to the longer time it would take to complete the manoeuvre.

As a resident with a garden adjacent to the B480 I am not happy that a law-abiding vehicle travelling at the proposed 20mph limit would take 50% longer to pass our property, compared to 30mph. Also, it is likely to still be in a lower gear, at higher revs, giving a potential increase in overall pollution levels.

Whilst traffic calming measures may help in achieving a lower speed, this needs to be carefully thought through to assess the impact on any neighbouring properties from potential noise (rumble strips or speed bumps) or pollution from vehicles potentially stopping and idling, if something involving giving way to vehicles coming in the opposite direction is introduced.

How will the limits be enforced? It risks being a blunt instrument, if there is no enforcement.

Any measures, in whatever form, are likely to have zero impact on the travel plans and methods of those who use the roads in the areas covered by these proposals.

Overall, I would prefer a retention of 30mph, but with appropriate traffic calming measures to ensure that even 30 mph is being achieved.

(9) Local resident, (Lower Assendon, Old Bix Road)

Bix 20mph – **Object**Middle Assendon 20mph – **Object**Lower Assendon 20mph – **Object**

Not necessary. Most dangerous area is the downward stretch of dual carriageway. Reducing to single carriageway and lowering speed limit would be more beneficial

Travel change: No

(10) Local resident, (Middle Assendon, B480)	Bix 20mph – Object Middle Assendon 20mph – Object Lower Assendon 20mph – Object Too slow. It's ridiculous. 30 MPH is acceptable. Travel change: No
(11) Local resident, (Middle Assendon, B480)	Bix 20mph – Object Middle Assendon 20mph – Object Lower Assendon 20mph – Object 30 is perfectly safe. I walk and cycle these roads constantly and see no issue with cars safely driven at 30. Inattentive driving and use of phones when driving is a genuine issue but is I suppose harder to police than a pointless number. That is where the focus should be. Driving at 20 on these relatively quiet and open roads will make people less attentive and more likely to be watching their speedo than the actual road. 20 limits are in the same bracket as smart motorways when it comes to research and evidence. Travel change: No
(12) Local resident, (Middle Assendon, B480)	Bix 20mph – Object Middle Assendon 20mph – Object Lower Assendon 20mph – Object Not necessary as a 30mph limit is perfectly adequate. Travel change: No
(13) Local resident, (Middle Assendon, White Lane)	Bix 20mph – Object Middle Assendon 20mph – Object Lower Assendon 20mph – Object

	I would rather money was spent on potholes in village and a speed camera which works very well on road past Shiplake school You state that this is to encourage other modes of transport - so I am supposed to carry all my food shopping back from Henley - how? 20mph is great around schools and town centres but leave other roads alone Travel change: No
(14) Local resident, (Middle Assendon, B480)	Bix 20mph – Object Middle Assendon 20mph – Partially support Lower Assendon 20mph – Object The road between The Fairmile and Assendon is relatively featureless and safe to drive at 30mph, more of an issue is people speeding within the zone, I don't think a 20mph limit would solve that. Travel change: No
(15) Local resident, (Middle Assendon, B480)	Bix 20mph – Partially support Middle Assendon 20mph – Partially support Lower Assendon 20mph – Partially support I'm against the urbanisation of the countryside with more signage/cameras/etc. Travel change: No
(16) Local resident, (Middle Assendon, The Green)	Bix 20mph – No objection Middle Assendon 20mph – Object Lower Assendon 20mph – Object No reason for change

	Travel change: No
(17) Local resident, (Middle Assendon, Chestnut Close)	Bix 20mph – No objection Middle Assendon 20mph – Support Lower Assendon 20mph – No objection A4130 through Middle Assendon is a busy commuter path at rush hour. This is also when the children are crossing our walking beside the road to get the school buses. Too many vehicles are rushing through the village, clearly in excess of 30mph. It is so dangerous. I hope that the 20mph limit is put in place and policed accordingly, and that speeders either find a new route or reduce speed. Fully support 20mph initiative through Middle Assendon. Travel change: Yes - cycle more
(18) Local resident, (Middle Assendon, Fawley Bottom Lane)	Bix 20mph – No objection Middle Assendon 20mph – Support Lower Assendon 20mph – No objection Safety Travel change: No
(19) Member of public, (Adderbury, Round Close Road)	Bix 20mph – Support Middle Assendon 20mph – Support Lower Assendon 20mph – Support For the safety of pedestrians and cyclists. Travel change: Yes - cycle more

