



Walk Talk

Newsletter of Oxford Pedestrians Association

July - September 2010

Welcome to Newsletter 94 of the Oxford Pedestrians Association

Walkability in times of austerity

There's no doubt that times are going to be tough – but this is an opportunity for our councils to invest in some value-for-money projects that will deliver real improvements for everyone. There is strong evidence that investment in walking and walkability pays off. Not only do we become fitter, with fewer visits to the doctor and fewer days off work, but walkable infrastructure offers far superior performance to that provided for vehicles. In hard times investing in walkability is, as some people would say, a 'no brainer'! The county has been consulting on what scenarios to develop in its next Local Transport Plan. We hope OxPA members will tell them loud and clear, 'We want Walkability – and more of it, please!'

Could you be OxPA's next Chairperson?

Our Chairman, Paul Cullen, has said that he will not be standing for re-election when OxPA's AGM takes place in October. Paul has a number of other projects on his 'back burner' and feels that now, with Local Transport Plan consultations almost complete, is the right time to be standing aside and letting someone with fresh ideas take over. Would you like to take on this important and rewarding job? Or do you have a suggestion for a candidate? If so, do get in touch with Paul or Corinne – phone numbers are on the next page.

"To Share or Not to Share?"

This was the topic of our public debate with cycling group Cyclox, on the evening of 27th May. Chaired by Richard Mann, the debate was opened by Graham Smith who presented the case for more shared space in Oxford, with examples from abroad and the UK of successful sharing. Paul Cullen pointed out that the different patterns of movement of cyclists and pedestrians often make it difficult to share safely. He recommended that cyclists should campaign for safer road space rather than accept pavement routes that are as unsatisfactory for them as they are unwelcome to pedestrians. After a lively but good-natured discussion it was suggested to follow up with further joint meetings.

Will the Local Transport Plan survive unscathed?

Heads of transport services in county councils and other authorities have called upon the coalition government to suspend the preparation of Local Transport Plans, due to come into operation in 2011, until funding prospects are determined. Local transport projects, always an easy target, have already been cut. How much money will be available for large-scale projects, nobody knows at present. A potential victim of cuts is the £88 million 'Access to Oxford' programme, designed to help people choose alternatives to the car for their journeys to Oxford. Included in this programme is the extra platform at the rail station. This might become a victim of the cuts.

Consultation update

Two important consultations are ongoing at the moment, one regarding the important city centre site of Frideswide Square, the other - equally important in different ways – the proposal to extend the city in the Barton area.

Frideswide Square

The county council has begun consulting with 'stakeholder groups' on alternative arrangements for Frideswide Square, the most vehicle-clogged area in the city.

Amazingly 35,000 vehicles pass each day through Frideswide Square. Despite the "Access to Oxford" programme aimed at enabling people to change the way they come to Oxford, the proposals as they stand make no provision for reducing the numbers of vehicles passing through the square. Proposals are at an early stage, but the County Council favours smoothing motor traffic flows by removing all traffic signals, and installing two mini-roundabouts.

What do you think? Is this the way to help people on foot use this important 'gateway' space outside the rail station? Whatever your thoughts, do let us have them. The consultation documents are available on the county website:

(www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/transformoxford). Select 'Design approaches for Frideswide Square'.

Or visit the County Council offices in Speedwell Street to see the proposals.

City extension at Barton

While the County Council is focusing on changing the city centre, the City Council is looking at ways to add about a thousand new homes on its edge, at Barton. Barton is outside the Ring Road, so a big risk is that the proposals will create an enclave of car-bound families unable to enjoy a feeling of 'connection' with the city. 'The wrong side of the tracks' is what an extended Barton might turn out to be – with many unintended social problems blighting what long-departed planners had seen as an opportunity to create a utopian 'sustainable environment'. OxPA will be submitting a response to the Barton consultation. Let us know please, what you think. How can we ensure that an extended Barton will not only be walkable, but that those growing up, and growing old, there, will not find themselves 'locked in' to car dependency. You can see the Barton consultation on the city council website (www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decP/BartonAAP.htm).

East Oxford Controlled Parking Zones

Following the withdrawal of the controversial proposals for a new CPZ in East Oxford, local residents are now working together with Cllr David Williams to find a better solution to their parking problems. A working

group has devised a questionnaire for consulting all residents and local businesses so as to achieve a consensus on the form of a new RPZ (Residents Parking Zone) to submit to the County Council during the next consultation in the autumn. OxPA is participating in this process and will continue to oppose legalizing the parking of vehicles on pavements.

Area Committee volunteers.

OxPA still needs members to attend the East, Cowley, and Northeast Area Committees each month and report on any Agenda items affecting pedestrians in their part of Oxford. Contact Paul or Corinne if you have time to help OxPA once a month in this way.

Next Meetings:

Our next meetings will be as follows:

Tuesday 27th July – meet on the Town Hall steps at 7pm for an evening walk lasting about 90 minutes, on the theme of 'Oxford's Two William Morrises'. We will take in sites associated with Morris the artist, and with Morris the car builder and philanthropist, generous supporter of education and health.

Tuesday 28th September, 7pm at the Town Hall. Subject to be announced.

Please note – there will be no August meeting.

Contacts

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