

Individual Decision

Title of Report:	40mph Speed limit - A4 Western Avenue, Newbury		
Report to be considered by:	Councillor Sally Hannon	on:	17th March 2005
Forward Plan Ref:	ID0862		

Purpose of Report:

To inform the Portfolio Member for Highways and Transportation of the comments received during the statutory consultation on the proposed replacement of a section of 30mph speed limit with a 40mph limit on the A4 Western Avenue, Newbury and to seek approval of officer recommendations.

Recommended Action:

That the Executive Member for Highways and Transportation resolves to approve the recommendations as set out in section 5 of this report.

Reason for decision to be taken:

Annual speed limit review.

List of other options considered:

Not to implement the proposed 40mph speed limit.

Key background documentation:

- Criteria for speed limits.
- ID0794 report - speed limit review 2004.
- Comments received during statutory consultation.
- Plan No SLR/04/10/001.
- Revised Plan No SLR/04/10/001A.
- Letter from Robert Sandilands Primary School in support of the revised proposals.

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Supporting Information

1 Background

- 1.1 The speed limit on the length of the A4 between the roundabout at its junction with Oxford Road and a location west of its junction with Brummell Road was considered by the Council's speed limit task group as part of the speed limit review for 2004. The current speed limit is 30mph as is the section which continues westwards towards the A34 Slip Road roundabout.
- 1.2 The A4 at this location is approximately 9 metres wide with footways on both sides of the road, which are mainly separated from the carriageway by a grass verge. The length of road between its junction with Oxford Road and Brummell Road has only one access whilst to the west of the Brummell Road junction there are residential frontages and business development including a garage/car showroom, a post office and a public house/hotel. There is also a staggered pedestrian crossing east of its junction with Old Bath Road to aid pedestrian movements across the A4.
- 1.3 In view of the character of the road between the Oxford Road roundabout and just west of Brummell Road and with reference to the national criteria for the setting of speed limits, it was considered that this length of road would be more appropriate for a 40mph speed limit. Further west of the Brummell Road junction the character of the road changes where there is frontage development and this length of road is more appropriate for a 30mph speed limit.
- 1.4 A traffic survey was undertaken during August 2003 in the vicinity of the Oxford Road and the Old Bath Road / Brummell Road junction. The results showed that the 85th percentile speed for westbound and eastbound traffic was 39mph with an average two-way daily volume of 14,265 vehicles.
- 1.5 In the latest three year period there have been four recorded injury accidents on the A4 between the roundabouts at the Oxford Road junction and the slip road to the A34 by-pass. All the accidents resulted in slight injuries being received, two of which occurred on the length of A4 under consideration. These two accidents involved a vehicle defect and vehicle being pursued by the police.
- 1.6 The recommendations of the task group, which included the proposal to replace the section of 30mph speed on the A4 from its junction with Oxford Road to west of Brummell Road with a 40mph speed limit, was considered by Individual Decision on 29th July 2004 (ID0794) when it was approved to undertake the statutory consultation process. The proposal is shown on Plan no SLR/04/10/001

2 Results of statutory consultation

- 2.1 At the close of the statutory consultation process on 16th December 2004, three responses had been received. One was from the ward member for Speen, one from Robert Sandilands Primary School, which also included a 152-signature petition and the third response was from a parent whose children attend Robert Sandilands Primary School and who had also signed the petition.
- 2.2 The comments from the ward member for Speen were that Robert Sandilands Primary School is very close to the A4 and children cross this road to go swimming or to the museum in town. There is a pedestrian crossing but the 30mph speed limit ensures more safety for those children. The ward member has subsequently submitted a list of concerns associated with the proposal which are detailed in Appendix 1 to this report.

- 2.3 A summary of the comments received from Robert Sandilands Primary School are that the proposed speed limit runs immediately adjacent to the school and bisects their catchment area, a faster road will be more dangerous, many children have to cross the A4 to come to school and all the children have to cross it to participate in normal school activities and the proposal is at odds with local and national policies and with the school trying to encourage children to walk to school.
- 2.4 The petition included within the response from Robert Sandilands Primary School states "*many of our children have to cross the Bath Road to get to and from school. All our children cross the road for school activities, such as swimming at Northcroft, museum visits and services at St Mary's church. If you believe this proposal will make the road more dangerous for our children please sign below. If you would like to protest further, please write to David Holling, Head of Legal and Electoral Services, West Berkshire Council Offices, Market Street, Newbury, RG14 5LD by 16th December setting out the grounds for your objection*"
- 2.5 A summary of the comments received from the one of the parents whose children attend Robert Sandilands Primary School is that drivers do not adhere to the current 30mph speed restriction, the proposal of the 40mph speed limit extends along the boundary of Robert Sandilands Primary School and special consideration must be given to the children walking to the school and crossing the A4, particularly as parents and children have become used to a lower speed limit.

