

CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT – 9 JUNE 2016

ACCESS TO HEADINGTON, OXFORD

Report by Deputy Director of Environment & Economy (Strategy)

Introduction

1. This report presents the outcomes of consultation on the Access to Headington project which includes proposals to introduce and amend various Traffic Regulation Orders and other traffic measures.

Background

2. Headington and surrounding areas are expected to accommodate significant growth in housing and economic development over the next 15-20 years. The Oxfordshire Local Investment Plan (May 2013) confirms 1,601 new homes and 101,900m² of additional employment floor space will be provided in Headington, Barton and within the existing hospital sites. Oxford City Council's Sites and Housing Plan (February 2013) also confirms the potential for ongoing redevelopment and intensification of the Churchill Hospital and John Radcliffe Hospital sites in particular, with employment, primary health care uses and residential development.
3. Over a number of years Oxfordshire County Council's transport strategy for the Headington area has been to accommodate the increasing numbers of people who want to travel to and through the area by creating more transport capacity, improving the attractiveness of non-car modes and managing commuting by car. Previously this has included bus priority measures and the expansion of Controlled Parking Zones implemented as part of the Headington and Marston Area Transport Strategy, and more recently, bus, pedestrian and cycle route improvements along the London Road corridor, and as part of the LSTF project, Thornhill Park & Ride has been expanded, cycle hire is now established at the major hospital and employment sites, and new and enhanced bus services have been introduced.
4. Oxfordshire's Fourth Local Transport Plan, which was adopted in September 2015, and includes the Oxford Transport Strategy, sets out the county council's long term vision for transport for the area and wider Eastern Arc (which also includes Cowley and Littlemore). The ambition is to create rapid transit routes serving the major hospitals and employment sites in Headington, and linking them to other parts of the city, P&R sites and surrounding settlements. In addition, a network of cycle super routes and premium cycle routes will link these sites to other parts of the city and out to nearby settlements.

5. In the short term, the Access to Headington project will deliver the first phase of infrastructure needed to achieve the above rapid transit and cycle networks. The project has already been awarded central government funding via the Local Growth Fund, which was announced as part of the Oxfordshire Growth Deal in July 2014.
6. The business case submitted to central government confirmed the project would deliver significant benefits attributed to improved health and reduced rates of absenteeism linked to an uptake in cycling. In addition, highway delay benefits from improved junction designs and the widening of junction approaches are predicted to reduce delay at junctions by 25-30%. Overall, the forecast benefits for the package of improvements are expected to generate £3.88 of benefits for every £1 spent.

Scheme proposals

7. The Access to Headington project is focused on improving orbital connections in Headington and more specifically, access to the major hospital and employment sites. The project includes a package of transport measures aimed at:
 - Improving bus journey times and service reliability by reducing traffic congestion at junctions and on roads leading to the major hospital and employment sites;
 - Upgrading and linking existing and new signal controlled junctions to enable greater bus detection and prioritisation across the network;
 - Providing a higher standard of cycle route provision, and in particular, more legible and continuous design than seen at present; and
 - Enhancing pedestrian and cycle routes by providing greater priority at side-roads, and new and improved crossings.

Informal consultation

8. In July 2015, initial designs (shown at Annex 1) were subject to informal consultation, including a series of exhibitions held at various locations in the project area. This resulted in over 1,000 responses including petitions specifically relating to road widening along Cherwell Drive and Osler Road, and the removal of on-street parking in Windmill Road. Key themes raised in the informal consultation are summarised at Annex 2.
9. In response to this feedback:
 - Proposals for a bus lane on Cherwell Drive were removed in favour of “virtual” bus priority;
 - Proposals to widen Osler Road were removed;
 - The scale of tree and vegetation loss was reduced by minimising the amount of road widening required and providing cycle lanes off-road;
 - A new pedestrian and cycle crossing was included on London Road to improve access between Osler Road and Lime Walk (and the hospital/employment sites)

- The proposal to remove the lower footway on Headley Way was removed, and a new pedestrian crossing was proposed to provide access to parking spaces in side roads; and
 - Parking surveys were undertaken and the results were made available at formal consultation stage. Additional parking bays were also proposed on roads surrounding Windmill Road.
10. Other changes were also made as part of the ongoing design and traffic modelling process.

