

Division(s): University Parks

CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT – 2 MARCH 2017

PROPOSED RAISED JUNCTION TABLE – BROAD STREET JUNCTION WITH PARKS ROAD, HOLYWELL STREET AND CATTE STREET - OXFORD

Report by Director for Infrastructure Delivery

Introduction

1. This report presents objections and comments received in the course of the statutory consultation on proposals to construct a raised junction table at the crossroads junction of Broad Street with Parks Road, Holywell Street and Catte Street, Oxford.

Background

2. Serious damage to the traffic signals at this junction was sustained in July 2016, which would be very expensive (at an estimated cost of approximately £100,000) to rectify due to the need to carry out a complete replacement of the current obsolete signal equipment. County Council officers consider - taking account of the reduced traffic flows since the traffic restrictions in Broad Street were introduced as part of the Oxford Transport Strategy in 1999 - that the permanent removal of the signals is likely to be acceptable having due regard for the safety and amenity of all road users and in particular the many pedestrians and cyclists crossing and travelling through the junction.
3. The permanent removal of the signals would also be consistent with aspirations for a comprehensive environmental improvement to this part of Broad Street shared by Oxford University, the County Council and Oxford City Council. Funding for this major improvement has though yet to be secured and the timescale for implementation is likely to be at least five years away, and in view of this, it is considered that a comparatively low cost interim treatment for the junction would be appropriate.
4. An informal consultation was carried out in the autumn of 2016 on a treatment (estimated to cost approximately £11,000) comprising the removal of the signal equipment, and the provision of a distinctive surfacing material (buff coloured) to highlight the entries to the junction where pedestrians typically cross, and - within the centre of the junction - a circular area of the same material to alert vehicle users of the presence of the junction but with no formal priority indicated. There are therefore similarities with the treatment as recently applied in Frideswide Square, Oxford.

5. The informal consultation sought the views of a wide range of interested parties including the local member, Oxford City Council, Oxford University and the adjacent university institutions and colleges, together with the police and other emergency services. Additionally the views of local cycling groups and the Oxford Pedestrians Association and Oxford Preservation Trust were sought.
6. The responses to this consultation were broadly supportive, with the removal of the signals being positively welcomed by many parties. However, some concerns were expressed that the proposals would not ensure that the speed of traffic through the junction would be sufficiently low to deliver acceptable levels of safety, in particular in respect of pedestrians. There were also concerns over the detailing of the treatment given the very sensitive location of the junction in the heart of the historic city centre.
7. In the light of these comments discussions were held with officers from Oxford University and City Council with a view to constructing a raised junction table to supplement the measures originally proposed. The revised arrangement is shown in **Annex 1**. Oxford University have offered in principle to contribute £35,000 and Oxford City Council the balance of £15,000.

Consultation

8. These revised proposals require (unlike the original proposals) a formal consultation under Road Hump Regulations, and accordingly, this was carried out between 5 January and 3 February 2017. This comprised the publishing of a notice in the local newspaper, the provision of street notices, and seeking the views of all parties consulted in the initial consultation. A dedicated page was also added to the County's online consultation portal to allow people to view and respond to the proposals.
9. Twenty eight responses were received (as summarized in **Annex 2**), comprising thirteen expressions of general support, eight objections, and seven responses expressing neither support nor objection.

Discussion of objections and other responses

10. Cllr Coates, the local member and City Councillor Louise Upton expressed support for the proposals.
11. Thames Valley Police expressed no objection, but as with the scheme at Frideswide Square which applies a similar design approach, noted that the absence of conventional road traffic signs and road markings left the status of the junction unclear in terms of legal obligations to give way. It is accepted that such uncertainty is inherent in this design approach, but that monitoring of the operation of the much busier Frideswide Square scheme has not identified to date that this is in practice creating difficulties. It should also be noted that there is no legal requirement for junctions to be provided with give way signs or markings.

