

Proposed traffic speed reductions for Comberton: Research feedback to Comberton Parish Council

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I was tasked with following up the idea of reducing speed limits in Comberton to 20 mph. This involved a speed survey, a public information campaign, a resident survey, and two detailed discussions with Cambridgeshire County Council's Highways Services to produce a finalised and costed plan for changes to speed limits. I am now reporting the findings, and proposing a course of action which would improve the safety and feel of the streets in Comberton.

I would like to thank the group of supportive residents who have been critical to making this happen.

1. Speed Survey

Average traffic speeds need to be below 24 mph for a 20 mph limit to be implemented, unless additional traffic calming measures are also planned. The rationale for this is that speeds should be low enough that reducing the limit does not create a new speed enforcement problem.

The traffic survey, using a radar speed gun, was carried out on 14th, 15th, 19th and 21st of July 2016. This was timed to take place before the school summer holidays began. For the three busiest points three hours were surveyed: roughly 8-9 am, 11.30 am -12.30 pm, and 5-6 pm. The times and locations were approved by Cambridgeshire County Council's Highways Services, and followed the recommendation that locations with higher speeds were chosen.

The locations and average speeds:

23.8 mph on B1046 outside Comberton Village College:

23.4 mph on B1046 opposite Woottens Farm:

24.9 mph on Long Road between Harbour Avenue and Fox's Way

21.6 mph on Green End by the Baptist Church

The speed survey results show average speeds low enough for 20 mph on these Comberton's roads. The exception is Long Road, where traffic calming would be needed for it to become 20 mph.

2. Public Information Campaign

The Comberton Contact newsletter published short articles about 20 mph in the April, May, June, July/August, and September 2016 editions. As well as detailing the benefits of 20 mph, articles have always invited people to respond and share their views. Comberton Contact articles also advertised public events and the opinion survey.

Information posters have been displayed at the Village Shop, Village Hall, Library and Comberton Village College. These posters make the case for 20 mph; present the local situation with pedestrian, cyclist and casualty data; and outline the process for reducing speeds in the village. They provide the opinion survey web address.

Information events were arranged for residents to learn more about the 20 mph plans and share their views. One took place on the evening of 29 June 2016, another will be on Saturday 24 September. Any help with the September information event would be appreciated. One of the Statutory Consultees, Traffic Management Officer Derek Crosby, attended the June meeting.

Some supporters of speed reductions are displaying window and wheelie bin stickers to raise the profile of proposed speed limit changes.

Comberton Village College has provided an official letter support for a programme of speed reduction (during term time).

3. Opinion Survey

To date, 247 people have responded to the 'Comberton Speed Survey 2016'. This is a good turn out; 10% turn out is good¹. The survey was carefully designed, and sent to members of the Transport Working Groups, several residents, and the County Council Highways Services for comment prior to being launched in the week commencing 11th July 2016.

The survey is advertised in the following ways: information posters around the village, on the Comberton Facebook page and Comberton website, via the parent mail for Meridian School and Comberton Village College, using business cards, and by word of mouth. 58% of respondents live in Comberton.

The opinion survey shows overall public support for speed reduction in Comberton (67.1% in favour, 21.1% against, 11.8% undecided). Respondents were asked to choose between various scenarios. The most popular options involved 20 mph limits on all roads in the core of the village, including the B1046 and Long Road (61% prefer this). Less popular were the option of the core of the village except for B1046 and Long Road (17.8% support).

As part of an integrated approach to speed management, respondents were also asked to comment on reducing limits from 60 to 40 mph on Royston Lane, Long Road, Green End, and the B1046 towards Toft and Barton. Support for this ranged from 55.0-63.3% depending on the road. Slowing these approach roads would prepare drivers for the transition to 20 mph. It would also make adjacent cycle paths safer.

¹ Comberton had a population of 2380 in 2011, including children.