Formal consultation

11. Revised proposals, including all of the changes summarised above, were published as part of a period of formal consultation on the scheme, including related Traffic Regulation Orders, between Thursday 25 February and Friday 25 March 2016. Formal consultation on proposed side road entry treatments also took place from Thursday 17 March to Friday 8 April. A copy of the designs is shown at Annex 3.
12. 2,300 letters were sent to residential and business properties in the project area and street notices were placed at intervals along the roads affected. Public notices were also published in the Oxford Times on Thursday 25 February and Thursday 17 March 2016. In addition, information was sent to statutory consultees, including Thames Valley Police, the Fire and ambulance services, Bus Operators and the local councillors, while a dedicated page was added to the County's online consultation portal to allow people to view and respond to the proposals. A number of public exhibitions were also held throughout the area.
13. In total, 407 responses were received, comprising 305 objections, a further 89 responses had objections to some parts of the proposals but supported others, while 13 responses were in support; the responses are summarised, including officer responses, at Annex 4. Copies of all the consultation responses are available for inspection in the Members' Resource Centre.
14. No objections were received from statutory consultees.
15. The main themes raised during the consultation were associated with:
- Removal of parking along Windmill Road and Headley Way;
 - Safety of shared pedestrian and cycle paths;
 - Cyclists right of way/priority;
 - Access to Cherwell Drive shops, and congestion around Copse Lane and Marsh Lane;
 - Hospital congestion and parking;
 - Loss of green space/trees;
 - Changing of junctions from roundabouts to signal control on Headley Way/Cherwell Drive;
 - Children walking to Windmill Primary School;
 - Stile Road additional parking;

- Petrol station access on Headley Way;
- Drop off and parking area provided for St Joseph's school;
- Relocation of bus stops;
- Side-road entry treatments;
- Diagonal crossing at London Road/Windmill Road junction; and
- Barton Park traffic impacts.

Further consultation on other options for Headley Way and Windmill Road

16. In response to concerns raised during the formal consultation, further formal consultation was carried out between Thursday 28 April and Monday 23 May 2016. This specifically related to other proposals for Headley Way and Windmill Road, which included the retention of some on-street parking bays. A copy of the proposals is contained within Annex 5. The consultation was published through site notices, local media and the plans were made available online. Approximately 400 letters were also distributed to local residents and business directly affected by the proposals.
17. 73 responses were received, comprising 46 objections, 3 responses in support and 24 neutral; the responses are summarised at Annex 6. Copies of all the consultation responses are available for inspection in the Members' Resource Centre.
18. No objections were received from statutory consultees.

Responses to formal consultation

19. The following provides a response to the most common objections/concerns raised during the formal consultation stage. A summary of all comments received is contained within Annexes 4 and 6 which also include officer responses.

Removal of parking along Headley Way and Windmill Road

20. The proposal to remove all on-street parking on Headley Way and Windmill Road raised many objections and concerns. The main issues related to a perceived lack of alternative space in side roads and the inconvenience caused. In particular, residents were concerned that they would have to cross a busy road and/or walk some way to access their car and those with disabilities, the elderly or people with young children felt their quality of life would be particularly affected as a result. The potential for proposals to increase vehicle speeds was also raised by many objectors.
21. Those who supported the removal of on-street parking along Headley Way and Windmill Road argued that this would help with the continuity of cycle lanes and remove risks such as when cyclists have to pull out into the carriageway to pass parked vehicles. Supporters also suggested 20mph speed limits should be introduced to overcome concerns about vehicle speeds increasing.

