

LONDON ROAD IMPROVEMENT SCHEME: HEADINGTON CENTRE



**Public Exhibition
27 and 28 March 2009**

This exhibition presents Oxfordshire County Council's proposals to improve London Road between Osler Road and Wharton Road. You can ask questions, and tell us what you think. This booklet is designed to be read as you go round the exhibition, and provides information about the plans and other materials on display. If you need more information, please do ask a member of staff.

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These include other languages, large print,
Braille, audio cassette, computer disk or e-mail**

BACKGROUND

We consulted on proposals for the centre of Headington in 2007, as part of planned improvements to Headington Road and London Road from Pullens Lane to Wharton Road. The stage from Pullens Lane to Osler Road is currently under construction and will soon be completed.

The objectives of the improvements as a whole are to:

- Make bus journeys quicker and more reliable
- Enhance the Headington shopping area, and
- Improve road safety for all users

In 2007 some people said that we could be doing more for local people and shoppers, and that we were perhaps focusing too much on the needs of people wanting to travel *through* Headington. As a result, the plans you now see include features designed to reinforce the proposed 20mph speed limit, and make the shopping area more obviously an area where pedestrians and cyclists are important.

We think the proposed changes will make Headington a much more pleasant place for people to shop, eat, or meet up with friends. This will make visiting Headington more attractive, and help to ensure its future as a vibrant local centre.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

When you've looked at the proposals, please complete a feedback form and post it in the box provided, while the plans are still fresh in your mind. If you are unable to do that, you can take the form away and return it to us at the address at the back of this booklet. Or, you can go to our website, at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk, where you will find the plans and an on-line feedback form.

If you would like to talk to someone, please speak to a member of staff here, or contact us by telephone later on 01865 815882. **The consultation closes on 28 April, so it is important that you give us your comments before then.**

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

We will analyse the feedback, and report to the Cabinet Member for Transport Committee on 2 July 2009, with any recommendations for changes. As we make progress towards introducing the scheme, there will need to be some further, formal consultation for any necessary Traffic Regulation Orders (for things like changes to parking arrangements). Construction would take place during 2010.

THE EXHIBITION

Look out for the main features of our proposals, which include:

- Improved pavements
- Less clutter and new, high quality street furniture
- A new crossing and pavement areas to replace the subway
- Bus gates to reduce delays to passengers
- Gently raised junctions and crossings

Plans

The plans show the length of London Road between Osler Road and Wharton Road. They are presented at 1:200 scale, and show the existing layout at the top, with the proposed layout below. Please refer to the key, which explains the colours and symbols (Please note that the colours do not represent the actual material colours).

Visualisations

On display are computer-generated images showing how the streetscape could look under our proposals.

Materials

Illustrations and samples show suggested materials that will enhance the appearance of the centre of Headington, giving it a high-quality feel, as well as distinguishing it from the rest of London Road. This will not only improve the 'feel' of shopping in Headington, but will help to alert drivers to the fact that it is a shopping area, where they will need to slow down and respect pedestrians.

- Main carriageway - red coloured chippings used in a very similar way to the white chippings in the recently completed Summertown scheme.
- Kerbs – a ‘conservation’ kerb, more special than the material used on the rest of London Road.
- Pavement material – ‘EcoGranite’ is the material used in Summertown, and offers an attractive alternative to repetitive slabs. The blocks come in different sizes, forming a random appearance, and contain up to 77% recycled material.

Street furniture and planting

We are proposing a simple, contemporary look to the lighting, posts, benches, bins, cycle stands, bollards and railings, with the main theme being sustainably sourced hardwoods and stainless steel. The bus shelters will also be replaced, and real time information displays will be provided. In addition to how they look, all items have been chosen with durability, ease of use, and ease of maintenance in mind.

We recognize the importance of greenery in the environment, and hope to be introducing new trees where possible. Trees will be planted in special pits to prevent the roots from causing damage. We will choose trees that will not cause damage by growing too big, and which do not have very large leaves, that might block drainage gullies.

We have taken a fresh look at the position of the street furniture, with the aim of reducing clutter, while creating a more pleasant environment that will encourage people to spend longer in Headington.



THE MAIN FEATURES

Reducing delays for bus passengers

Both the bus gates in our plans are at the end of bus lanes. They operate by detecting a bus approaching in the bus lane, and turning the signals red to general traffic for a short time, to create a gap and allow the bus to bypass any traffic queue before moving safely back into the general traffic lane.

Other, legitimate users of the bus lane, including cyclists and taxis, will not trigger the signals, but will merge with other traffic at the give way markings at the end of the bus lane. This is an arrangement which has been used successfully elsewhere in Oxford.

Reducing speeds for safety

The plans include features designed to reinforce the proposed 20mph speed limit, by alerting drivers that they are in an area where there are likely to be more pedestrians. These features include gently raised surfaces at the Osler Road, Windmill Road and Wharton Road junctions. The proposed new crossing between Osler Road and Stephen Road, and the pelican crossing outside St Andrew's school, would also be raised to the level of the pavement. We would ensure that the ramps were not steep enough to cause damage to vehicles or discomfort to drivers and passengers.

The materials proposed for the pavement and carriageway will also make the area look very different from the rest of London Road, and the position of street furniture has been planned to make pedestrians more obvious in the streetscape, which will help influence driver behaviour.

Reducing congestion at laybys

Much of the congestion in the centre of Headington is caused by buses and other vehicles stopping outside laybys. Sometimes buses cannot pull in because a layby is full of other buses or obstructed by illegally parked vehicles. Sometimes vehicles making deliveries have to stop outside a layby because it is full.

