

20mph is finally coming to Whitchurch

I am very excited to report that it looks like a 20mph speed limit is finally coming to Whitchurch-on-Thames. Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) Highways team has confirmed they have secured the budget for the change of signs and road markings in the village along with a formal public consultation that will likely happen for 4-week period in January or February. Depending on the results of the consultation, the change could happen as early as March or April.

The reason this is happening now is due to a change in policy from OCC promoting a reduction in speed from 30mph to 20mph in built up residential areas. The OCC policy states:

- *The main reason for promoting 20mph is to help enhance and create an environment that is more appropriate for our active neighbourhoods: promoting lower vehicle speeds, encouraging more walking and cycling, and supporting a sense of a community place.*

Villages in Oxfordshire have been invited to apply to the new scheme which has selection criteria to prioritise requests.

- Whitchurch-on-Thame has been selected ahead of this scheme as we have been pushing for this for some time and have met the criteria.
- This will be a popular programme and many other villages across the county will be applying to become part of the first tranche of rollout for next fiscal year.
- The budget for this includes 'signs only' changes and will not require traffic calming measures as a pre-requisite or include budget for subsequent traffic calming measures.

This would apply to all streets in the centre of the village including the High Street, Manor Road, Eastfield Lane, Hillside and the portion of Hardwick Road before the village entrance sign. I have attached a high level map that OCC provided showing the 3 main village entrance signs that would change. There will be more details of smaller intermediate signs and road markings in the consultation.

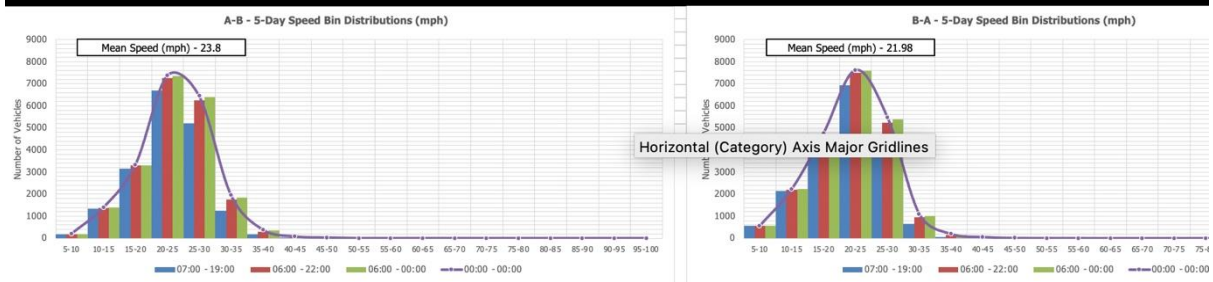
We expect the results of the consultation to be overwhelmingly positive as this is something that residents have been asking for, at least since 2009:

- The 2009 Village plan stated that 85% of residents cited traffic speed as the single most important issue in the village
- 2019 Village Plan recommended the move to 20mph following a similar village survey in which 90% of respondents supported it
- Feedback from the September 2021 TAPWG survey again shows speeding as a top concern

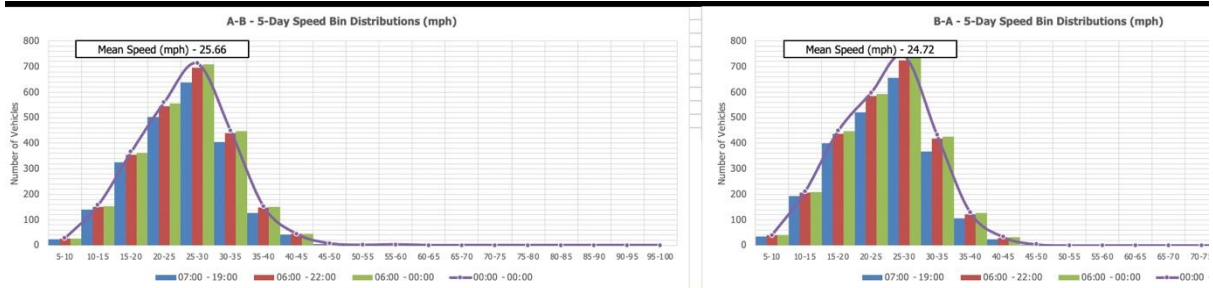
OCC conducted two speed surveys on the High Street and Hardwick Road in November as part of our application. The resulting mean speeds over the 7 day period were:

- High St Northbound: 23.87mph
- High St Southbound: 22.32 mph
- Hardwick Road Eastbound: 25.8mph
- Hardwick Road Westbound: 24.69mph

High Street Survey Results (5 day):



Hardwick Road Survey Results (5 day):



The results show that we have really good compliance with the current 30mph speed limit. Average speeds are slightly higher on Hardwick Road than on the High Street.

- OCC highlighted that national research has found: Where existing mean speeds are at or below 24mph the introduction of a 'signs only' speed limit should be enough to see compliance with a new 20mph speed limit.
- The results of Hardwick Road are already showing mean speeds above this level, so compliance may not be achieved without the introduction of other measures, for example, an enhanced entrance gateway feature and/or some suitable vehicle activated signs.
- We can re-assess the need for traffic calming measures near the Hardwick Road village entrance in the future once we have some experience with the results from the change on signs to 20mph.

Kind regards,
Jim Donahue

Chairman, Whitchurch-on-Thames Parish Council