

Individual Decision

Title of Report:	40mph Speed limit – A329 Wallingford Road, Streatley		
Report to be considered by:	Councillor Sally Hannon	on:	31st March 2005
Forward Plan Ref:	ID0869		

Purpose of Report:

To inform the Portfolio Member for Highways and Transportation of the comments received during the statutory consultation on the proposal to introduce a 40mph speed limit on a section of the A329 Wallingford Road, Streatley and to seek approval of officer recommendations.

Recommended Action:

That the Portfolio Member for Highways and Transportation resolves to approve the recommendations as set out in section 6 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.
- Responses to the statutory consultation.
- Plan Nos. SLR/04/12 and SLR/04/12/ 001.
- Area Highway Section (Newbury) Report 12 December 1994.

Portfolio Member:	Sally Hannon
Tel. No.:	01635 846855
E-mail Address:	sallyhannon@hotmail.com

Contact Officer Details

Name:	Andrew Garratt
Job Title:	Principal Traffic Engineer
Tel. No.:	01635 519491
E-mail Address:	agarratt@westberks.gov.uk

Supporting Information

1 Background

- 1.1 The speed limit on the length of the A329 Wallingford Road, between its junction with the A417 Wantage Road and a location north of its junction with Townsend Road, was considered by a task group as part of the speed limit review for 2004.
- 1.2 This length of the A329, which is subject to a 30mph speed restriction, is approximately 7 metres wide, with a footway on the eastern side of approximately 1.5 metres in width. The road is rural in nature with light woodland and open farmland located to the east and residential properties to the west which do not front onto the A329 but are accessed via Townsend Road or private driveways. The boundaries of these properties, which are separated from the carriageway by a grass verge varying in width from 2 to 8 metres, are mainly hidden from view due to the location of trees and vegetation. There is also no street lighting present along this length of road.
- 1.3 Within this section of the A329 there is one residential frontage and one residential garage that is accessed directly from the A329. There are 27 properties located within Townsend Road and Three Gables Lane, which are accessed from the A329 to the east or from the A417 from the west. On the length of the A329 under review there is a private road with an adjacent footpath that leads to 15 properties in Cleeve Court and a playing field area. There is also a private driveway leading to 3 residential properties opposite the road leading to Cleeve Court.
- 1.4 In the latest three year period there have been two recorded injury accidents on the A329 between the start of the existing 30mph speed limit and its junction with the A417 Wantage Road. One accident involved a slight injury being received at the junction of the A417 when a vehicle pulled out into the path of a northbound vehicle. The other accident resulted in a serious injury being received in the vicinity of Townsend Road when a school bus stopped to allow students off and whilst a student collected their belongings from the locker the bus moved off injuring the pedestrian. This accident was not speed related.
- 1.5 A traffic survey was undertaken on the A329 to the north of its junction with the A417 during February 2004 for a period of seven days. The results of the survey showed that the 85th percentile speed for northbound and southbound traffic was 51mph and 45mph respectively, with an average two-way daily volume of 4,793 vehicles. The results also showed that 92 percent of the traffic was exceeding the 30mph speed limit.

2 Speed Limit Review 1994

- 2.1 In July 1994 the Area Highway Section for Newbury, a Berkshire County Council Sub Committee, agreed to the introduction of safety measures on the A329. These measures consisted of marker posts and an assessment for a double white line system.
- 2.2 On 26th September 1994 the Area Highway Section considered a 175 signature petition stating “in view of the large number of accidents and ever present threat to pedestrians caused by the sheer speed of traffic on the A329 inside the village area by Townsend Road, Streatley, we the undersigned herewith petition the Berkshire County Council to reposition the existing 30mph sign from near the centre of the village to a position beyond Townsend Road, to the north and outside the village area”.

