

Response to consultation received via feedback forms and letters

1. Aspects of the scheme received positively

- The various bus infrastructure improvements (lanes, stops, shelters, information etc)
- Changes to the traffic light phasing at the Windmill Road crossroads to include a right turn filter into Windmill Road.
- New paving and general improvement to street environment in Headington shopping centre
- New short term parking and loading spaces in Headington shopping centre
- New 20mph speed limit
- Relocating scheduled coaches to west of Gipsy Lane
- Replacement of the subway with Pelican crossing
- New/improved/relocated crossings including the crossing west of Gipsy Lane 'resting on red'

2. Concerns about the proposed scheme approach

Concern - Cyclists sharing bus lanes

- People were concerned that it would be dangerous for cyclists to have to share the bus lanes and that cyclists would slow buses down.

Officer response

- The bus lanes are an essential aspect of the scheme – without them, the objective to make bus journeys quicker and more reliable would not be met. Cyclists already share bus lanes in similar situations, for example on the Banbury and Woodstock Roads in Oxford. There is no evidence that this has led to an increase in accidents involving cyclists and buses.
- As far as possible, off-carriageway provision for those cyclists not wanting to use the bus lane would be retained (except the outbound stretch between Headley Way and Sandfield Road where highway space does not allow it).
- For some cyclists, particularly the more experienced and confident, bus lanes would be a significant improvement on the current situation, allowing them to bypass stationary or slow moving queues of traffic more easily and safely than at present, without using an off-carriageway cycle track.

- The section of bus lane between Gipsy Lane and Headley Way would be within the extension of the 20mph as far as Headley Way (see below).
- The outbound bus lane approaching Summertown on the Banbury Road is used by cyclists and, in common with to the London Road lane, is also slightly uphill. In that situation, there have been no obvious problems with cyclists holding up buses. On the London Road, for part of the bus lane (Sandfield Road to Osler Road), less experienced cyclists (and therefore likely to be slower cyclists) are likely to use the available off carriageway cycle track. There is no such alternative for cyclists on the Banbury Road.

Concern - narrowing of the shared pedestrian/cyclist facilities on the pavement (and removal of the outbound section between Headley Way and Sandfield Road)

Officer response

- The narrowing of facilities for cyclists and pedestrians has been necessary to allow the outbound bus lane to be provided. The bus lanes (which have been designed at the minimum sensible width) are an essential aspect of the current scheme – without them, the objective to make bus journeys quicker and more reliable would not be met.
- The existing cyclist section of pavements has been retained despite the width being reduced to ensure as much provision as possible for those less confident/experienced cyclists who do not want to use the bus lanes. In recognition of the fact that the overall width of the shared sections of pavement has been reduced, directional arrow markings have been proposed to encourage one way cycling in order to reduce the possibility of conflict with pedestrians. Except for one short stretch of pavement between Horwood Close and Osler Road, the width of the pedestrian side of the pavement would be at least 2 metres wide (the minimum recommended by the DfT in its guidance document “Inclusive Mobility”).
- The bus lanes are an integral part of the scheme and therefore the narrowing of some pavements is unavoidable. The outbound section of the cycle track between Headley Way and Sandfield Road would be removed because in that location, widening of the carriageway is needed for the bus lane and widened inbound lanes approaching to the traffic lights.
- During detailed design, careful attention should be given to ensure that markings on the shared use pavements allow users to be as clear as possible as to how to share the space safely and comfortably. Adding pedestrian symbols on the pedestrian side of the pavement (to complement the cycle symbols and directional arrows) could improve this clarity for users.

Concern - proposed new Pelican crossings would cause further congestion

Officer response

- The new crossings would create slight additional delay to traffic. However, at worst, they would add only a few seconds to an average bus journey time. Given that the outbound bus lane and other aspects of the design would give such a significant journey time benefit to buses, the delay caused by the new crossings would be insignificant in comparison, particularly when considered in the light of the benefits they would bring about for pedestrians.
- The settings of the new (and existing) Pelican/Toucan crossings should be set to ensure the minimum disruption to traffic flow whilst maintaining their attractiveness to pedestrians/cyclists.