² Transport for London data shows that fixed interactive signs only really slow traffic for the first couple of weeks, after which benefits decline. As such, Cambridgeshire County Council no longer installs fixed sign and recommends

Respondents were asked about their preferred choice of ways to slow traffic. The percentage of respondents thinking each was a good idea are as follows:

- 80.4% - Interactive signs
- 57.6% - Gateway features indicating entry to Comberton
- 40.2% - Edge carriageway markings
- 38.4% - Speed cushions
- 17.9% - Removal of centre lines

Respondents were asked about whether Swaynes Lane should become one-way. Many people did not know (46.3%) and many others preferred Swaynes Lane to be two-way (37.4%), and a few wanted it to be one-way with two-way cycling (12.2%) or completely one-way (4.1%).

Other issues raised by the survey were:

- a lack of zebra crossing on the B1046 by Meridian School
- the problem of parked cars along the B1046 (especially near junctions)
- the inadequacy of provision for cyclists (both within the village and on the cycle path to Barton being bumpy and too narrow)
- poor bus service due to restricted hours and infrequent buses
- people drive children to school, instead of walking or cycling, as it feels safer

4. A costed plan for speed reduction in Comberton

With the speed and opinion survey data, interested residents and the Transport Working Group were invited to meet plan new speed limits for Comberton. We then met with Highways Officer Andrew Preston, who advised us on current policy and helped adjust our plans. Highways officer Joel Sykes has since undertaken a review, and sought guidance from the Highways Policy and Regulation Team. Joel has costed up two versions of a plan. These are very similar, the only difference is whether Long Road is including in the 20 mph area.

The basic costs of the plan are:

- £24,000 without Long Road at 20 mph
- £40,000 with Long Road at 20 mph
- In addition we could purchase a mobile interactive sign², which could be of benefit to the introduction of a new speed limit and assist reinforcement of the current limit. These vary in price depending on model and specification, anywhere between £3000 and £5000. The signs can be set at 20, 30 and 40 mph. The Parish Council would be responsible for moving the sign between fixed post locations within the village. A data

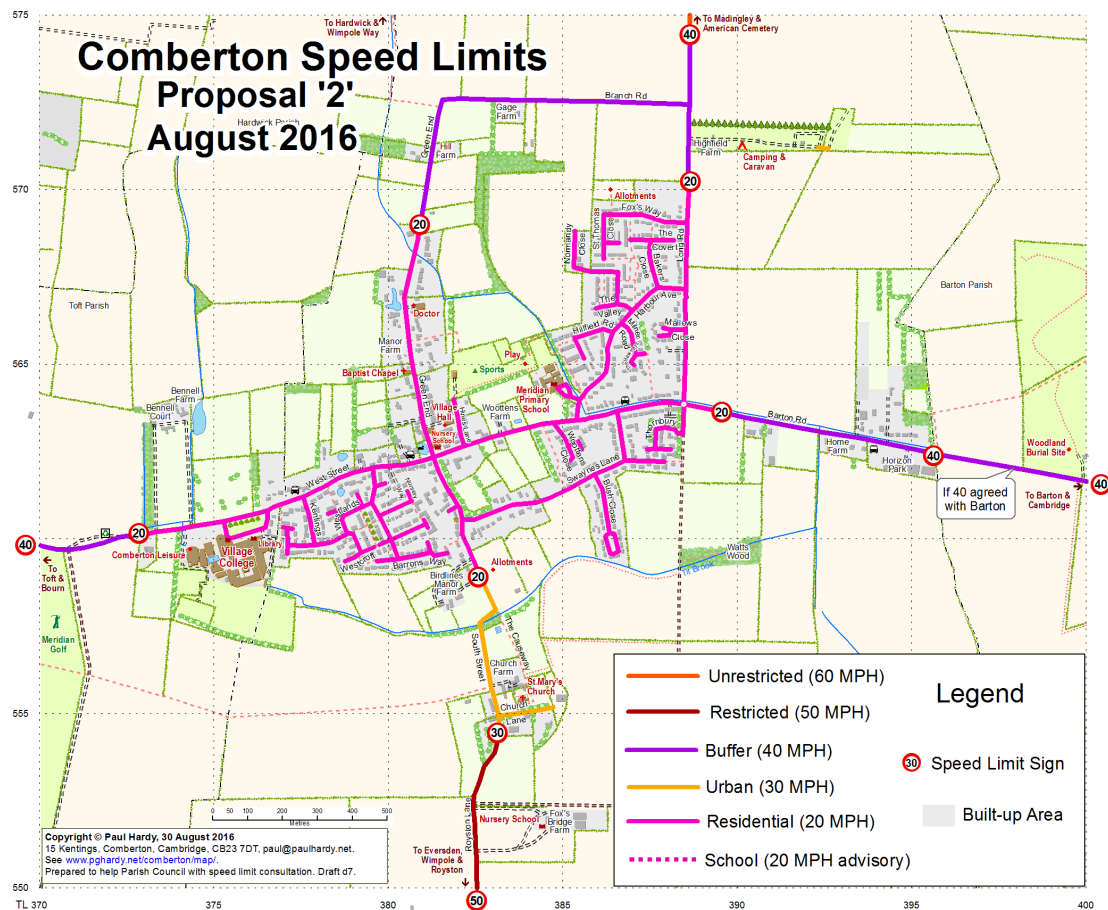
² Transport for London data shows that fixed interactive signs only really slow traffic for the first couple of weeks, after which benefits decline. As such, Cambridgeshire County Council no longer installs fixed sign and recommends mobile ones instead.

