
A4 Benham Hill, Thatcham

30mph Speed Limit Consultation

Committee considering report:	Individual Executive Member Decisions
Date of Committee:	24 March 2022
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Richard Somner
Report Author:	Gareth Dowding
Forward Plan Ref:	ID4170

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To inform the Executive Member for Planning, Transport and Countryside of the responses received during the statutory consultation of the introduction of a 30mph speed limit on the A4 Benham Hill, Thatcham and to seek approval of officer recommendations.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that:
- (a) the proposed 30mph speed limit is introduced as advertised and that the objector is informed accordingly;
 - (b) the proposed 30mph speed limit is monitored for a period of 18 months from the date of implementation in order to gauge its effectiveness and a summary of the findings is submitted for review by the Speed Limit Review Task Group if appropriate.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	The implementation of the physical sign works will be funded from existing Capital budgets as part of the Network Management team's Minor Works Programme for 2022-23.
Human Resource:	N/A

Legal:	The Traffic Regulation Order required to amend the speed limit will be processed and sealed by the Legal Services team.			
Risk Management:	If implemented, the project will be managed in accordance with the Environment Department's approach to risk management.			
Property:	N/A			
Policy:	The consultation was in accordance with the Council's consultation procedure.			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		x		N/A
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		x		N/A
Environmental Impact:		x		N/A
Health Impact:		x		N/A
ICT Impact:		x		N/A

Digital Services Impact:		x		N/A
Council Strategy Priorities:		x		N/A
Core Business:		x		N/A
Data Impact:		x		N/A
Consultation and Engagement:	<p>Local stakeholders and road users were consulted on the proposed speed limit changes by way of statutory advertisement of proposed Traffic Regulation Orders.</p> <p>Affected ward members were also consulted on this proposed change in the speed limit as part of the statutory advertisement carried out last year and have been sent a copy of this report to comment on. Any comments received will be recorded accordingly during the ID meeting.</p>			

4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Executive Member for Planning, Transport and Countryside of a response received during the statutory consultation for one proposed speed limit advertised as a result of the 2020-21 speed limit review and to seek approval of officer recommendations.
- 4.2 One objection was received to the introduction of the proposed 30mph speed limit on the A4 Benham Hill, Thatcham. This report summarises the objection and makes a recommendation to the Executive Member that the speed limit be implemented as advertised.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

- 5.1 Requests for new or amended speed limits are considered by the Speed Limit Review Task Group, which consists of Council officers, Members and the Police. When assessing the request the Task Group consider current guidance (principally the Department for Transport Circular 01/2013 'Setting local speed limits'), traffic survey results, the number of recorded injury accidents and the local road environment. Following approval of the Task Group's recommendations, speed limit proposals are subject to a statutory consultation process. Where no objections are received, the speed limits are implemented and new signs are erected on-street, but where proposals attract statutory objections, these must be referred to the Executive Member for a decision as to how to proceed. An objection was received to one speed limit advertised as a result

of the 2020-21 speed limit review and this report summarises that objection and makes a recommendation to the Executive Member.

Background

- 5.2 A Councillor Motion by Cllr Jeff Brooks supported by Cllr Keith Woodhams and also supported by Thatcham Town Council was brought to the 2020/21 Speed Limit Review (SLR) following numerous complaints from local residents relating to inappropriate vehicle speeds in addition to a number of high profile incidents including one involving a young child.
- 5.3 This request was considered by the Task Group at its meeting on 9th December 2020. The Task Group recommended that the speed limit be reduced from 40mph to 30mph and this recommendation was approved for inclusion on the 2021-22 Minor Works Programme by Individual Decision (ref ID3874) on 19th August 2021.
- 5.4 A plan of the speed limit request is included as Appendix A.
- 5.5 Following a delay resulting from issues associated with the Covid-19 pandemic, statutory consultation and advertisement of the proposals was undertaken between 25th November and 16th December 2021.

Responses to Statutory Consultation and Officer Comments

- 5.6 At the end of the statutory consultation period one objection had been received. The objector made the following point:

“The only justification for a reduction from 40mph to 30mph at this location would be if there is credible evidence that there is road traffic problem directly attributable to vehicle speeds in excess of 30mph.”

Officer Comment:

- 5.7 Speed data collected prior to the review did indicate that whilst the A4 is a much used road, vehicle speeds were in fact reasonable for such a busy route and consistent with the 40mph limit. However the character and nature of the road have changed in recent years with the introduction of on-carriageway cycle lanes and new central pedestrian refuge islands near Pound Lane resulting in narrower running lanes for vehicular traffic.
- 5.8 There have been a number of high profile injury incidents, including the unfortunately incident involving a child being hit by a passing vehicle, and several incidents of cyclist being hit at the A4/Tull Way roundabout. The continuing concerns from residents together with the Council's aim to promote alternative modes of travel by improving cycle facilities along the A4 make a reduction in vehicle speeds desirable.
- 5.9 It should be noted that the length of road subject to the proposed speed limit reduction is relatively short, with traffic signal junctions at each end and a roundabout in between. Reducing the speed limit will deter drivers from needlessly accelerating and braking between the junctions with no discernible increase to journey times, especially during busy periods.

5.10 It is acknowledged that reducing a speed limit may not necessarily lead to the desired reduction in observed vehicle speeds, therefore it is suggested that follow-up traffic surveys are undertaken.

6 Proposals

6.1 In view of the above, is proposed that:

- (a) the proposed 30mph speed limit is introduced as advertised and that the objector is informed accordingly.
- (b) the proposed 30mph speed limit is monitored for a period of 18 months from the date of implementation in order to gauge the effectiveness and a summary of the findings is submitted for review by the Speed Limit Review Task Group if appropriate.

7 Other options considered

7.1 Not to proceed with the proposed changes to the speed limit. As the proposed speed limit change has been subject to a robust process and having only one statutory objection, this option is not recommended.

8 Conclusion

8.1 The Council has a robust and long standing process in place to assess requests to alter speed limits and the conclusion of this process was that the speed limit at this specific location should be reduced. The proposal attracted one statutory objection when the draft Traffic Regulation Order was advertised and the points made in the objections have been addressed in Section 5 of this report. It is therefore considered that the revised speed limit should be implemented as advertised.

9 Appendices

9.1 Appendix A – Consultation Drawing No: SLR/20/05/002

Background Papers:

Individual Executive Member Decision report ref ID3868

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☒ No: ☐

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval ☐

Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council ☐

Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position ☐

Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months ☐

Item is Urgent Key Decision ☐

Report is to note only ☐

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Consultation Drawings SLR/20/05/002