



## **Oxford Pedestrian Association response to the Cornmarket/Queen St proposals to make pedestrianised streets shared use (cycles/pedestrians)**

**October 2023**

[Oxford Pedestrians Association \(OxPA\)](#) represents pedestrians (including wheelchair users and those who use other mobility aids) using walking as urban transport. We work with other groups to achieve our aims which are: wide enough, unobstructed, level pavements and footways, and responsive, level, unobstructed road crossings.

OxPA understands that Cornmarket and Queen Street are valuable through routes for vulnerable road users, they are direct, wide, free of most motorised traffic, free of fast-moving wheeled vehicles between the hours of 10am and 6pm (although this is extremely poorly enforced) and central. They are currently as valuable through routes for pedestrians (including wheelchair users and people with mobility support needs), as they are for cyclists before 10am and after 6pm daily.

OxPA members range in ability. We have many members with a variety of mobility support needs, which means that few routes in Oxford are easy to navigate for many people we represent. We have members who did not feel they could respond to the OxPA survey as they rarely, if ever, make it into the city centre due to issues of accessibility. This is for a variety of reasons (including generally narrow, obstructed, badly maintained pavements and footways, large puddles at key pedestrian crossings, the intrusive noise and smell of motorised traffic, and many issues associated with crossing roads).

Unlike other forms of urban transport, including bicycles, pedestrians have other needs than moving continuously and predictably in a single direction. An attempt during the covid years was made to ensure pedestrians isolated, so cycles were permitted in the middle of Cornmarket and Queen St, and pedestrians were allocated (by the painting of lines and signs) to the margins, where we were supposed to move in narrow groups at uniform speeds in one direction only. This failed from the start because it was a move that did not understand the nature of pedestrians. Pedestrians wander, spread out and walk side by side where possible, they stop and chat or eat, they come in groups or alone, moving at varying speeds. They push buggies, including double buggies, pull shopping trolleys, some may have dogs on leads. Unlike the parallel New Inn Hall St other activities take place on Cornmarket; there are musicians, cafes, and despite the paucity of proper benches, pedestrians linger.

Despite being a minority of cyclists, ebike users and ebike delivery cyclists go at varied speeds through these streets between 10am and 6pm. Many cyclists who ride during prohibited hours are adept at swerving, and many restrain their speed in very dense crowds of pedestrians, but several near misses were cited, raising fears of possible debilitating injury. This applies especially to e-bikes, with their greater speed and weight.

OxPA has received much feedback from members of OxPA, much of this expressed verbally at meetings and events where the question has been asked. We are a small organisation with only 78 members; of these 20 responded in writing to the survey. This is a little over 25% of members. Many others fed back verbally, all against, except one who argued for cycling on Queen St and not on Cornmarket. I have not included an analysis of these as I have no recorded data of these.



Of the 20:

- 14 respondents are wholly against the proposals. Their arguments were from the perspective of a pedestrian who would feel neither safe nor free knowing that the space is shared with cyclists who are entitled to cycle through the spaces.
- 11 cited a fear of being struck.
- 6 cited the power and 'dominance' of cyclists to force a pedestrian to step aside, ringing bells etc.
- 4 cited an experience of being hit or nearly hit causing fright.
- 4 are parents or grandparents who feared children would not be allowed to be or feel so free in the public space.
- One respondent argued that this move would be good for neither pedestrians nor cyclists as each would impede the other, and in addition could exacerbate existing tensions.
- 3 respondents said that cycling should be permitted on Queen St but not Cornmarket, citing other uses of Cornmarket such as music, stalls, cafes, benches etc. and the greater number of pedestrians this ambience attracts.
- 3 said cycling should be allowed on these streets at all times, arguing from a cycling rather than a pedestrian perspective, and arguing that it will be statistically safe, and one respondent said that anyway there will be fewer cyclists on New Inn Hall St and Turl St so these streets will carry fewer cyclists, although not saying why this would be better for pedestrians.
- 3 mentioned the shortness of the inconvenience of cyclists walking these short stretches compared to the sense of safety and freedom in vulnerability that could be lost.

An analysis of the results shows that the OxPA members who responded supporting reintroducing cycling during daytime hours argued from the perspective of a cyclist rather than a pedestrian.

Those who present their views as pedestrians are almost wholly against proposals to make Cornmarket and Queen St shared use for cycles and pedestrians. This is true also of the overall view at pedestrian meetings. These represent the most vulnerable pedestrians, who have various conditions making them feel vulnerable, ranging from having a vulnerable family member or child(ren), to having poor hearing or vision, inability to move fast or turn the head, having restricted mobility generally, and having chronic pain.

Pedestrians expressed a view of being outnumbered by cyclists and having a less effective voice. OxPA members can present as demoralised and angry, with feelings going back often to cycle lanes placed on pavements forcing pedestrians into single file and making pavements generally feel less safe due to some cyclists using them whether or not a cycle lane has been placed on the pavement. For these respondents, being made to share space with cyclists and having their views not taken seriously, is depressing.

However, at least at committee level, we are aware that the County Council has adopted a policy of placing pedestrians at the top of the road users' hierarchy, and therefore we send this response with the hope of being taken seriously in concerns raised.

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