3 Response to the comments received during the statutory consultation

- 3.1 The boundary of Robert Sandilands Primary School which abuts the A4 Western Avenue does not have any pedestrian or vehicular access to the school. The entrance to the school is located on Brummell Road approximately 60 metres from its junction with the A4.
- 3.2 Children crossing the A4 use the signalised crossing facility to the east of Old Bath Road, installed by the Council during 2003. Although many crossing facilities are located within 30mph speed limits there are a number located within 40mph and 50mph speed limits. One crossing within a 40mph speed limit is located on the A4 Bath Road at Calcot, Reading and is used by parents when taking their children to and from Calcot Junior School. The location and use of this crossing has not presented any road safety concerns.
- 3.3 The existing crossing facility east of Brummell Road allows pedestrians to safely cross the A4 and changing the speed limit will not affect pedestrians using this crossing as vehicles have to stop when directed by the traffic signals.
- 3.4 The results of the traffic survey show that the 85th percentile speed of traffic is 39mph, which is appropriate for a 40mph speed limit. Revising the speed limit to 40mph is unlikely to have any significant effect on existing vehicle speeds.
- 3.5 The proposal is in accordance with national criteria for speed limits and the Council's local policies for setting speed limits, which is why the task group have recommended the change.
- 3.6 Detailed Officer responses to the ward members list of concerns are contained in Appendix 1 to this report.

4 Conclusion

- 4.1 In view of the comments received during the statutory consultation, it would not be unreasonable to reduce the proposed length of the 40mph speed limit so that the junctions of the A4 Western Avenue with Brummell Road and Old Bath Road and the crossing facility remain within the 30mph speed restriction. The 40 mph section could be provided from the Oxford Road roundabout to a location east of Old Bath Road, as shown on the revised Plan No SLR/04/10/001A. This would have the effect of highlighting the start of the 30mph speed limit in advance of the main pedestrian routes where the signs are likely to have more impact on driver behaviour and hence enhance road safety near to the school.
- 4.2 To obtain the views from the School about the revised proposals on Plan No SLR/04/10/001A a meeting was held on 2nd February 2005 with the Head Teacher and the Chair of Governors who organised the petition. Having seen the revised proposals both the Head Teacher and Chair of Governors fully support the revised scheme, which has been confirmed in a letter dated 4th February 2005.
- 4.3 The length of A4 between its junctions with the Oxford Road roundabout and the Old Bath Road is consistent with the criteria for a 40mph speed limit. Revising the speed limit would make it consistent with other 40mph speed limits and be more appropriate for the length of road given the lack of frontage development and the results of the traffic survey. It would not affect pedestrians using the crossing facility as the crossing is controlled by traffic signals.
- 4.4 The results of the speed limit survey show that drivers are not respecting the existing 30mph speed limit in the vicinity of the Brummell Road junction. Changing the speed limit to 40mph as indicated in the revised proposal will enable the speed limit to be positively signed and highlight the start of the 30mph speed limit, which is likely to have the benefit of reducing vehicle speeds past the Primary School and at the pedestrian crossing.
- 4.5 It is considered that the revised proposal to the speed limit would be appropriate for the character of the road whilst addressing the concerns of the respondents. If the revised speed limit is implemented it could be monitored to determine its effectiveness. Officers expect the 85th percentile speed of traffic will reduce near the school and at the pedestrian crossing.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 It is recommended that the existing 30mph speed limit on the A4 Western Avenue be replaced with the revised proposal for a 40 mph limit between its junction with Oxford Road roundabout and a location east of Old Bath Road and the pedestrian crossing facility, as shown on the revised Plan No SLR/04/10/001A.
- 5.2 That the respondents to the statutory consultation be informed accordingly.
- 5.3 That the speed limit be monitored with the ward members being informed of the results.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Detailed objections from the Ward Member Paul Bryant with officer responses.

Implications

Financial:	The recommendations will be funded from the Council's Capital Programme.
Legal:	The speed limit traffic regulation order will require sealing by Legal and Electoral Services.
Environmental:	The proposed speed limit will make the speed limit more appropriate for the surrounding environment and will be consistent with other speed limits.

Consultation Responses

Members:

Leader of Council: Councillor Royce Longton supports the proposal provided that it has the support of the portfolio Holder and Ward Members

Select Committee Chairmen: Councillor Brian Bedwell feels that he can not support the recommendations if a Ward Member has objected to the proposals.

P&L Committee Chairman
(where appropriate): N/A

Ward Members: Councillor's Tony Vickers, Sue Farrant and Marcus Franks support the recommendations. Councillor Paul Bryant does not support the recommendations and his comments are detailed in Appendix 1.

Opposition Spokesperson: Councillor Brian Bedwell feels that he can not support the recommendations if a Ward Member has objected to the proposals.

Advisory Members: N/A

Local Stakeholders: Have been consulted as part of the statutory consultation process.

Officers Consulted: Mark Cole and Mark Edwards.

Trade Union: N/A