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12. Oxford University supports the proposals in principle, and as referred to above, is willing – again in principle- to contribute £35,000 towards the raised junction table to help reduce the speed of vehicles. A number of queries were though raised on points of design details, including the specification of the buff surfacing material, kerb upstands, the provision for users with sight or other mobility impairments, as well as on-going maintenance.
13. Similar expressions of general support were received from the Oxford Preservation Trust, the Oxford Pedestrians Association and Cyclox, a local cycling group, together with the Linton Road Residents Association, although many of these responses also raised similar queries on the points raised in the response from Oxford University.
14. The objection from Cycling UK also related primarily to aspects of the detail design, rather than the overall principle of a raised junction table.
15. The queries on the detailed design issues raised by the University, Cyclox and Cycling UK were discussed at a site meeting on 17 February attended by their representatives and officers, which clarified the points raised, and identified a number of adjustments to the detailing of the footway works required to accommodate the raised junction table.
16. Oxford Bus Company expressed no objection to the proposed junction table (the junction is used as a diversionary route during St Giles Fair, and occasionally at other times) but raised a query over a point of detail design.
17. Eight objections were received from members of the public. Three expressed concerns over the planned removal of the signals and requested their re-instatement (or, in one case, the provision of a zebra crossing as an alternative), and three expressed the view that the raised junction table was unnecessary, and objected on the grounds of the unnecessary cost and / or the visual intrusion to the streetscape. In two cases, objections were submitted but with no details supplied on the grounds for objection.
18. Four responses from members of the public expressed no support or objection. Two of these expressed a preference for the re-instatement of the traffic signals, but also stated that if not, the raised table was unnecessary and / or might present a hazard to cyclists if poorly maintained, and suggested the provision of a conventional mini roundabout.
19. While noting the above comments, the cost of re-instating the signals would not appear to make this a viable or desirable option given the current financial constraints, the longer term plans for their removal even prior to the damage last year, and the general balance of views (including on the part of some of the objectors to the raised junction table) that the junction operates satisfactorily without signals. The provision of the junction table would – if approved – be funded by Oxford University and Oxford City Council, and would assist in reducing the speed of vehicles through the junction.

20. The provision of a conventional mini roundabout has been considered, but the signing and road markings required are not judged to be in keeping with the character of the area, and would also likely not in practice operate with any greater levels of safety than the proposed treatment, taking account of the monitoring of the similar treatment used at Frideswide Square.
21. The request for one or more zebra crossings is also noted, and while it is accepted that such crossings would provide positive priority for pedestrians, siting such crossings on the current desire lines for pedestrians would require them to be very close to the crossroads, which in turn could impair the operation of the junction. It should be noted that, when operating, the traffic signals did not provide any pedestrian lights.
22. The scope to significantly adjust the kerblines of the junction as suggested in two of the responses is not considered to be within the scope of this interim scheme, but could be investigated as part of the planned major environmental improvement.

How the Project supports LTP4 Objectives

23. The proposals will facilitate the safe and efficient movement of traffic as an interim treatment to the planned major environmental enhancement scheme.

Financial and Staff Implications (including Revenue)

24. Funding for the proposal is being delivered by a variety of sources, including development contributions, maintenance funding, and contributions from Oxford University and Oxford City Council; the appraisal of the proposals and consultation has been undertaken by Communities officers as part of their normal duties.

RECOMMENDATION

25. **The Cabinet Member for the Environment is RECOMMENDED to approve the implementation of proposals as advertised.**

