

SPEED LIMIT ASSESSMENT OF C12

We have now received the report of the consultants who have conducted the speed limit assessment of the C12 for Wiltshire Council. They recommend no change to the existing 40mph limit past The White Hart. The same outcome applies to the change in speed limits proposed by Broad Chalke Council. These recommendations have been accepted by Wiltshire at officer level. I am meeting the Clerk to Broad Chalke PC on Tuesday to discuss what action to take (they meet on Wednesday).

A copy of the consultant's report is attached. Whilst this exercise began with requests from Bishopstone and Broad Chalke PCs for specific changes to speed limits, Wiltshire Council decided to extend the assessment to the length of the C12. It is therefore necessary to pick out the parts of the report relevant to the 40mph limit past the Recreation Field (this is Section 11 in the assessment).

The report sets out a short summary of our concerns – though this does not pick up all the issues raised in our submission, a copy of which is also attached. It sets out the assessment process and the policy background as set out in Department for Transport Circular 01/13. It looks at average speeds in the different sections of the C12, traffic accident data etc.

Table 2 in the report sets out average (mean) speeds in the different sections. That for Section 11 past the Recreation Field (40mph limit) is 36.4. Also of interest is the figure for our 30mph limit (Section 10) which is 26.6mph.

The consultant's analysis of Section 11 is as follows:

"Section 11 has an existing speed limit of 40mph. There have been no reported injury collisions in the recent six years. There are a number of houses to the south of the C12 but most of them gain access to the C12 by estate roads with T-junctions.

Bishopstone Parish Council have requested that this section of road has a reduced speed limit of 30mph (see Introduction above). Whilst Circular 1/13 does provide highway authorities with the flexibility to consider local environmental factors in determining the speed limit on a road in its jurisdiction, there is less scope when it comes to the introduction of 30mph speed limits in rural settings where the frontage density criterion is the principal determining factor. At the most dense central section there are seven accesses over a distance of 320 metres. This is significantly less than the requirement to qualify for a 30mph limit and is a shorter length than required for a change in speed limit, as is covered in Circular 1/13. If a longer length is considered the density of development would be reduced, meaning the justification for a 30mph speed limit is diminished. The Parish Council refer to a playground and bus stop which may require people to cross the C12 to access. If the Parish Council have concerns about people crossing the road to access these facilities it may be of value to consider the provision of safety measures, such as additional warning signs or informal crossing points to assist pedestrians undertaking this particular movement.

In consideration of the above it is recommended that the speed limit is kept to 40mph".

This recommendation has been accepted by Wiltshire Council Officers. Whilst this is unhelpful, it is not the end of the matter. Our submission acknowledged that this section of road does not meet the criteria in Circular 01/13 for a 30mph limit, but asked Wiltshire to use the discretion it is allowed to take account of all the hazards in that section. Going outside the established guidance is really a matter for the elected members. So if the Parish Council wish to pursue the matter it will be necessary to take it up with the new Wiltshire Cabinet Member for Highways Nick Holder.

Subject to the outcome of a discussion I propose to have with the Clerk for Broad Chalke Council about next steps, I think that this matter should be pursued further. An outline of the representation we might make is set out in the attached sheet. I will produce a complete draft if this action is approved at the meeting on 9th May.

Mike Ash
May 2024

OUTLINE SUBMISSION TO CLLR NICK HOLDER

[Background to SLA.]

Speed of vehicles in this section of C12 a long standing matter of concern to Bishopstone residents (mothers unwilling to cross to the play area etc).

Application for reduction to 30mph was rejected in 2017 for exactly the same reason as set out by the consultants now (the guidance in DfT Circular 01/13 about need for residential frontage development).

Issue raised again in 2023 following initiative by Cllr Najjar and indications that Wiltshire Council prepared to reconsider speed limits along the C12 - ie it was Wiltshire Council that re-opened this matter. As a result proposals for change were submitted to the LHFIG (copy attached).

A change to Wiltshire Council's approach of these issues was confirmed by the then Cabinet Member for Highways, Cllr Caroline Thomas, and the Director of Highways Samantha Howell, at a meeting of the SWWAB on 29th November 2023. Cllr Thomas volunteered, without prompting, that the criteria for setting local speed limits in Circular 01/13 are a bit narrow and that more weight should be given to community views. In a subsequent email Cllr Thomas reiterated that decisions would be based on the guidance in Circular 01/13 but said: "The guidelines themselves are not narrow as such and do allow LAs to use their judgement based on local circumstances".

Circular 01/13 does not, as the consultants assert, say that *"there is less scope when it comes to the introduction of 30mph speed limits in rural settings where the frontage density criterion is the principal determining factor"*. It does say: "If there are just fewer than 20 houses, traffic authorities should make extra allowance for any other important buildings, such as a church, shop or school. Where the character of a village falls outside this definition, local authorities are **encouraged** to use their discretion in deciding whether a lower speed limit is appropriate".

Bishopstone Parish Council, in its submission, did not dispute that the criteria in Circular 01/13 are not met, but asked that Wiltshire Council should exercise its discretion to reduce the speed limit to 30mph taking account of all the factors set out in the submission.

The consultants reject the proposed change by reiterating the narrow criteria in Circular 01/13. In their report they say: *"If the Parish Council have concerns about people crossing the road to access these facilities it may be of value to consider the provision of safety measures, such as additional warning signs or informal crossing points to assist pedestrians undertaking this particular movement"*. Playground warning signs and a marked pedestrian crossing point already exist at this location. It is unlikely that additional road markings will make much difference.

If the proposed change in limit is again rejected for the same reasons as in 2017, it will show that nothing has changed and that Wiltshire Council's commitment to reducing speeding on rural roads and of taking more account of community concerns are worthless.

Whilst you have now taken over the role of Cabinet Member for Highways, we assume that the broad direction of policy outlined by Cllr Thomas will not have changed. The Parish Council would therefore ask you to look again at the submission that was made, use the discretion available and agree that a reduced speed limit at this location is appropriate. The Parish Council has set funding aside to meet its share of the costs of any change.