Concern – drivers won't observe the 20mph speed limit

Officer response

- The police do not have sufficient resources to routinely enforce 20mph limits, so new limits need to be self enforcing. This is much more likely to be achieved if drivers can understand the reason for the lower speeds and where the road layout helps to enforce the limit. That is why the two stretches were proposed, i.e. outside Oxford Brookes University and in Headington Shopping centre where there are large numbers of pedestrians, traffic signals and so on. The 20mph limits should therefore remain part of the design.

Concern – there are too many buses on the route

Officer Response

- Buses are a very sustainable mode of transport. The London Road corridor is the key strategic route into Headington and the city centre from the east of the city. The resultant frequent bus and coach services that run along the London Road corridor ensure that people can visit the area and the city centre without having to use a car. The proposed scheme design would mean that the impact of the buses using the route is lessened in that (1) they should be stuck in slow moving queues for less time with resultant improvements to visual, air and noise pollution (2) bus reliability would be improved and bus bunching (more than one bus turning up simultaneously at the same stop) should therefore be reduced.

Concern – the proposals will lead to more rat-running along adjacent side roads

Officer response

- Whilst the objectives of the scheme do not actively seek to reduce delays for car drivers along the route, it is unlikely that the proposed design would make existing congestion worse for general traffic. Indeed, any modal shift from car to bus that results from the scheme will reduce pressure on the road. For this reason, the scheme should not increase rat running on side roads. However, before-and-after monitoring of traffic on the side roads would be carried out to quantify the effects of the scheme on side road traffic volumes in order to inform whether any action might need to be taken.

3. Summary of suggestions for changes to the scheme design (officers' recommendations for changes to the design are in bold)

Pullens Lane to Gipsy Lane

Suggestion

- The scheduled coaches should not be relocated from outside Headington School as the new location is further away and less convenient for people living on the Gipsy Lane housing estate.

Officer response

- As set out in the exhibition booklet in Annex 5, the relocation of the scheduled coaches the short distance to outside Oxford Brookes is a key element of the design in helping to reduce congestion for traffic between Gipsy Lane and Headley Way. For some people the new stops will be closer.

Suggestion

- The 'Keep Clear' marking in the eastbound bus lay-by should be lengthened in order to improve visibility for vehicles exiting the Headington School works access.

Officer response

- **This should be included in the detailed design.**

Suggestion

- The westbound bus lay-by should be amended or relocated to prevent creating access problems for the access road immediately to the west of 194 Headington Road and the area outside numbers 192 and 194.

Officer response

- **Changes to the layout of the westbound bus lay-by should be investigated as part of the detailed design.** This is likely to include a

'Keep Clear' marking across the access immediately to the west of number 194 Headington Road. It would not be possible to relocate the bus lay-by to the east because of the presence of the Pelican crossing outside Oxford Brookes University (the location of the bus stop would be subject to further consultation should the scheme be approved).

Gipsy Lane to Headley Way

Suggestion

- The exact location and layout of the westbound bus stop should be amended to retain the mature tree in the road verge.

Officer response

- Design work carried out so far has shown that it is not possible to relocate the lay-by off the carriageway anywhere else in the vicinity without causing serious damage to at least the roots of existing trees. **Further work on the detail of the design will confirm whether or not this is the case.**
- Positioning the lay-by partially off the road in this location would have significant congestion benefits for inbound buses and coaches, particularly during the evening peak period.
- The proposals include the replacement of the lost tree with a similar semi mature tree.

Suggestion

- The eastbound bus stop should be relocated further east to be directly in front of the Headington School main entrance in order to improve sight lines for drivers exiting the school. The new Pelican crossing can then be relocated further east.

Officer response

- **These changes should be made at the detailed design stage.**

Suggestion

- The 20mph speed limit should be continuous throughout the length of the scheme. Others suggested that the limit should be extended eastwards from Gipsy Lane.