DIRECTOR FOR INFRASTRUCTURE DELIVERY

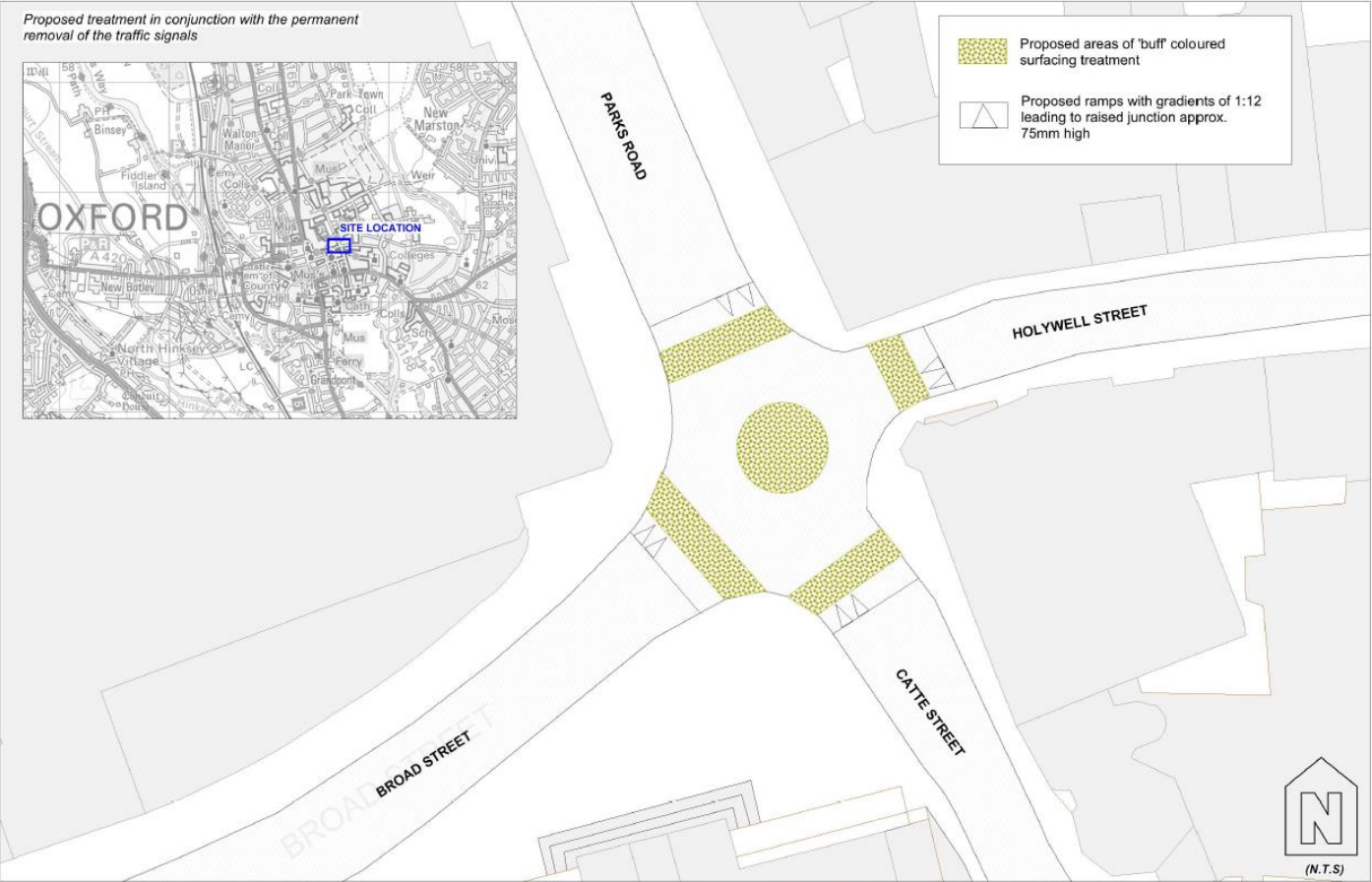
February 2017

Background papers: Consultation responses

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Annex 1

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL - HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT



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Date drawn: 24/11/2016
Drawn by: CJM