22. To overcome concerns raised by local residents and build more consensus around what might be implemented, and so get the best possible outcome for all, officers came up with an alternative set of proposals for Headley Way and Windmill Road that would retain some on-street parking whilst also providing continuous cycle lanes.
23. Feedback on these proposals was again mixed, with those in support welcoming the retention of some parking bays whilst also achieving betterment for cyclists. Those against were still concerned about the impacts of removing parking bays, particularly capacity for additional overspill parking in side roads. Amended proposals would mean a loss of approximately 17 parking bays along Headley Way and 18 parking bays along Windmill Road. Parking surveys undertaken by the county council over a number of different days and when demand is considered to be at its peak (4am) confirm however that there is already some spare parking capacity in side roads; approximately 62 spaces off Headley Way and 56 spaces off Windmill Road. Furthermore, approximately 26 additional parking bays are recommended for approval in roads surrounding Windmill Road.
24. Objectors were also concerned about the standard of cycle lane provision, and that the proposals would not be as safe nor meet the standard and ambition set out in LTP4. Proposals still include continuous cycle lanes both along Headley Way and Windmill Road. On the western side of Headley Way near St Joseph's School a 1.5m advisory cycle lane is now proposed, with this widening to 1.8m where on-street parking is provided. On the downhill section of Headley Way (also on the western side), between Bowness Avenue and Copse Lane, the advisory cycle lane width is 1.25m plus a 0.75m buffer is considered essential given the additional risks due to likely higher cycle speeds (Local Transport Note 2/08 suggests buffers for lanes by parking bays should be 0.5-1.0m wide). On Windmill Road 1.5m advisory cycle lanes are proposed on both sides of the entire length of Windmill Road, which widen to 1.8m where on-street parking is provided. Officers believe that this approach is the best compromise between the safety of cyclists, keeping some on-street parking provision, working with limited available carriageway widths and a desire to reduce the potential for any further loss of trees and grass verges.

Safety of shared pedestrian and cycle paths / Cyclists' right of way/priority

25. Concerns were raised about safety and the potential conflict between pedestrians and cyclists as a result of shared paths. In fact, only a small number of areas are truly shared, such as near the Cherwell Drive shops/Copse Lane and where off-road cycle lanes pass bus stops (and where space doesn't allow for a cycle bypass). The vast majority of shared paths would in fact be segregated by a white line, and in most instances the total footway width provided would be between 3 and 4 metres, which should help ensure lane compliance. Experience from Oxford's existing segregated shared pedestrian and cycle paths suggests these generally work well and safety has not been an issue.

Hospital congestion and parking

26. Concerns related to access and the traffic impact of the John Radcliffe Hospital, with respondents suggesting alternative improvements should be considered including a direct road link between the hospital and the A40 Northern Bypass, a dedicated hospital Park and Ride site, and additional on-site parking. A direct highway link from Oxford's Northern Bypass to the John Radcliffe Hospital is considered inappropriate as environmental and planning constraints mean any solution is likely to be prohibitively expensive, and certainly more than the budget available for the Access to Headington project. There is also concern that it would merely shift existing traffic and environmental problems elsewhere. Reducing traffic on roads that serve the hospitals by providing a step-change in public transport and improved walking and cycling routes, and through implementation of demand management measures, will improve access to all the hospital sites in Headington (and not just the John Radcliffe Hospital), and also benefit local residents and communities. As previously mentioned, an ambitious set of proposals are set out in the Oxford Transport Strategy, with Access to Headington being the first phase of improvements.

Loss of green space/trees

27. Objections related to the loss of trees and verges, and impact this would have on the environment and character of the areas affected. Taking on board previous concerns the amount of tree loss in particular has been considerably reduced, with 29 trees now proposed to be removed but replaced with 30 trees in locations as close to the removed trees as possible. Furthermore, public realm improvements and replacement tree planting are also proposed as part of the junction improvements at the Cherwell Drive shops, the area most affected in terms of tree loss.

