

CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT – 26 MARCH 2020

A424 – FULBROOK TO IDBURY – PROPOSED 50MPH SPEED LIMIT

Report by Interim Director of Community Operations

Recommendation

1. The Cabinet Member for the Environment is RECOMMENDED to approve the 50mph speed limit as advertised.

Executive summary

2. Speed limits are reviewed when there are changes to the road layout or usage, as a result of development and when requested by the local member or local councils due to concerns over road safety.

Introduction

3. This report presents responses received to a statutory consultation to introduce a 50mph speed limit on the entire length of the A424 Burford to Stow road within Oxfordshire.

Background

4. The above proposals as shown at Annex 1 have been put forward following a review of the recent accident history – including several accidents resulting in fatal injury – and, if approved, would be funded by the Road Safety budget within the County Council's Capital programme.

Consultation

5. Formal consultation on the proposal was carried out between 15 January and 14 February 2020. A public notice was placed in the Witney Gazette newspaper and sent to statutory consultees, including Thames Valley Police, the Fire & Rescue Service, Ambulance service, Fulbrook, Taynton, Milton under Wychwood, Fifield and Idbury parish councils, West Oxfordshire District Council and local County Councillors.
6. Nine responses were received. 3 objections, 4 in support and 1 response not objecting but expressing some concerns. These are recorded at Annex 2 with copies of the full responses available for inspection by County Councillors.

Response to objections and other comments

7. Thames Valley Police expressed no objection to the proposal noting the poor safety record of the road including three fatal accidents in recent years and also that the speed surveys carried out by the County Council at their request indicated that a 50mph speed limit may be appropriate. A site visit has also been carried out with officers to identify possible sites for police enforcement.
8. West Oxfordshire District Council, Fifield Parish Council and Fulbrook Parish Council expressed support for the proposal along with one response expressing support also received from a member of the public.
9. Three objections were received from members of the public citing concerns that the proposed 50mph speed limit was not needed and could be counterproductive if it resulted in an increased number of hazardous overtaking movements by road users frustrated by the slower speed of vehicles ahead complying with the proposed limit. One of these responses expressed concerns specifically on the approximately 2.5km length of the route north of the Tangley Farm junction, which they considered to be suitable for the current national speed limit given the comparatively straight alignment of the road and which they considered provided safe overtaking opportunities, noting also that no proposal has been made for a 50mph on the adjoining part of the route within Gloucestershire.
10. A response was also received from a member of the public which – while not expressing an objection – raised concerns that the a 50mph speed limit would not be effective unless enforced and that a lower (possibly 40mph) speed limit would be appropriate at the junctions along the route. Concerns were expressed also on the need for improved road markings and signing at the junctions in particular.
11. Noting the above, 50mph speed limits have been introduced on a large number of rural A class roads, including those with very similar widths and alignments and have found to help reduce accident risks with no evidence of an increased number of accidents involving overtaking. The proposed limit is considered to be consistent with Department for Transport guidelines on setting local speed limits. The introduction of lower speed limits in the vicinity of junctions as suggested by one of the respondents is not considered to be consistent with the above
12. The existing traffic signs and road markings - particularly those at junctions – will be renewed as required as part of the works to implement the speed limit in response to the concerns raised on this matter.

How the Project supports LTP4 Objectives

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

Financial and Staff Implications (including Revenue)

14. Funding for the proposed speed limit has been provided from the Road Safety budget within the Oxfordshire County Council Capital programme.

JASON RUSSELL

Interim Director of Community Operations

Background papers: Plan of proposed waiting restrictions
 Consultation responses

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March 2020

Drawing No. Revision 0



SAFETY, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION

IN ADDITION TO THE HAZARDS/RISKS NORMALLY ASSOCIATED WITH THE TYPES OF WORK DETAILED ON THIS DRAWING, NOTE THE FOLLOWING SIGNIFICANT RESIDUAL RISKS

CONSTRUCTION	(ENTER 'NONE' IF APPLICABLE)
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USE	(ENTER 'NONE' IF APPLICABLE)
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Rev.	Date	Purpose of revision	Drawn	Checked	Approved



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A424 Fulbrook - Idbury - Proposed 50mph