To tackle this we are proposing to:

- Improve the layout of the bus laybys, making it easier for buses to pull in
- Separate bus stops from parking laybys
- Introduce new coach stops separate from the bus stops
- Move the taxi rank to the layby on the north east side of the Windmill Road junction
- Ensure that parking restrictions prevent parking and loading in bus laybys
- Provide more loading bays, to allow for vehicles that need to stop to deliver and collect

Improvements for pedestrians

A major part of the scheme will be to transform the pavements using high quality materials. Parts of the pavement are not highway land, so improving those areas will depend on us reaching agreements with the landowners.

On the north side of London Road, immediately east of the junction with Old High Street, we hope to remove the step in the pavement. On the south side of London Road, immediately west of the junction with Windmill Road, we would like to remove the existing steps by splitting



the pavement into two distinct levels, accessed by stairs and a ramp, with a smart stainless steel railing for safety.

We have looked into removing the steps in the pavement elsewhere, but the difference in level between

the shop fronts and the kerb is too great, and would result in a gradient across the pavement that was too steep.

In some areas we are proposing to widen the pavement, to provide more usable space for pedestrians, and help create a more pleasant shopping environment. These include an area alongside the bus layby near Osler Road, the east side of Old High Street near the junction with London Road, and the area currently occupied by the subway ramps. This also creates an opportunity for seating, planting and cycle parking.

Although this scheme focuses on improving London Road, if money allows we would like to improve the pavements in Windmill Road and Old High Street, as far as the extent of the shops.

At the mouths of the side road junctions, the crossings would be raised to the level of the pavement, to make it easier for pedestrians to cross and to deter drivers from turning into and out of the side roads too quickly.

Parking

We are proposing some additional short term parking, loading bays and disabled parking bays in the area covered by this scheme.

Outside the post office, we would like to change the current 1-hour limit to 30 minutes, to allow for more frequent turnover.

Cycling

We are proposing to remove the cycle lanes in this section, because the new 20mph limit and the features to reinforce it mean that cyclists will be traveling at speeds nearer that of the traffic. Without widening the carriageway significantly, it would not be possible to provide continuous cycle lanes of the recommended width through the centre of Headington. We could mark cycle symbols on the carriageway as a reminder to drivers that they share the road with cyclists, as has been done on Cowley Road.

We are proposing to improve the provision of cycle parking in Headington, in terms of the number, the quality and the position of stands.

New crossing

To enhance the shopping environment, we are proposing a level, wide pedestrian crossing to replace the subway. There would be a wide refuge in the middle to enable people to cross in two stages if they wish.

The subway provides a route under the road completely separate from the traffic, which some people would prefer to keep. However, about as many people choose not to use the subway and instead cross the road nearby without the assistance of a crossing.

We feel that the proposed crossing would have many advantages over the subway, including:

- Better for people with mobility problems – no ramps – the new crossing would be level with the pavement (the existing ramps are twice as steep as the current standards recommend)
- A much shorter crossing distance
- Safer for those reluctant to use the subway
- Cleaner, and not out of sight
- Makes pedestrians more obvious – helps to slow the traffic
- Creates more pavement space, which enhances the street environment
- Better visibility across the street – links the two sides together much better



The murals in the subway could be photographed and then reproduced on a website (as has been done in Plymouth), as well as being displayed at a suitable location elsewhere.

Some people have been concerned that a pelican (light controlled) crossing would delay the traffic, but we can link the crossing to the signals at the London Road junction, which means there would only be very small additional delays of a few seconds. It is worth bearing in mind that the outbound bus lane and improvements at the Headley Way junction will save a significant amount of time for bus passengers.

Other people have suggested that pedestrians would have to wait too long for the green man. The time between each green man coming on could be up to two minutes during the morning and afternoon peak, but the waiting time will depend on when a person arrives at the crossing, i.e. at what point during the cycle. Sometimes using the new crossing would be much quicker than using the subway: at other times it would take longer. The central refuge would help people cross without waiting for the green man, if traffic conditions allow.

Pelican or zebra?

There are very successful examples of zebra crossings (crossings without signal controls) on Cowley Road, in St Clements and elsewhere in the country. We are currently looking at the benefits and disadvantages of zebra and pelican crossings at this location, for both pedestrians and traffic flow, both of which do need to be considered.

Zebra crossings give pedestrians greater priority, but traffic would have to stop more often. However, unlike at a pelican crossing, traffic would be able to proceed as soon as the person had reached the other side, so it would usually be stopped for a much shorter time than with a pelican. Predicting a zebra crossing's impact on traffic flow is more difficult than with a pelican crossing: with a pelican crossing there would be more control, as it would be linked to the signals at the Windmill Road junction.

Pedestrians would have to wait longer to cross at a pelican crossing than they would at a zebra crossing, but the central refuge would make it easier for people who did not want to wait for the green man.

Some people feel less safe using a zebra, but accidents at both zebra and pelican crossings are very rare indeed. One disadvantage of a zebra crossing is that there is no audible signal telling blind people when to cross, as there is with a pelican.

We would like to know how you feel about our plans for a replacement crossing, and whether you think a pelican or a zebra crossing would be best. Whichever crossing is chosen, it would be very carefully designed to the highest standards of safety, with excellent visibility. It would also be one of several raised features along the route, which together would act to calm the traffic, and increase safety for all road users.

Safety and Vulnerable Road user audits

The proposals have been audited by engineers independent of the design team. Further audits will be carried out when we progress to designing the details of the scheme to ensure that it operates as safely as possible and is convenient and comfortable for the pedestrians (especially including those with mobility or sensory problems) and cyclists using the area.

*Thank you for taking the time to visit the exhibition.
If you have any questions please contact:*

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*100% recycled paper
Printed with vegetable based inks*

Produced by County Print Finishers
Tel: 01865 815672 • Fax: 01865 204309

V044-01 (03/09)



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