

## Service and community impact assessment (SCIA)

### **Frideswide Square transport and public realm improvements**

February 2012

Environment & Economy

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to assess the potential impact of proposals for the redevelopment of Frideswide Square in Oxford, with particular reference to groups of people who share protected characteristics. This SCIA provides an update to the March 2011 EqIA, focusing on the proposal to proceed with the Boulevard as the preferred option. This assessment will be kept under review as the scheme is developed through to implementation, and updated as necessary to ensure emerging risks are identified and appropriate mitigating action taken.

Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 (“the 2010 Act”) imposes a duty on the Council to give due regard to three needs in exercising its functions. This proposal is such a function. The three needs are:

- the need to eliminate any conduct which is prohibited by or under the 2010 Act;
- the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who
- share any of the protected characteristics listed in section 149(7); and the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.

Complying with section 149 may involve treating some people more favourably than others, but only to the extent that that does not amount to conduct which is otherwise unlawful under the new Act.

The need to advance equality of opportunity involves having due regard to the need to:

- remove or minimise disadvantages which are connected to a relevant protected characteristic and which are suffered by persons who share that characteristic,

- take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and which are different from the needs other people, and encourage those who share a relevant characteristic to take part in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such people is disproportionately low.
- Steps to meet the needs of disabled people which are different from the needs of people who are not disabled include steps to take account of a person's disabilities.

The need to foster good relations between different groups involves having due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

These protected characteristics are:

- Age (people of different age groups)
- Disability (e.g. physical or sensory impairments, long-term illnesses and conditions, hidden impairments such as a heart condition, frailty, learning disabilities or mental health problems)
- Gender (men/women) and Gender Reassignment
- Ethnicity (including Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic groups, Gypsies & Travellers)
- Religion/belief (different faiths, including people with no religion or belief)
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage/civil partnerships
- Pregnancy & Maternity

## Summary

In March 2011, the Cabinet Member for Transport approved a design approach for Frideswide Square with no traffic signals, drawing heavily on "shared space" principles including compact roundabouts, greatly reduced carriageway areas, courtesy crossings, and landscaping. The officer report explained why this was considered appropriate, including full assessments of equality, safety and sustainability impacts.

Two options were approved for further design work and consultation, based on 'Oval' and 'Boulevard' designs. It is proposed to take forward the 'Boulevard' option for detailed design and implementation as it offers the best outcomes in terms of regeneration, deliverability, flexibility. It was also the option supported by most of the community during consultation with stakeholders. .

It is considered that the main impacts of the proposals would be on older people, younger people and those with a disability, as a result of the traffic signal free approach and creation of a shared space environment where the distinction between pedestrian and vehicular spaces less well defined than 'traditional schemes'..

This is mitigated to a large extent by the fact that the scheme will create an environment where traffic will move very slowly and will be encouraged to give way to pedestrians. Features will need to be incorporated into the final design to guide visually impaired pedestrians to crossing points and help them orientate themselves in relation to the buildings, bus stops, and the vehicular areas.

There are also some smaller risks for other groups, though many of these are mitigated by the slow, safe environment the scheme aims to create.

Part of the suggested mitigation is a “monitoring and review period”. Part of the project contingencies will be set aside to deal with any changes (including, but not limited to, changes to assist people with disabilities) post completion. No major changes will be made until at least one year has passed after the full completion of the scheme. This allows sufficient time for all road users to adjust to the new layout and for monitoring to be carried out.

## Impact on customers

The proposals for Frideswide Square have no traffic signals, drawing heavily on “shared space” principles including compact roundabouts, greatly reduced carriageway areas, courtesy crossings, and landscaping. This approach is considered to have significant advantages over more traditional approaches because it creates a safe, attractive, comfortable environment whilst reducing delays

However it is recognised that the proposals may have particular impacts on younger and older people, and people with a disability, and these are considered in detail below.

### Age

Of the options under consideration the Boulevard option is simpler and could therefore be easier for younger children and older people to navigate. However, having no traffic signals could be particularly challenging for younger children and older people, who may be less confident crossing the road independently.

Disabilities associated with old age are covered in the Disability section.

