

CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAY MANAGEMENT

23 MARCH 2023

SPEAKERS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS RECEIVED

ITEM 5 – WITNEY LCWIP

Cllr Dan Levy

I am speaking as the County Council Active Travel Champion, and as someone who spends a lot of time in Witney, and who represents a division where residents look equally to Witney and to the city.

I am pleased to support the adoption of the Witney LCWIP. It is a thorough piece of work. The officers of this council and WODC, and the individuals and organizations which have contributed all deserve our sincere thanks.

The LCWIP sets out locations where improvements to infrastructure are required to remove barriers and increase the attractiveness of walking and cycling to residents and visitors to Witney. Some of these barriers should never have been built in the first place, and could have been removed in previous rounds of infrastructure building, but that does not diminish the importance of making things better when we can. The suggested improvements are thorough and evidenced and necessary.

The ambition is to make walking and cycling the preferred methodology for short journeys, and to double cycling trips by 2031. That is ambitious, and entirely the right objective. We can particularly note that the two senior schools in Witney should be aiming to have the sort of cycling levels we see at Lord Harry's in Abingdon or even Cherwell in North Oxford. Witney has really good stretches of bike facility already. Much of this, like the route from Cogges to the town centre which I often use coming in from Eynsham, is completely traffic free. Witney is compact and flat, and the LCWIP outlines plans to get round the one significant hill. Unfortunately the existing good bits tend to end in road junctions that are at best inconvenient and at worst dangerous or barely passable.

This LCWIP identifies those bottlenecks, and prepares the groundwork for when money becomes available to fix them. It is a key step in fixing the problems.

Combined with our ambitious strategic active travel network which will link Witney to outlying towns and villages and to Oxford, and with the commendable whole town 20 mph safety measures and the opening of the High Street to walkers and cyclists with most cars directed to the huge free carparks nearby, I am confident that a thriving Witney will be a beacon of active travel in future years and part of an active Oxfordshire.

ITEM 6 – Wantage – Market Place West – proposed permanent amendment to vehicle access and parking places

Bill Falkenau – Clerk, Wantage Town Council

Good morning. I am Bill Falkenau, Clerk to Wantage Town Council. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of the permanent prohibition of vehicles and removal of parking places from the western end of the Wantage Market Place.

The Town Council's ambition to pedestrianise this area goes back to July 2018. A number of events in the Market Place had demonstrated that the ambience in this area could be significantly improved by closing it off. Dialogue regarding what would be involved to introduce a permanent closure commenced in early 2019. The prospect of conducting short trials to test feasibility were contemplated. The elections in May 2019 changed the makeup of the Town Council but it remained committed to pursuing the change. There were a couple of Sunday afternoon events held in the area in the latter part of 2019. The pandemic outbreak in March 2020 prompted the need for social distancing and it was apparent that the closure of the area provided an appropriate route for pedestrians to pass through, maintaining a suitable distance apart. This prompted an 18 month temporary closure from 4 July 2020.

Later in the pandemic, when the public were being encouraged to only gather outdoors, the area accommodated al fresco hospitality. The County Council, being aware of, and supportive of the Town Council's long-term ambitions, agreed to extend the closure period for a further 18 month period from January 2022 under an experimental order. During the closure period the Town Council's consultant and County Council officers have been working together to agree details of a final scheme. This led to the County Council consultation between January and July 2022.

The Town Council's responses to the consultation objections/concerns are detailed in the report. There is strong support for the scheme. Principal objections/concerns related to disabled persons' parking places, and these have been addressed.

The temporary closure of the area has been in place for coming up to two years and nine months. Few schemes are given such a lengthy period of test. No major issues or problems have emerged. Whilst there are some loose ends, there is agreement that these can be dealt with.

May I, on behalf of the Town Council, request that the recommendation of the Corporate Director, Environment and Place be approved.

Statement in support of 20mph schemes across Oxfordshire

Danny Yee – Oxfordshire Liveable Streets

I fully support the traffic speed reduction measures being decided on today, but these will have relatively small effects compared to reducing speed limits in Oxford. Tens of thousands of people a day walk and cycle along or across Oxford's main roads, and reducing speeds there is the single biggest contribution you could make towards both Vision Zero and enabling active travel -- and would be vastly cheaper than either junction rebuilds or corridor upgrades.

I understand your reluctance to upset the bus companies. But if we have to wait first on Network Rail to finish their bridge works and then on eighteen months for the traffic filter trial to finish, that means a delay of over three years! Meanwhile, Wales is set to make 20mph the built-up area default in September, Scotland is committed to that by 2025, and other local authorities in England are moving forward. This change is going to happen sooner or later, so the bus companies need to accept it.

A conservative estimate -- based on STATS19 injury data and evidence from 20mph changes on Iffley Rd and in other local authorities -- is that reducing the speed limit on the current 30mph roads in Oxford would, over three years, avert or reduce the severity of more than ten serious injuries.