- 2.3 The Area Highway Section considered a report on 12 December 1994, the recommendations of which were to introduce a double white line system on the A329, assess the introduction of a footway on the west side of the road and to advertise a 50mph speed limit. The Section agreed to the implementation of the double white lines and despite the report indicating that the criteria for a 30mph was not met the Section resolved that a 30mph speed limit be advertised. The Thames Valley Police objected to the advertised order on the grounds that that the road did not meet the criteria and considered that it would be an inappropriate limit which would be abused and did not support its enforcement.
- 2.4 A speed and traffic count survey was undertaken and the results indicated that the daily volume of traffic was 5,500 vehicles, with the 85th percentile speeds being 49mph for both north and southbound traffic. The report dated 12 December 1994 indicated that there had been no recorded injury accidents in the 3 year period to the end of July 1994.

3 Speed Limit Review 2004

- 3.1 The length of the A329 under consideration was one of sixteen speed limits considered by a task group as part of the Speed Limit Review 2004. The task group consisted of two representatives from the Thames Valley Police, two district councillors and two officers from the Council. In view of the character of the road between the A417 junction and a point north of the junction with Townsend Road and with reference to the national criteria for the setting of speed limits, it was considered that this length of road is not appropriate for a 30mph speed limit. Traffic surveys were undertaken to assess the current traffic speeds. The results of the survey, detailed in paragraph 1.5, reinforced the view that the existing 30mph speed limit is inappropriate.
- 3.2 During the period of the traffic surveys being undertaken and the task group considering the speed limit, a local resident expressed his concerns about the speed of traffic passing the junction of Townsend Road and the difficulty residents have when exiting Townsend Road. The task group recommended that a 40mph speed limit should be introduced on the A329 subject to junction improvements being introduced at Townsend Road.
- 3.3 The recommendations of the task group which included the introduction of a 40mph speed limit on the A329, was considered by Individual Decision on 29th July 2004 (ID0794) when it was approved to undertake the statutory consultation process. The length of the revised speed limit is shown on Plan no SLR/04/12 and the proposed junction improvements are shown on Plan No SLR/04/12/001.

4 Results of the statutory consultation

- 4.1 At the close of the statutory consultation process on 10th February 2005, 85 responses had been received of which 6 were from representative organisations and 17 were from 8 addresses. A summary of the responses received from representative organisations together with officers comments are detailed in Appendix A to this report. A summary of all other comments received together with officers comments are detailed in Appendix B to this report.
- 4.2 A petition of 13 signatures was also received stating “ we the undersigned, object to traffic regulation order MS/L13-1408 for the proposed increase in speed limit to 40mph on the Wallingford Road in Streatley”.

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 The character and surrounding environment of the length of A329 between its junction with the A417 Wantage Road and a point north of the junction with Townsend Road is similar in nature to other 40mph speed limits within the district. 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. It would also create a buffer zone for traffic approaching Streatley village where there are residential frontages. It is considered that that junction improvement measures at the junction with Townsend Road would improve visibility for traffic exiting on to the A329.
- 5.2 Speed limits on their own have very little impact on driver perception of the appropriate speed. Drivers generally travel at a speed which they perceive to match traffic conditions and according to other factors, such as the road environment, the weather, parked vehicles, number of junctions, pedestrian movements etc. Consequently the introduction of an inappropriate speed limit and its associated signing alone will not affect overall speeds without an extremely high level of Police enforcement.
- 5.3 The results of the traffic survey undertaken during 1994 when the A329 was subject to the national speed limit of 60mph showed that the 85th percentile speed of traffic was 49mph in both directions with a two way total volume of approximately 5,500 vehicles. When compared to the recent traffic survey, where the 85th percentile speed for northbound and southbound traffic was 51mph and 45mph respectively, with a two-way volume of 4,793 vehicles, it is apparent that there has been little change in traffic speeds and drivers are not respecting the existing 30mph speed limit.
- 5.4 During the statutory consultation, comments were made that traffic calming measures should be introduced to reduce traffic speeds. Physical traffic calming measures include horizontal and vertical deflections are introduced in street lit areas where there is a history of speed related injury accidents. Vertical deflections such as road humps and speed cushions are not appropriate whilst horizontal deflections such as build outs are only effective when there is an equal opposing traffic flow. Given the character of this section of the A329, the lack of frontage development, the latest three year injury accident record, the volume of traffic and the absence of a system of street lighting, the introduction of traffic calming is not appropriate.
- 5.5 Many of the respondents to the statutory consultation consider that increasing the speed limit to 40mph will increase existing traffic speeds by over 10mph. The results of the traffic surveys undertaken when the A329 was subject to 60mph and also 30mph show that an increase in traffic speeds is unlikely. It is considered that a 40mph speed limit is more appropriate for the character and environment and could therefore have the affect of reducing traffic speeds. Furthermore because this would be more appropriate it would have the support of the Police and would therefore receive enforcement attention from time to time.
- 5.6 A number of respondents including the Leader of the Council and local ward member have indicated that a pedestrian crossing should be provided on the A329 near its junction with Townsend Road. This location does not meet the criteria for a formal crossing facility and there is insufficient space to safely introduce a pedestrian refuge without land acquisition. However the proposed measures at its junction with Townsend Road would have the effect of narrowing the carriageway and reducing the distance pedestrians will have to cover when crossing the road. See paragraph 3.2.
- 5.7 Officers' are strongly of the view that road safety would be enhanced and traffic speeds reduced within the retained 30mph speed limit in the centre of the village if the 40mph buffer zone were introduced on its approach. It is also considered that traffic speeds on the revised 40mph section could reduce because a 40mph speed limit is more realistic for the environment and less likely to be disregarded by

