

**Divisions Affected - Wolvercote and Summertown, St Margaret's,
University Park**

**DELEGATED DECISIONS BY CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT
MANAGEMENT**

18 JULY 2024

WOODSTOCK ROAD SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT IMPROVEMENTS

Report by Director of Environment and Highways

Recommendation

The Cabinet Member is **RECOMMENDED** to:

- a) Approve the following highway and bus journey time/ reliability improvement measures to the Woodstock Road, Oxford (A4144) as advertised and set out in Annex 1. That subject to approval, detail and final design of the listed measures shall be delegated for approval to the Director of Environment and Highways in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport Management:
- b) Commence an experimental trial for a removal of part of the 24-hour southbound bus lane between the Wolvercote roundabout (A40) and Squitchey Lane and replacement with a northbound bus lane of similar length; alongside necessary supplementary measures.
- c) Implement new and improved side road crossings at the following side roads: Bevington Road, St. Margaret's Road (East), South Parade, Little Clarendon Street, Observatory Street, St Bernards Road, Plantation Road, Leckford Road, Canterbury Road, Farndon Road, St. Margaret's Road (West).
- d) Introduce a new section of off-carriage way cycle path on the western side of Woodstock Road between the junctions with Frenchay Road and St. Margaret's Road.
- e) Provide a new zebra crossing on Woodstock Road to be located approximately 20 metres south of the junction with Bevington Road.
- f) Commence an experimental trial to relocate a marked parking bay (limited stay parking) outside Belsyre Court on the Woodstock Road.

- g) Deliver a range of localised measures detailed in public consultation plans set out in Annex 1 to support the aims of the scheme including sections of improvements to the condition of footway/ cycleways, amending road markings, install solar studs, and implementing measures proposed in the County Council's 2021 'Quickways' consultation for Woodstock Road.**
- h) Implementation of a bus stop clearway (which will prevent parking except for buses at all times) - to be located within the existing bus stop, approx. 25 metres south of its junction with Little Clarendon Street.**

Executive Summary

- 1. This report presents responses to the consultation on the proposals to introduce sustainable travel measures on the Woodstock Road (A4144) in Oxford, including changes to the bus lane to support bus journey time reliability and active travel measures to prioritise people walking and wheeling as shown in **Annex 1**.
- 2. Objectives of the project are aligned with the councils adopted Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) and aim to;
 - Increase walking/ wheeling trips
 - Increase cycle trips
 - Improve walking and cycle safety
 - To improve public transport journey times
 - Enhance placemaking
 - Help new residents and employees travel in and out of the city more sustainably
- 3. Sustainable travel enhancements to the Woodstock Road would complement wider significant investment in sustainable travel currently committed and being delivered along the A40 and A44 routes. Measures will also complement the approved Oxford traffic filter trial.
- 4. The Woodstock Road Sustainable Travel Improvements are being funded from the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal (HGD). If approved measures will need to be delivered by March 2025 to meet the funding timescales.

Background

- 5. The A4144 Woodstock Road is a radial route that stretches 3.69km (2.29 miles) northwest from Oxford city centre. The corridor sees significant flows of cyclists, pedestrians and bus users both from within Oxford and to/from external urban areas extending from the A44 and A40. Over future years, travel demand is expected to rise with (amongst other factors) development of the committed Oxford North, Eynsham Salt Cross and Cherwell district's allocation of Oxford's unmet need housing development sites.