recorder can be added. Note: interactive signs were popular amongst 80.4% survey respondents.

The map below shows the proposed speed reductions. If Long Road were to remain at 30 mph, then the mini roundabout would be 20 mph, with just the very Southern end of Long Road also being 20 mph. The side streets off Long Road would all be 20 mph too.

Discussions with the Highways Policy and Regulation Team approved that a 40mph speed limit on Green End and Branch Road would be suitable. At the time of writing, we await comments on:

1. Is reducing the 60 mph to 40 mph on the section between Barton and Comberton is workable?
2. Is reducing the 60 mph to 50 mph on Royston Lane workable?



Below is a general cost break down. These estimates follow national guidance and employ the same design principals used in the Cambridge 20 mph scheme. The costs have been rounded up by 4-5%, but this could be increased to 7% for contingency (£24,480 or £40,800).

A pair of 600mm terminal speed limit signs = £212
A pair of 600mm terminal speed limit signs on new posts = £436
A pair of 300mm repeater signs (back to back) on existing street furniture
= £132
New post = £112
20mph roundel marking = £100
Coloured surface = £1150
Speed cushions (pair) = £3500-£5000
Gateway feature (one side of road) = £430 to £850 depending on size
Gateway feature with integrated village sign (one side of road)x 1 =
£1530
Gateway features for the village including 2 village entrance signs would
be in the region of £6500-£7000.
Traffic Regulation Order cost = £1500

Here is the Traffic Officer's explanation of why Long Road would be such an expensive road to reduce to 20 mph. The main reason is because the average speeds measured were greater than 24 mph.

“Long Road traffic calming - after undertaking a site inspection and measuring the existing carriageway width, it is questionable whether there is sufficient road width for cushions to be safely installed. The absolute minimum road width for their installation is 5.45m kerb to kerb, with the desired width being 6.2m. The lack of kerbing on the eastern side of Long Road, the presence of driveways and the limited road width (varying between 5.4m and 5.8m) are likely to cause problems at a design stage. Localised widening of the carriageway is an option, however this would be expensive especially when taking into account the possible necessity for relocating some street lighting or removal of trees. I would estimate the cost of two pairs of cushions (minimum required), localised widening and kerbing, the relocation of street lighting and safety auditing at approximately £17k. I would add however that there are concerns over the rationale behind widening a road for the purpose of traffic calming it.”

5. What next?

Take this proposal to the Parish Council to ask about:

- Support for the proposal?
- Which scheme would be best?
- Plan how to fund this

Note that the Local Highways Initiative have a funding deadline in late November 2016, and if successful up to £10,000 could be granted.

If supported by the Parish Council, this plan will be consulted on again, using a short survey, the 24th September information day, and printing the map in the centre pages of the Comberton Contact (pencilled in for the October issue). I would also seek support from other Comberton institutions and from neighbouring Parish Councils.