Map centre:
easting, 451551, northing, 206512

Annex 2

DETAILS	Comments
Cllr Sam Coates	Support - This is a good solution until a more permanent arrangement including wider pavements can be brought about. It should have the effect of slowing down all traffic including cyclists to look before continuing and improve pedestrian safety.
City Cllr Louise Upton	Support - This will be a substantial improvement on the existing situation. it gives visual signals to all users to slow down. It will make the junction safer and easier to use for pedestrians and cyclists, wheelchair users and people with buggies.
Traffic Management Officer (TVP)	Neither - No objection in principle, but seeks clarity on how this area is defined; while the plan shows a mini roundabout like arrangement, the absence of any conventional signing or road markings as prescribed for a mini roundabout, it is unclear who has the right of way, which might lead to confusion and compromise road safety for the more vulnerable road user. The existing cycle lane on Parks Road will need to be removed in the vicinity of the junction.
Sustainable Transport Manager (University of Oxford)	<p>Support- The University agrees that traffic signals are no longer required following the closure of Broad Street to traffic at Magdalen Street East This is an important site for pedestrian movement between iconic public buildings including the Weston Library, the Clarendon Building, Radcliffe Camera and the Indian Institute, and is the main gateway to the Science Area from the City centre on foot and by bike. Tragically a member of the University was killed at the junction ten years ago after being involved in a collision involving a refuse truck.</p> <p>It is therefore a priority for the University that its staff, students and visitors can move safely and conveniently through the junction on foot, by wheelchair and bicycle The proposed junction table is therefore welcomed by the University which considers this represents a significant improvement for vulnerable road users on the original proposals for surface markings only, and is reflected in the University's offer of £35,000 funding to support the County to deliver a scheme which achieves these objectives and creates a more pleasant environment for vulnerable road users.</p> <p>Clarification is nevertheless sought on issues including signing and road markings, kerb upstands, the needs of users with sight or mobility impairments, and maintenance.</p>
Oxford Preservation Trust	Support - We welcome the permanent removal of the traffic lights and clearance of street clutter as a positive move towards the Vision for Broad Street set out in the plan, and see the County Council's work here as the next stage in the improvements to this end of the street. The plans state the use of 'buff coloured material', and we encourage the County to use the highest quality

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	materials in making these improvements. We also ask that the work be carried out in a way which will allow the further improvements in the Vision to happen in due course, as exemplified by the nearby front steps to the Weston Library. Here the design and levels were planned to allow the area to integrate with adjoining street improvements linking across to the Clarendon Centre as and when these can happen.
OxPA	Support - . From their observations since the lights were disabled, the junction has become more user-friendly for both cyclists and pedestrians with the uncertainty for motor traffic seeming to result in more courteous and cautious behaviour at a junction where the predominant traffic is on foot or cycle. The distinctive surface colouring should be carefully chosen so as not to clash with surrounding stone buildings.
Cyclox	Support in principle - the response collates a range of views of Cyclox members; there is broad support for the removal of the signals and the junction table, but also there are queries on the treatment of the 'roundabout', provision for pedestrians, kerb heights and drainage, and the need for additional road markings and signs to help ensure that all vehicles approach and enter the junction at a safe speed.
Cycling UK	Object – while welcoming the removal of the signals, considers that the proposed height of the table (75mm) is insufficient to achieve the adequate levels of speed control, although also considers that the 1:12 gradient ramps are too steep for cyclists, suggesting a gentler gradient or different profile. Also objects to the detail of the proposed applied surfacing, suggesting possible alternative arrangements, and considers the road hump markings to be not in character with the area. Also noted that the consultation plan did not provide details of kerb upstands (including any amendments to the double height kerb on the north west corner of the junction) and the paving.
Oxford Bus Company	Neither - Whilst this is not on the primary route network for OBC it is on a diversionary route used by our buses (mainly when the St Giles Fair is in residence) or in other situations so the ability to for buses to use this is needed; supports the proposals based on the 75mm above existing carriageway height and a gradient of 1:12. We would be able to fully support the proposals if they also indicated a length of 1500mm and width of 600mm to ensure that a bus can use it safely and comfortably for passengers and the driver. Could OCC please confirm these elements of the scheme?
Linton Road Neighbourhood Association	Support There can be no case for lights at a crossing when the traffic is so low.
Resident	Support - strongly supports traffic-calming at this junction, to assist all road users ,especially pedestrians and cyclists
Resident	Support - welcomes the removal of the signals and the consequent more free flow of vehicles and generally