drivers. However, in view of the strength of feeling locally officers propose that the revised speed limit should be introduced on a trial basis for a period of 18 months and monitored carefully during this period to assess the impact of the change. Officers' strength of feeling is based on experience from situations elsewhere but they understand that the local community is not convinced that speeds will reduce. By undertaking a trial it would be possible to obtain factual information and this is the course of action recommended by Officers.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 It is recommended that given the adverse response to the statutory consultation, an experimental 40mph speed limit be introduced for 18 months on the A329 Wallingford Road between its junction with the A417 Wantage Road and a location north of Townsend Road, as shown on the Plan No SLR/04/12 (Appendix C).
- 6.2 That vehicle speeds be regularly monitored during the experimental period and a report prepared on the results towards the end of the experimental period to be considered by Individual Decision.
- 6.3 That junction improvements be introduced on the A329 Wallingford Road at its junction with Townsend Road as shown on plan no Plan No SLR/04/12/001 (Appendix D).
- 6.4 That the respondents to the statutory consultation be informed accordingly.

Appendices

- Appendix A: Summary of comments received during the statutory consultation from representative organisations.
- Appendix B: Summary of all other comments received during the public consultation.
- Appendix C: Plan No SLR/04/12
- Appendix D: Plan No SLR/04/12/001

Implications

- Policy:** The proposed change to the speed limit is in accordance with the national criteria for setting of speed limits.
- Financial:** The recommendations would be funded from the Council's Capital Programme.
- Personnel:** None arising from this report.
- 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 within the District.
- Equalities:** None arising from this report.
- Partnering:** None arising from this report.

Consultation Responses

Members:

- Leader of Council:** Councillor Royce Longton has indicated that the gateway feature should be enhanced if the 30mph speed limit is retained or that the gateway feature is enhanced with a pedestrian crossing facility introduced in the vicinity of Townsend Road should the 40mph speed limit be introduced.
- Select Committee Chairmen:** Councillor Brian Bedwell does not support the recommendations.
- P&L Committee Chairman** N/A
(where appropriate):

Ward Members:

Councillor Chris Webber does not support the recommendations and made the following comments:

- i. The perception of the A329 should be changed by having a better gateway feature and improved signing rather than the speed limit being changed.
- ii. A crossing facility should be introduced in the vicinity of the Townsend Road junction.
- iii. Does not believe that the 40mph speed limit will reduce current traffic speeds.
- iv. If the experimental 40mph speed limit is introduced and found not to be successful that the A329 would be changed back to a 30mph speed limit.

Opposition Spokesperson:

Councillor Brian Bedwell does not support the recommendations.

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