



Hanborough Parish Council

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Request to reduce the speed limit on Lower Road

Dear Mr Kemp

cc Ian Hudspeth

Hanborough Parish Council is requesting OCC to implement, with urgency, necessary measures to deal with traffic issues on Lower Road. Specifically we are asking for:-

1. a reduction of the maximum speed limit to 50 mph along the whole road from Eynsham roundabout to the junction with A4095.
2. the creation of a 40mph limit zone extending from 100m south of the Willow Cottage Nursery entrance down past the junction with Church Road to the bottom of the large dip, ca 200m North of the junction, and also along Church Road from the T junction to the entrance to Church Hanborough village [see map below, marked in purple].

In addition, we are asking for devising an appropriate strategy for the betterment of the road surface, particularly adjacent to the verges, and to road edges and markings. Furthermore, we request a reduction in the number of Heavy Goods Vehicle movements on the road, which is patently not suited for the current volumes of such traffic.

Lower Road is a narrow, rural, winding route with multiple blind bends, a large dip, and a narrow rail viaduct. It has a junction with Church Road [poor visibility], which leads to Church Hanborough and beyond [Long Hanborough, Freeland, North Leigh, Witney]; 13 entrances [most of them with poor road visibility] to 20 residential properties and numerous commercial premises, a nursery school [60 children + 20 staff] and two working farms as well as a number of field accesses. The recent accidents history has identified accident clusters at the nursery entrance, at the junction with Church Road and at the narrow rail viaduct [marked with red arrows]. Most accidents were caused by poor observation and speed, therefore it is essential to implement speed limit and better markings. In addition, the road itself is in very poor condition. Many years of increasingly busy traffic, in particular the HGV movements accessing the City Farm landfill and the New Wintles Farm recycling, have eroded the road verges, the edges of which have become increasingly indistinct due to accumulation of carried over soil and debris and the road surface has been torn away. Together, this has resulted in the road becoming increasingly narrow and hence difficult for navigation by motor vehicles and cyclists, particularly during hours of darkness or adverse weather conditions [the valley is very often foggy].



Prompted by increased concerns of local residents about dangerous driving conditions on this road, Hanborough Parish Council (HPC) conducted a traffic survey (between 9-15 and 17-23 September 2015) and believe that its results strongly support ours and the residents concerns and the above request.

The summary of the traffic survey is as follows:

1. Traffic Volume: the average traffic volume on weekdays, over a period of two weeks of the survey, was 6775 vehicles per day (range 6343 – 7139) and 4158 vehicles on Saturdays/Sundays. This represents increase in volume by roughly 10% within the last two years. [it was 6100/day* in survey made in November 2013]. We believe it unlikely that the observed increase in traffic volume resulted from traffic delays caused by the works on North Oxford roundabouts as the residents reported substantial increases in traffic well prior to July 2015. The southbound volume was higher than northbound volume by roughly 10%.
2. Proportion of traffic above the speed limit: on average 4.6% of southbound traffic moved with the speed above 60mph each day (range: 3.5 to 6.1%); Sat and Sun, on average 5.4%. Again this is 85% increase from 2.5% traffic over the speed limit cited in 2013 survey.
3. On the other hand on the average 69.3 % vehicles travelled every day with the speed below 50 mph [with 61% of drivers moving between 36mph and 50mph falling into the bins below 45mph]; this clearly indicates that the vast majority of drivers considers a safe speed on this road to be well below 50 mph.

We note that many adjacent roads, which are straighter, wider, in much better condition and with fewer accesses have 50mph/40mph limit. For example A4095 from Bladon to Witney, with 40mph limit west of Long Hanborough and at the turnout to North Leigh near Eymsham Hall; similarly, the road from Eynsham roundabout to Botley via Farmoor has a 40-50mph limit. Lower Road is one of the few rural roads with large traffic volumes in the area that does not have a reduced speed limit. We question why Lower road is still considered ‘unclassified’, given that its extension south beyond Eynsham roundabout has a B classification [B4449].

The local residents strongly support our request as evident from two separate petitions with ca 450 signatures in 2008 and ca 250 in the current mixed paper/change.org, petition and the results of the HPC leaflet survey

on the residents concerns. The reduction of the speed limit is also supported by the Thames Valley Police.

HPC is concerned with large volumes of HG Lorries on the road, particularly the minerals and waste lorries (see Appendix 2). We wrote to Cllr Ian Hudspeth on 22nd October 2015 (see letter attached – Appendix 3), who promised to pass this on to appropriate departments. We do accept that Lower Road has HGV access permission to the New Wintles Farm, a permanent aggregates recycling facility, which according to OCC E&E should bring about approx. 88 lorry movements a day; plenty for this road. Cutting the speed limit to 50mph and 40mph would significantly reduce a danger from these lorry movements to other road users [currently a large proportion of the lorries driving along the road are allegedly doing so at great speed] and although, thankfully, no lorry involved accidents were reported recently, near misses were reported by residents and the speeding lorries are terrifying the road users.

Furthermore, Lower Road has recently become a popular shortcut for lorries that are deliberately breaching the council restrictions; our own survey in October 2015 showed lorry passing along Lower Road every 2-3 min, from 6am till 6pm, which is equivalent to 200-300 lorries per day; please note that at the time of this survey, the City Farm site has been already shut and the New Wintles Farm site was dormant. Although, we are sympathetic to the hardships that some companies faced upon the A40 roundabout road works caused traffic delays, it is not fair to residents to be exposed to dangers coming from speeding lorries that shouldn't be here; we also suspect that restriction flouting is most often motivated by financial gain (as reported in Oxford Times February 25th 2016) and therefore it should be stopped. We are wondering, if placing signs 'no goods vehicles over maximum gross weight XX or 'unsuitable for HGVs' except for access could do the trick without OCC transport department to intervene and negotiate with each rules breaching company individually. Again, bringing the speed limit down will make the route less attractive to 'rat running'.

HPC requested for similar measures about 18 months ago and were told that although "a 50 mph limit might be appropriate taking account of the character of the road and the existing speeds"* and that the 40mph limit in the vicinity of the Church Road and the nursery would seem more marginal in terms of compliance with DFT guidelines (for unclassified route)"* none of these could be considered, due to severe financial constraints. While HPC recognizes the current financial difficulties of OCC, something has to be done immediately to calm down traffic on Lower Rd.

HPC and the residents are grateful for the recent digging of the gullies along the whole road, which reduced the risk of flooding. However, the lack of clear markings along the road and the eroded edges remain a great danger, which puts the lives of the road users at risk. We are therefore asking you to consider our requests very carefully.

For clarity, these are listed as follows (see Appendix 1 attached)

1. A reduction of the speed limit
2. Action to reduce the number of HGV's using the road
3. A solution to avoid dangerous encounters under the railway bridge
4. Indistinct verges require cutting back
5. Ripped tarmac requires fixing
6. Bygone road markings need repainting
7. Other necessary betterments required on Lower Road
8. Blocked Drains on Church Road need cleaning

Yours sincerely

Jon Gammage

* citations from Mr Kemp's email of 4th of December 2014.