6. There has been longstanding feedback from active travel groups, bus operators and local councillors that current active travel (cycling and walking) provision along the Woodstock Road requires improvement in terms of continuity and priority and that there are currently poor outcomes for bus reliability and punctuality.
7. To address this, a phased package of measures is proposed, which have been developed with stakeholder input, and include:
Phase 1 – Introducing an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) to remove the 24-hour southbound bus lane between the Wolvercote roundabout (A40) and Squitchey Lane and replace it with a northbound bus lane of similar length retaining existing permissions (i.e. for pedal cyclists, taxis and licenced private hire) alongside delivery of minor complementary measures. It is hoped the measure will improve bus journey time reliability and support the planned trial traffic filters. Both local bus operators (Stagecoach and Oxford Bus Company) have been strongly supportive of the measure. An ETRO provides an opportunity to monitor measures before committing to a permanent decision. This is considered beneficial as the scheme will complement the traffic filters trial which itself is being trialled as an ETRO. A flexibility in approach will allow quick changes to be made where required, should there be unforeseen issues or challenges to objectives of enhancing bus reliability/ journey times.
Phase 2 – A package of active travel (cycling, wheeling, walking) priority measures focussed on the southern end of the Woodstock Road details of which are set out in the ‘recommendations’ section.
8. Plans showing details of the proposals are available in Annex 1.
9. The A4144 Woodstock Road is a radial route that stretches 3.69km (2.29 miles) northwest from Oxford city centre. The corridor sees significant flows of cyclists, pedestrians and bus users both from within Oxford and to/from external urban areas extending from the A44 and A40. Over future years, travel demand is expected to rise with (amongst other factors) development of the committed Oxford North, Eynsham Salt Cross and Cherwell district’s allocation of Oxford’s unmet need housing development sites.
10. Sustainable travel enhancements to the Woodstock Road would complement wider significant investment in sustainable travel currently committed and being delivered along the A40 and A44 routes. Measures will also complement the approved Oxford traffic filter trial.
11. Objectives of the project are aligned with the councils adopted transport policy (LTCP) and aim to;
 - Increase walking/ wheeling trips
 - Increase cycle trips
 - Improve walking and cycle safety
 - To improve public transport journey times
 - Enhance placemaking

- Help new residents and employees travel in and out of the city more sustainably
12. Oxfordshire County Council consulted on the proposals in May and early June 2024. We received considerable feedback on the designs including 111 online survey responses, 29 written e-mail responses and 4 written letters.
 13. The traffic filter trial is expected to commence in November 2024. Initial traffic modelling undertaken to support the traffic filter trial suggests a reversal of the bus lane at the northern end of Woodstock Road would be strongly beneficial. Any measure would need to be delivered ahead of the start of the trial traffic filters.
 14. There is an aspiration for the highway network to be as 'neutral' as possible to enable effective monitoring of the trial traffic filters, therefore it is also necessary for the traffic management for the other elements of the active travel scheme to be well managed to ensure delivery of these does not compromise the monitoring.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

15. The Woodstock Road Sustainable Transport Improvements are consistent with and deliver on a number of the council's nine corporate priorities, including:
 - Put action to address the climate emergency at the heart of our work
 - Prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents
 - Invest in an inclusive, integrated and sustainable transport network
 - Preserve and improve access to nature and green spaces
 - Play our part in a vibrant and participatory local democracy
 - Work with local businesses and partners for environmental, economic and social benefit
16. In July 2022, Oxfordshire County Council adopted its new Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) which sets a clear vision to deliver a net-zero transport system that enables Oxfordshire to thrive, protects the environment and makes the county a better place to live for all residents. This includes ambitious targets to:
 - (a) replace or remove 1 in 4 car trips in Oxfordshire by 2030
 - (b) deliver a net-zero transport network by 2040
 - (c) have zero, or as close as possible, road fatalities or life-changing injuries by 2050
17. To help deliver the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan vision, the adopted Central Oxfordshire Travel Plan (COTP) proposes a set of 22 actions to support a more sustainable and reliable transport system across the central Oxfordshire area, including proposals for traffic filters which are required to address several challenges, including the need to:

- (a) reduce exposure to air pollution and rapidly reduce carbon emissions from all transport related activities
- (b) reduce congestion and its negative impacts on bus services and economic productivity and vitality
- (c) encourage more sustainable development, making greater use of limited road space and prioritising public transport, walking and cycling
- (d) improve health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities

Financial Implications

- 18. The Woodstock Road Sustainable Travel Improvements are funded through the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal (HGD). The project was allocated £4 million. including the £992,000 already spent or committed on the design and consultation.
- 19. The Full Business Case has now been approved with a released budget of £2.059 million for design and construction subject to the approval of this paper. This includes budgeted risk allowances to make amendments if required and cover future costs of making the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order permanent if successful.
- 20. The measures are required to be delivered and paid for by the Housing and Growth Deal Funding deadline of 31 March 2025.
- 21. The area of public highway to be maintained (including footway and carriageway) remains the same and within the council's maintenance programme. There will be new materials introduced at the side roads, with more highway space allocated to walking and wheeling. Decisions on final design including materials will be taken by the Director for Environment and Highways in consultation with the cabinet member. This will include consideration for future maintenance costs in the context of factors including the planning status of the area and objectives of the scheme.

Comments checked by:

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Legal Implications

- 22. The scheme development will be led by Oxfordshire County Council as the Highway Authority. Legal advice required for the project will be met from existing council resources.
- 23. The consultation that has been undertaken, which will aid development of the scheme designs, complies with the consultation requirements for the various elements as required under the Highways Act 1980, the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and related regulations.