Changing of junctions from roundabouts to signal control on Headley Way/Cherwell Drive

28. Comments have been mixed, with those objecting to signalling these roundabouts concerned about the scale of the proposals, the impact of changes in terms of local access and banned turns and the inconvenience this will cause, and because traffic signals are considered to be required for just the busiest hours of the day. Those who welcomed changes were supportive of giving more priority to pedestrians and cyclists in particular. Many people questioned why the county council wasn't putting forward a scheme similar to Frideswide Square, where traffic signals have been replaced by roundabouts.
29. The current roundabout arrangements, with single lane approaches, leads to both 'mini' roundabouts operating over capacity in the morning and evening peak periods, and as a result there is significant congestion along Headley Way and Marsh Lane in particular. The impact of this leads to a number of issues such as traffic blocking back onto the A40 Northern Bypass, the use of less appropriate routes (e.g. through Old Marston) to avoid the junctions, and

delay to those travelling through this part of the network, including patients and visitors accessing the John Radcliffe hospital. The junctions are currently also considered to be very unwelcoming for pedestrians and cyclists. Bus services also get significantly delayed when travelling through this and the JR Hospital junction, which leads to acute unreliability issues. The latter issues make it particularly difficult when it comes to encouraging commuters to travel by more sustainable modes.

30. Alternative roundabout designs were considered early in the design process. This included roundabouts with two lane approaches in order to provide more junction capacity, however, detailed modelling confirmed that these designs would still cause large queues and delay. Furthermore, roundabouts with two lane approaches are not considered to be the most appropriate for cyclists or courtesy/uncontrolled pedestrian crossings (such as those at Frideswide Square).
31. Junction modelling of the proposed signalised arrangement estimates that total vehicle delay and queuing will be significantly reduced. As a result, more of the junction's capacity can be given over to prioritising buses through selective vehicle detection, cycle safety can be improved with the introduction of cycle pre-signals, and more controlled crossings for pedestrians and cyclists can be installed, which will also be more responsive to demand. And this can be achieved without having a negative impact on general traffic.

How the Project supports LTP4 Objectives

32. See paragraphs 4 and 5 above.

Financial and Staff Implications (including Revenue)

33. £8.2m of funding has come from the government's Local Growth Fund, with the remaining budget (£4.3m) made up entirely of money previously secured from developer s106 contributions.

RECOMMENDATION

34. **The Cabinet Member for the Environment is RECOMMENDED to approve the implementation of proposals as advertised and as set out below:**
 - a) **waiting restrictions on The Slade**
 - b) **the amended proposals for waiting restrictions and residents parking places on Headley Way and Windmill Road (as consulted on between 30 April 2016 and 23 May 2016)**
 - c) **the new residents parking bays on side streets adjacent to Windmill Road with the exception of the following:**
 - i. **Stile Rd – 3 bays on boundary of 62 St Leonards (east side)**
 - ii. **Stile Rd – 1 bay outside 25 Stile Road (east side)**

- iii. **Margaret Road – 1 Bay outside number 12 (south side)**
 - iv. **Windsor Street – 1 bay opposite 18 (north side)**
 - v. **St Anne's Road – 3 bays boundary with 18 Gathorne Road (west side)**
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- d) **the proposed mandatory cycle lane on the east side of Headley Way, but shortened by 9m between its junction with Bowness Avenue and Snowdon Mede**
 - e) **the proposed mandatory cycle lane on the west side of Headley Way between the John Radcliffe Hospital junction and Eden Drive**
 - f) **shared use cycle track on Headley Way**
 - g) **the reversal of the permitted direction of travel, and proposed changes to the waiting restrictions (including the provision of a traffic calming narrowing) in the Cherwell Drive service road.**
 - h) **the turning restrictions at the proposed new signalled junctions of Headley Way and the John Radcliffe Hospital access road and the Headley Way / Cherwell Drive junctions with Marsh Lane and Marston Road and at the existing signalled junction of Old Road with Warneford Lane, Gipsy Lane and Roosevelt Drive, and A4142 Eastern bypass junction with Horspath Driftway**
 - i) **proposed new and amended pedestrian and pedal cyclists crossings with the exception of:**
 - i. **the new pedestrian and cycle controlled crossing on Old Road**
 - ii. **the proposed signal controlled crossing on Headley Way by Coniston Avenue**
 - j) **the raised side road entry treatments on Headley Way, Windmill Road and The Slade**

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Background papers: Consultation responses

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