



CYCLE SAFE ROUTES SUBGROUP

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Frequently Asked Questions on Road Safety and Traffic Management

Why can't we have a weight limit on the A44 in Woodstock?

The problem with weight limits are that the HGVs simply use another route that may be just as unsuitable. And all sorts of HGVs need exemptions, such as deliveries to Blenheim or the town's businesses, builders working in the town, and other businesses operating near Woodstock whose only access is the A44. Add to these, refuse vehicles, farm equipment, buses and the occasional emergency vehicle and you quickly find that a weight limit only excludes a proportion of the HGVs.

Woodstock Town Council tried to get a weight limit imposed and persuaded Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), the Highway Authority, to investigate. The only viable alternative route for long distance, non-exempt, HGVs between the Evesham freight distribution centre and the channel ports is the A429 through Stow-on-the-Wold to Northleach and the A40 to Oxford and M40 onwards. Unsurprisingly, the good people of Stow objected to having more HGVs imposed upon them and in the end the Stow route became an advisory route only, and is signed accordingly. But because of severe congestion on the A40 between Witney and Oxford, many HGV drivers ignore the advisory route.

Why can't we have a 20 mph speed limit throughout Woodstock?

You can. In theory. And in Oxford, that is what has been achieved, except that the main roads – Woodstock Rd., Banbury Rd., Botley Rd., Abingdon Rd., and London Rd., etc., remain at 30 mph. And, of course, the A44 in Woodstock is a main road.

The police and to some extent the highway authority (OCC) take the view that road traffic rules and regulations must be "policed by consent". By this they mean that the majority of sensible, responsible drivers need to see traffic regulations as "reasonable and proportionate". Otherwise the rule of law falls into disrepute. As a means of measuring what the majority of drivers see as "reasonable and proportionate", speed measurements are discreetly and invisibly taken. A calculation is made of the 85 percentile speed (85%ile). This is the speed below which 85% of drivers are driving. Put another way, about 15% of drivers are exceeding the 85%ile speed. The 85%ile speed is used to determine what speed limit is reasonable to impose. For example, and this is not a precise guide, an 85%ile speed of 35 mph might trigger the imposition of the 30 mph limit but not a 20 mph limit. An 85%ile speed of around 30 mph might lead to a 20 mph limit. Sustainable Woodstock's Safe Routes project have no up to date speed survey measurements (we will try and get the data from OCC) but our best guess is that the A44 in the town centre has an 85%ile speed of less than 30 mph whereas in Old Woodstock it will be between 30 and 36 mph.

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Let's have a One Way system in the Hensington Road "narrows"

Yes, but road safety managers will be concerned that it may increase speeds and it is speed that is invariably a factor in injury accidents. Opposing traffic does cause drivers to slow down, particularly on narrow roads. If a one-way system were to be installed, further traffic calming measures might be needed on Hensington Road and Union Street.

More FAQs shortly