20mph limits would also enable walking and cycling for tens of thousands of people currently deterred by motor traffic. Lower speeds make using zebra crossings easier, make informal crossings usable by children and slower adults, and make cycling along - and most importantly across - main roads safer and less stressful.

Three years is two whole cohorts of Year 5 and 6 children, many of whom will miss out on being allowed to walk or cycle to school by themselves, and on the gains in independence and well-being which that brings.

So - as I have previously argued for School Streets schemes - I urge you to prioritise 20mph schemes based not just on how easy they are, but on how much of an effect they will have. Please make Oxford's main roads 20mph as soon as possible.

ITEM 15 – Uffington – Proposed 20mph speed limits

Benjamin Rule

I object to the proposed implementation of a 20mph speed restriction in Uffington.

Oxfordshire has a policy of implementing 20mph in towns and villages. The speed policy statement specifies benefits from increased active travel and a reduction in casualty rates and improved road safety.

The questions facing the Cabinet Member today are:

1. Does 20mph restriction in Uffington specifically deliver these stated benefits? and
2. Can proposals for Uffington be prioritised over other locations in the County?

The answer to these questions is no. The proposal must be rejected by the Cabinet Member.

Regarding benefits. **20mph will not encourage active travel in Uffington.** The village is well provided with footpaths allowing all of the 30mph zone to be reached safely on foot.

Speed in the village centre is reduced by road layout and on street parking. A 20mph zone exists for relevant school times. Uffington is remote. Active travel to other locations places the individual in a 60mph area not covered by this policy. There were 15 individual consultation responses. **The majority (12 out of 15) and majority of supportive responses (6 out of 9) said it would not encourage travel change.**

The proposal has been progressed with no analysis of casualty rates in Uffington. Department for Transport figures show 10 accidents in the whole of Uffington Parish since 2013. Outcomes were:

- Across the whole parish 14 injuries: 13 minor and 1 serious (a motorcyclist)
- Of the 10 accidents only two occurred in the 30mph area, both described as 'slight'
- Of the two accidents in the 30mph area none involved cyclists or pedestrians
- There have been no accidents involving pedestrians at all in the parish since 2013 and only 1 cyclist injured in an accident with a car on Whitehorse Hill (a 60mph area).

Replacing the existing 30mph restriction in Uffington with a 20mph restriction will have no impact on accident rates. Accident rates in Uffington Parish would be improved by focussing action in the 60mph areas.

The declared resource prioritisation statement lists the following in order of priority. I have added the facts relevant to the Uffington proposal:

- a) Recorded KSIs (None recorded in Uffington 30mph zone)
- b) Evidenced minor incidences (2 slight car accidents, no cycle or pedestrian accidents)
- c) Evidenced near misses (No evidence provided for this for the Uffington 30mph zone)
- d) On a school walking route (Does apply, but 20mph warning lights already provided)

- e) Level of pedestrians walking along or crossing the road (As expected in village of this size)
- f) Level of active frontage (No shops face 30mph zone directly, the shop has its own car park)
- g) Areas of high traffic volume expected for the type of road (No evidence of this in Uffington)
- h) Local [funding] contribution (No funding being provided)

Therefore, ***the Uffington proposal cannot be approved ahead of other existing proposals with much stronger cases.*** The Abingdon proposal (already deferred) has many serious cycling accidents and some fatal accidents. The Thame proposal (submitted prior to the Uffington proposal) is in a later tranche despite there being a number of serious pedestrian, cycling and motorcycling accidents recorded. If the Council wishes to achieve the stated objectives and benefits then the available money must be prioritised accordingly. Uffington is not one of those locations.

Carineh Shahbazian

I object to the introduction of a 20mph speed limit in Uffington because I do not believe that it will achieve its stated aims, namely improving road safety or increasing the number of journeys made by bicycle instead of by car.

Those people advocating for the scheme to be introduced in Uffington have not been able to demonstrate that doing so would achieve either of these aims in the village. Therefore, spending money on implementing this scheme in Uffington would be a waste of money which given the current economic climate, is unconscionable.

If there is a real desire to improve road safety in Uffington, money needs to be spent correcting the problems which actually affect road safety in the village (namely the poor road quality which also poses a significant safety risk to cyclists and the poor visibility due to inconsiderate / illegal parking).

If the aim is to increase journeys made by bicycle, then analysis of the sorts of journeys which people might swap car for bike and the issues currently preventing them from doing so needs to be undertaken before any schemes are proposed or funded.

If there is a serious desire to improve road safety in Oxfordshire in general, money needs to be allocated to a range of initiatives which correctly target the identified causes of road traffic incidents in the worst affected locations, not on a first come first served basis for a scheme where nobody has undertaken due diligence to show that it would provide any benefit in the location for which it is being proposed.

Mike Tustin

My name is Mike Tustin a resident of Uffington. Due to the fact that Uffingtons proposed 20mph zone is on a road that is largely used by village residents and the fact that the road is not an essential transport route for Oxfordshire I am broadly in favour of reducing the speed limit to 20mph in this village and other small villages especially as the plan has kept the limit to 30 in the faster more open run out zones of the village.