Officer response

- 20mph limits are more effective when they are focussed on stretches of road where drivers can understand the reason for the lower speeds and where the road layout helps to enforce the limit – that is why the two stretches were proposed, i.e. outside Oxford Brookes University and in

Headington Shopping centre where there are large numbers of pedestrians, traffic signals and so on.

- It is felt that continuing the new 20mph limit for the entire route (as a number have suggested) would make it less effective, although extending the western section as far as Headley Way could be acceptable in that there would still be two distinct focussed limits, and the section outside Headington School also has high levels of pedestrian activity clearly associated with the school, Cheney School and to an extent, Oxford Brookes University.
- **The proposals for a 20mph limit should therefore be extended from Gipsy Lane as far as Headley Way** to cover a section of road with high levels of pedestrian activity associated with the schools and the bus stop.

Suggestion

- The 20mph limit should be extended to cover the side roads.

Officer response

- As explained in the response to the concern about increased rat running (see above) on the side roads as a result of the scheme, it is not expected that more traffic would divert away from the main road following completion of the scheme. Given this, together with the fact that the length of side roads off the main road that would need to be covered is very large, and the accident record of these side roads is very good, the 20mph should remain on the main road only.
- **Monitoring of the traffic levels on the side roads before and after the scheme would be carried out and any accidents would be recorded routinely as part of the council's casualty monitoring system.**

Headley Way to Horwood Close

Suggestion

- The right turn lanes into the side roads between Headley Way and Osler Road should be retained.

Officer response

- It is not possible to retain these right turn lanes as well as provide the bus lane. There are a number of other locations in the city where vehicles have to turn right off a main road with a bus lane without specific right turn lanes (Botley, Banbury and Woodstock Roads). In these cases, the road has generally worked satisfactorily in terms of road safety and congestion. In any case, any possible negative road safety implications need to be balanced against the significant journey time savings gained through the provision of the bus lane.

Horwood Close to Wharton Road

Suggestion

- The level differences in the paving of the shopping area should be removed.

Officer response

- **Where physically and financially possible, this should be included in the design.**

Suggestion

- The new paving in the shopping area should be extended to include those areas under private ownership.

Officer response

- **If sufficient funding is available and agreement can be reached with the landowners, the new paving should be extended to include those areas under private ownership.**

Suggestion

- More trees should be included as part of the design for the shopping area.

Officer response

- There are already quite a large number of trees in the area. **If funding is available and appropriate locations can be found (allowing for physical constraints such as underground services, sightlines for traffic and pedestrians and so on), additional trees could be included.**

Suggestion

- The subway should be retained because it is a safe way for people to cross the busy road and is currently well used. Its proposed replacement with a Pelican crossing would be less safe and would disrupt traffic flow more.

Officer response

- The Exhibition Booklet (in Annex 5) sets out the reasons why the subway is proposed to be filled in and replaced by a Pelican crossing – the proposals would help meet the objectives of the scheme for Headington shopping centre in terms of road safety and street environment.
- The most recent pedestrian crossing survey of the area close to the subway shows that over a weekday 12 hour period (7am to 7pm) in November 2004, 384 people used the subway and 363 people crossed without the subway between Osler Road and Stephen Road. Given that the flows of traffic are so high on this section of road, this would suggest that the subway is not as popular as some would suggest.

- There is little evidence that a Pelican crossing would be less safe than using the subway.
- Oxfordshire Highways has advised that the timing of the Pelican crossing signals could link with the Windmill Road traffic lights so that when the crossing is called, traffic disruption is kept to a minimum. However, further detailed work could still be done to (1) establish how long, on average, pedestrians would need to wait for a green man, given the likely demand for the crossing and (2) the possible impact on traffic flow given its location close to the Windmill Road crossroads.
- **Further detailed investigation should therefore be undertaken into how the new Pelican crossing would work and what impact it might have on traffic flow in the light of its proximity to the Windmill Road traffic lights.**