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RESPONDENT	SUMMARISED COMMENTS
(1) Traffic Management Officer, (Thames Valley Police)	<p>No objection – This section came to note in the last few years with several fatal collisions. In view of the safety record Police requested speed profiles to establish or eliminate speed causations on what is an undulating very rural road. Speed was identified by the data and consideration to a lower limit with some supervision taken to Oxon CC.</p> <p>I have been to site with County officers with a view to locating hardened areas suitable for mobile enforcement vehicles at appropriate locations which is justified with the collision evidence. Any enforcement will be at the discretion of Thames Valley Police on road safety grounds.</p>
(2) Fulbrook Parish Council	<p>Support – that we totally agree with the speed reduction limit. The current 60 mph is not acceptable. You have the complete backing and support from Fulbrook Parish Council. If we can help you with anything at all, then please don't hesitate to ask.</p>
(3) Fifield Parish Council	<p>Support – This is excellent news, which we have been seeking for many years. However, I will be grateful to know how it is to be "policed" – bearing in mind the present 60mph is exceeded by over 30% (with impunity) on a daily basis and both Thames Valley Police and the County Council have repeatedly contradicted local knowledge about the speed of traffic and declined any action on the ground they do not perceive any problem?</p>
(4) West Oxfordshire District Council	<p>Support – In the interests of pedestrian and road safety, West Oxfordshire District Council supports the proposed reduction in speed limit on the A424 Burford to Stow-on-the-Wold road from the A361 Fulbrook roundabout to the Gloucestershire Country Boundary at Idbury.</p> <p>This information is based on the proposal being carried out in accordance with the details supplied in the Public Notice, Statement of Reasons, Consultation Plans, Speed Limit Order, General Traffic Signs Schedule, Road Markings Schedule, Location Map and Draft Traffic Regulation Order that accompanied the enquiry.</p>

<p>(5) Email Response, (unknown)</p>	<p>Object – I’m really worried about this one. It’s not because I’m interested in ragging down the A424 at speed - it’s because I stick to the limits on both my motorcycle and in the car.</p> <p>I use the A424 a lot. It’s clear, wide and open with good, long views. Most of the issues I see are around frustration overtakes - even at the existing speed limit - and poor judgement at junctions. I believe the new limit would increase the former whilst doing nothing about the latter.</p> <p>I can’t see any crashes from the data that would imply any benefit for a 50 limit. In fact, a lower limit is far more likely to increase disengagement from task and increase distraction and a tendency to mentally switch off.</p> <p>From the Stats 19 data, I can’t see anything that would be improved by the addition of a 50mph limit on a road where (I’m guessing) the 85th percentile speed would be higher - quite possibly the mean speed too. If drivers are already frustrated at 60, they’ll be far more likely to overtake at 50.</p> <p>Most frustration overtakes I see are from drivers often following older drivers who are running considerably below the limit - usually at between 45 and 55mph. They build up huge queues of weaving, irritated followers who become eager to pass. A 50 will, I believe, increase this tendency for frustration overtakes.</p> <p>Making drivers drive at 50 on a road with these characteristics is going to feel artificially low for the road conditions, leading to massive non-compliance. Oxfordshire’s limits are already so low in places that I’m regularly overtaken when complying with them - yesterday through Curbridge’s 30 limit, earlier in the week leaving Clanfield in the 30, then in the 50 extending up to Faringdon.</p> <p>A lot of these crashes look like junction-related accidents. Would OCC consider specific VAS rather than a limit?</p>
<p>(6) Local Resident, (Bledington)</p>	<p>Object – No evidence has been given that this stretch of road is particularly dangerous.</p>
<p>(7) Local Resident, (Oxford)</p>	<p>Object - I object to the proposed speed limit as described in the public consultation.</p> <p>I would not object if the northern limit of the speed limit were to be at a point about 200 metres north of the Tanglely Hall junction.</p>

	<p>However, immediately north of that point there is clear forward visibility of more than a kilometre, almost as far as the Merry-mouth Inn. This provides by far the safest opportunity for overtaking in the 9 miles between Burford and Stow. When overtaking a vehicle travelling at about 45mph, restricting the speed to 50mph would make the overtaking prolonged and difficult. There are no junctions or dwellings on this length. I most recently drove this route (southbound) on Sunday 2nd February.</p> <p>From a search on Gloucestershire County Council's website, it appears that they are not consulting on a speed limit north of the County Boundary. The length of A424 between Merry-mouth Inn and the County Boundary (about 1 kilometre) probably does not need a 50mph speed limit.</p>
(8) Email Response, (unknown)	<p>Concerns – does not believe that a 50mph speed limit would make much difference in slowing down traffic on this road unless it is enforced. The speed limit should be lowered at junctions to possibly 40mph. The junctions should have improved lining and signing to help slow traffic as people tend to overtake at junctions. Also a query about the limit not continuing within Gloucestershire.</p>
(9) Local Resident, (Abingdon)	<p>Support – No comments.</p>