However, I am not in favour of reducing all 30 speed limits to 20 mph all over Oxfordshire thereby reducing traffic flow and making travelling by car or any other means in Oxfordshire less pleasant than ever. A county already in turmoil over the debate between working people having to drive private cars due to less public transport and county council officials wanting to reduce those journeys whilst at the same time increasing housing in rural areas, centralising health care (on Oxford), as well as increasing travel necessary for employment and education.

I think it is particularly noticeable that without exception all applications considered by this council are to reduce speed limits to cause congestion. Where are the applications to improve traffic flow and increase speed to offset the current continued reduction in driving speeds across Oxfordshire? This stampede to promote politically correct 20 zones also effects journey times on public transport too and like the forest of now rusting speed cameras funded by government will probably get lost in time when people take no notice.

The advertised main arguments for 20mph zones are:

Road safety. Granted 20mph reduces the physical damage done to a person if they are actually run over. How many pedestrians got run over and seriously injured or killed on Oxfordshires roads in 2020. 23 reduced from 45 in 2016 without 20s. Not very many when you consider 136 die or are seriously injured in cars and on motorcycles in the same period.

A person running in front of a car waving a flag could be more effective. But would the reduction in road deaths be worth that cost. Perhaps this is the next step if government offers funding.

Would it not be better to spend the huge sums of money that are currently funding 20mph zones on repairing road drainage systems and potholes so a driver or cyclist can lift their eyes off the road surface when driving in Oxfordshire without breaking your car. If that was achieved my own driving would be better and not have to be punctuated by swerving to avoid the frequent massive craters and deep floods caused by blocked drains (after only 5 minutes of rain). This would allow me to concentrate on other road users better and not spend a large percentage of my available mental capacity scanning the road ahead for the myriad of potentially very expensive car breaking obstructions let alone pedestrians.

Reduced pollution. I would like to see the hard evidence that lowering the speed limit from 30 to 20 actually reduces pollution. My own car has to be driven in a lower gear to do 20mph rather than 30 and as such the engine will be combusting more in a given distance than before. My personal view would be that this reduction in pollution is a fantasy, perhaps dreamt up by politicians to make 20s more palatable to the masses. Added to the basic reduction in speed additional traffic queues and tailbacks caused by 20mph zones are surely likely to increase emissions. Finally, no one seems to have considered the move to electric cars where reduced speed limits will make no difference to the emissions of these cars. As a result, the emissions argument is a poor one to persuade people to support 20mph zones. Another government funded message that I hear every morning on the local radio station.

ITEM 19 – East Hanney – Proposed 20mph speed limits

Cllr Sally Povolotsky

I am here as the WARD Councillor for Steventon and The Hanneys to speak on the East Hanney 20mph

The need to allocate housing (and employment) is not a justification for failing to meet policy objectives and, specifically, to mitigate the effects of traffic generation. From an East Hanney perspective, I want to repeat village fears and the parish council that the village is being sacrificed to enable unbalanced growth in Wantage/Grove and the surrounding area. We are all struck by the fact that the 'Healthy [and Safe] Streets Approach' summarised in LTCP is focussed on the towns and city but not on villages where the reverse effects are being experienced.

The 20mph I hope is the start of measures to help make our villages safer, we already have issues with children being able to safely cross the road due to parking outside the school, despite provision being offered at the Village Hall Car Park. The village and parish council has been championing 20mph through signage, bin stickers and banners at the main village entry. The A338 now has a new crossing to help those homes on the frontage on both sides of the main road to cross. The A338 is at full capacity in every possible way, and having encountered buses on that road myself, I would like to ask them to kindly slow down, as the bend in the road at La Fontana can cause hazards when confronted by a bus and/or a HGV. The comments by Thames Travel lead me confused, there are many homes with a frontage and a two businesses onto the A338 including Dews Meadow Farm shop and La Fontana as well as a depot for a housing association. The reference to Summertown, has a straight section and then a series of bends and historic bridge and heritage buildings...

Ironically I was here a month ago speaking about Steventon and their 20mph which also deferred due to Thames Travel issues, and Chair perhaps you will read with interest the number of buses caught speeding by the speedwatch group there, and I am hoping The Hanneys will form a Speedwatch group as well. We already have a TAS on the A338, and the traffic crossing, its unfair on residents to have to continually ensure the speeds inside the village and on the A338. As the ward councillor I will be supporting this approach in the same way I did for Steventon.

We want children to be able to move around the village safely to school by walking and cycling, residents to their provisions like the pubs, village hall, allotments and the wonderful newly refurbished. I disagree with the comment – or take a different slant on the one by the bus company, the short distance makes ALL the difference in encouraging walking and cycling, and horse riding locally especially given the semi and rural location, and new estates being connected to the older village. The school is walkable and well within cycling distance throughout the east and west Hanney parish boundaries. Please help us make this safer by granting this 20mph request.

In relation to the Thames valley police comment, I think perhaps they are geographically confused as they are talking about the A4260?