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	<p>safer behaviour on the part of most road users, though some vehicles enter the junction too fast, especially from Holywell Street taking account of the limited sight lines from this approach. The raised table With 1:12 gradient ramps is likely to be an acceptable solution, though its effectiveness will depend greatly on the visibility of the differential buff colouring, and the exact positioning of the proposed central circle of buff surfacing (a query was also raised on whether an 'egg' shaped area of such surfacing might be more effective). However also considers some additional measures to reduce speeds are advisable, suggesting for example a visual island (possibly over-runnable) on the Parks Road approach in particular to assist the many pedestrians crossing here.</p> <p>Also raised a query on the kerb upstands (taking account of the proposed 75mm height of the table) and expressed view that the kerb must be retained on the South-west corner, to reduce the temptation for cyclists to cut across the plaza in front of the Clarendon Building, and that the double kerb on the North west corner should be removed due to the hazard it presents to pedestrians.</p>
Resident	<p>Neither – expressed concern over dangers due to cyclists travelling through the junction at excessive speed, and suggested some form of control / priority is needed, but no need to raise the surface of the whole junction. Ideally the traffic signals should be reinstated, with a pedestrian phase. An alternative would be a mini-roundabout, with raised informal crossings on the two Parks Road and Broad Street where most pedestrians cross.</p>
Resident	<p>Object – supports the removal of the traffic lights, but considers the treatment is too intrusive in an area of exceptional historic and architectural significance and should be made minimalist with as little street furniture and roadway features as possible, and suggests just the mini-roundabout with textured road surface.</p>
Resident	<p>Object – supports the removal of traffic lights and all road signs but considers that the raised junction table is unnecessary and unsightly and should be omitted, & that the buff-coloured road surface should be applied on all the junction area.</p>
Resident	<p>Neither - Much preferred the junction when the traffic signals, due to motor vehicles not exercising due care. However, not opposed to a mini-roundabout type layout but concerned that the raised table and applied surfacing will not be maintained and present a hazard to cyclists, and suggests the provision of a conventional mini roundabout.</p>
Resident	<p>Neither – in favour of the removal of the signals, but considers that adjustments are also required to the Holywell Street approach to provide more visibility, which would require significant amendments to the existing kerb lines. Also expressed view that additional measures were needed to assist pedestrians.</p>
Resident	<p>Object – would like the traffic signals re-instated – the treatment is unnecessary and is not in keeping with the surrounding buildings, and does not assist the many pedestrians crossing here.</p>
	<p>Neither – while supporting the principle of a roundabout in place of the signals, expressed concern that the table</p>

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Resident	is unnecessary and may present a hazard for cyclists.
Resident	Object – requests the re-instatement of the signals or the provision of zebra crossings. The proposed traffic calming measures are like those already in place in Frideswide Square, which do not provide sufficient precedence for pedestrians and are not safe for children or pedestrians with sight or other mobility impairment.
Resident	Support – but suggests that the footways are widened so that pedestrians have a shorter distance to cross the road and create a more enjoyable public space, and considers this to be feasible noting that the junction is predominantly used by pedestrians and cyclists, and that motorised traffic is relatively light.
Resident	Object – <i>no comment made.</i>
Resident	Support – <i>no comment made.</i>
Online response	Object – Does not consider the treatment will adequately slow cyclists through the junction.
Resident,	Support – While very much supporting the removal of the signals, expressed some concern over the visibility of cyclists travelling from Holywell Street.
Resident	Object – while supporting the removal of the signals, considers that the provision of a raised table is an unnecessary use of funds given other priorities for improving cycle safety.
Resident	Support – but expressed concern that the correct tactile paving is used at all locations where the footway is flush with the carriageway (in accordance with the DfT's Inclusive Mobility document).
Resident	Neither – supports the removal of the signals; however the central circular buff coloured area makes it look like a mini roundabout, but the lack of other roundabout signage or any give way marks makes it look like an uncontrolled junction.