(20) Local resident, (Bix, B4130)	Bix 20mph – Support Middle Assendon 20mph – Support Lower Assendon 20mph – Support There are no pavements in some of these areas which means pedestrians (sometimes walking dogs or with kids) are walking on the road - there are too many blind corners for cars to be able to stop quickly enough which has the potential to cause very serious accidents - 20mph would almost certainly prevent serious injury Travel change: Yes – walk/wheel more
(21) Local resident, (Middle Assendon, B480)	Bix 20mph – Support Middle Assendon 20mph – Support Lower Assendon 20mph – Support Many residential houses exit directly onto the road with heavy lorries, large farm vehicles and cars all travelling at high speed. The road is also used as a pleasant short cut to Watlington and the M40. Additionally a significant of cyclists ride through the village, both individuals and groups from cycling clubs throughout the week. Travel change: Yes – walk/wheel more
(22) Local resident, (Middle Assendon, B480)	Bix 20mph – Support Middle Assendon 20mph – Support Lower Assendon 20mph – Support In Bix the roads are very narrow, with many blind corners, made even more dangerous by the need to drive in the middle of the road to avoid potholes. For the Assendons, the B480 is narrow, with several blind exits from side roads. To avoid potholes, traffic is often forced into the middle of the road. The re-emergence of the Assendon Spring has led to further deterioration, despite recent ditch-clearing. There are also several established crossing-points for herds of deer, which pose additional risks.

	At times local farm activity results in fleets of very wide tractors passing through, usually towing enormous trailers. Finally, SatNavs show the B480 as a shortcut up the Stonor valley to Watlington, resulting in high volumes of wholly inappropriate traffic, (including enormous tankers and double-artics). Travel change: Yes – walk/wheel more
(23) Local resident, (Middle Assendon, Mill Close)	Bix 20mph – Support Middle Assendon 20mph – Support Lower Assendon 20mph – Support We experience many vehicles driving far too fast through Lower and Middle Assendon and beyond towards Stonor. Pets have been killed. We also have a lot of wildlife crossing these areas. Cyclists and pedestrians are also in danger especially where the roads narrow or where the many pot holes restrict the usable width. Therefore I support the proposed speed restrictions in all three zones. Travel change: No
(24) Local resident, (Middle Assendon, Fawley Bottom Lane)	Bix 20mph – Support Middle Assendon 20mph – Support Lower Assendon 20mph – Support Cars race through the villages without any concern for residents. As there is no pavement speeding cars make it. very dangerous to walk along the road Travel change: Yes – walk/wheel more
(25) Local resident, (Middle Assendon, Main Road)	Bix 20mph – Support Middle Assendon 20mph – Support Lower Assendon 20mph – Support Traffic screams along Stonir Valley at great speed. I find it hazardous trying to exit our property

	Travel change: No
(26) Local resident, (Middle Assendon, Mill Close)	Bix 20mph – Support Middle Assendon 20mph – Support Lower Assendon 20mph – Support Too many vehicles speed through the Assendons. There is no pavement between the villages and the Fairmile. Children need to use the road. Travel change: Yes – walk/wheel more
(27) Local resident, (Middle Assendon, Mill Close)	Support – I live in Middle Assendon and would like to see 20 mph in the village area but can understand the objection to 20 mph out of the village, where there are no houses, otherwise people won't adhere to the restrictions in the village. The bit of road out of Middle Assendon with nothing on it between The Rickyard and Witness Farm does not need to be 20mph for instance. I hope these are useful comments and we get a 20mph limit in the village.
(28) Local resident, (Bix, White Lane)	Support – Lane I fully support the 20mph limit on the single track lanes in Bix (Rectory Lane, White Lane and Old Bix Road). At present Rectory Lane has a 30mph sign at the start of the lane which is not appropriate for a single track road. Cars passing along the open stretch of White Lane by the common are often travelling too fast for a single track road. 20mph signs will be a reminder to motorists of the correct speed for single track roads.