<i>Risks</i>	<i>Mitigation</i>
Younger children, crossing without an adult, may be less confident pedestrians. The removal of signal controlled crossings within the square could make it more difficult for younger children to cross independently.	The proposals create significantly more pedestrian space, provide many more crossing points, improve bus journey times and improve interchange with the station for bus users. These improvements will all represent significant improvements for the independent mobility of younger and older people.  It is recognised that the lack of signal controlled crossings will be a source of anxiety for younger and older people, but the proposals aim to reduce traffic speeds to 10 – 15 mph and the design will encourage vehicles to give way to pedestrians. This should create an environment that feels (and is) safe
Older people may be hesitant / avoid crossing the road in the absence of signal controlled crossings. This may prevent them taking their desired route through the square, take them longer or result in them avoiding the square altogether.	

	even for less confident pedestrians.
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**Disability**

The proposals will create an environment without traffic signals and with the distinction between pedestrian and vehicular areas less well defined than traditional schemes. This may increase the risk or perception of risk of accident or injury for people with a disability. Oxfordshire Association for the Blind believes the Boulevard option may be better for visually impaired pedestrians because of the straighter lines.

<i>Risks</i>	<i>Mitigation</i>
<p>Visually impaired pedestrians – removal of signal controlled crossings may make it more difficult to cross the roads.</p> <p>Shared space design approach may make the distinction between pedestrian areas and vehicular areas harder to identify and understand.</p>	<p>This has been the focus of many discussions with visually impaired people. Features will need to be incorporated into the final design to guide visually impaired pedestrians to crossing points and help them orientate themselves in relation to the buildings, bus stops, and the vehicular areas.</p> <p>The crossings will be designed to encourage drivers to give way to pedestrians, though this will not be legally enforceable. The design will seek to achieve traffic speeds of 10 – 15 mph. This should create an environment that feels (and is) safe even for less confident pedestrians.</p> <p>The new design will be much simpler and will create provide wide, flat, clutter-free pedestrian spaces, with level crossings at many more points than exist currently.</p> <p>Provision will be made for converting crossings to more formal “zebra” crossings if required.</p> <p>The whole scheme (but particularly the crossings) will be kept under review and changes made in response to feedback after an initial monitoring period.</p> <p>Training may be useful to help visually impaired pedestrians learning new routes through the square.</p>

<p>Mobility impaired pedestrians – removal of signal controlled crossings may make it more difficult to cross the roads.</p>	<p>The risks relating to mobility impaired pedestrians are not expected to be as significant as for visually impaired pedestrians, but much of the above mitigation applies.</p> <p>For many people with mobility problems, the new layout could represent a significant improvement, which has been recognised in consultation feedback.</p>
<p>People with learning difficulties – removal of signal controlled crossings may make it more difficult to cross the roads. Shared space design approach may make the distinction between pedestrian areas and vehicular areas harder to identify and understand.</p>	<p>The risks relating to people with learning difficulties are not expected to be as significant as for visually impaired pedestrians, but much of the above mitigation applies.</p> <p>The crossings will be designed to encourage drivers to give way to pedestrians, though this will not be legally enforceable. The design will seek to achieve traffic speeds of 10 – 15 mph. This should create an environment that feels (and is) safe even for less confident pedestrians.</p> <p>The new layout proposed will be considerably simpler and more legible than the present arrangement. People with learning difficulties have been consulted and their feedback has been positive.</p>
<p>People with hearing loss - removal of signal controlled crossings may make it more difficult to cross the roads.</p>	<p>The risks relating to people with hearing loss are not expected to be as significant as for visually impaired pedestrians, but much of the above mitigation applies.</p> <p>The crossings will be designed to encourage drivers to give way to pedestrians, though this will not be legally enforceable. The design will seek to achieve traffic speeds of 10 – 15 mph. This should create an environment that feels (and is) safe even for less confident pedestrians.</p>

**Gender reassignment, race, pregnancy and maternity, religion of belief, sex and sexual orientation, people living in rural areas, people living in urban areas, deprivation.**

The proposals will not have a differential impact on service users arising from any of these characteristics.