24. The proposals for bus lane reversal and parking amendments will be introduced using an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) in accordance with the powers and duties set out in the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. Some, all, or none of the changes may be made permanent at a Cabinet Members Decision meeting following the experimental phase, subject to the six-month consultation and monitoring of the scheme's impacts.
25. Should the scheme be implemented it is confirmed that the statutory consultation procedures have been followed within the guidelines set down by Legal Services.

Comments checked by:

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Equality and Inclusion Implications

26. An Equalities Impact Assessment is at Annex 3. The proposals are not expected to have a disproportionate impact, bias, discriminate or unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups within the community.
27. The Equalities Impact Assessment will be reviewed as the detailed design is finalised and will continue to be reviewed as part of the ETRO process and as the new infrastructure is implemented and been used. Any issues or complaints received will be responded to and if aligned to scheme objectives, addressed.

Sustainability Implications

28. The proposals will have a positive impact on sustainability as they will help encourage increased use of sustainable and active modes along the Woodstock Road corridor, and help improve road safety, especially for the more vulnerable road users (people walking and wheeling) in the area. The proposals would support Oxfordshire County Council's adopted Local Transport Connectivity Plan vision to deliver a zero-carbon Oxfordshire transport system that enables the county to thrive whilst protecting the environment and making Oxfordshire a better place to live for all residents.
29. A Climate Impact Assessment for the Woodstock Road project is included in Annex 4. It concluded the scheme will have a net positive impact particularly in terms of reducing travel by private car and increasing use of public transport, walking and wheeling. As a result, there is expected to be a reduction in total annual CO2 emissions from road transport in the area.

Risk Management

30. A risk register has been maintained and will continue to be maintained throughout the life of the project. The key risks at this stage are:
 - Bus journey time savings cannot be made
 - Network Management issues and road space availability

- Road safety considerations
- Scope creep and late changes to design
- Loss of funding if there are delays to delivery
- Asset and maintenance implications

Consultation Approach

31. Proposals have been co-developed alongside a number of key stakeholders between Winter 2023 and Summer 2024. Formal consultation was undertaken from 8 May to 5 June 2024. To ensure that all residents and stakeholders were made aware of proposals a number of activities were undertaken;
 - Letters were sent to residents along the Woodstock Road and those side roads with proposed entry treatments
 - Emails were sent to an identified list of stakeholders including statutory consultees, including local councillors, Thames Valley Police, the Fire & Rescue Service, Ambulance Service, bus operators, Cycloxx and other local user groups
 - A consultation page ran on the council's Let's Talk Oxfordshire webpage alongside a survey
 - Hard copy deposits of plans and consultation materials and surveys were available at Summertown Library, County Hall, Westgate library
 - Site notices throughout the route
 - Publication of notice in local newspapers
 - Presentations to identified stakeholder groups including local councillors, inclusive accessibility groups and a university and colleges group
32. To ensure that all residents could take part in the consultation, an option was offered to request a hard copy of any documentation, for surveys to be returned by post or comments to be given over the phone by contacting the council's helpline. Written responses were also received by post, and via a dedicated email address.

Consultation Feedback and Officer Responses

33. In total 144 responses were received during the formal consultation period. 111 of those were received via the online survey and 4 paper surveys were also received. A further 29 emails were also received during the consultation period.
34. Beyond the formal responses received, the consultation was successful in raising awareness about the proposals. In total there were 1,500 visits to the consultation webpage. Of those 1,100 were classified as "aware" of the proposals as they viewed at least one page of the survey. Of the 1,500 visits to the consultation webpage, 499 were classified as "informed", as they took an action such as downloading a document or reading the FAQs.
35. There were 22 per cent of respondents to the online survey who indicated that their day-to-day activities were limited by long term illness, health and/or disability. The age of respondents to the online survey ranged from 25 up to 65+ however no one identified as under the age of 25 responded to the online

survey. There was a mixture of both male and female respondents to the survey with an overwhelming dominance of respondents (85 per cent) indicating that they were a resident living in Oxford.

36. Some objections and challenges were received against the original plans by residents. All comments received are recorded in Annex 2. Further detail is included below.
37. These are noted, and suggestions relating to design of the measures will be passed on to the design team and reviewed as designs are finalised.
38. As all of the proposals align with our policy and support the overall objectives of our LTCP, we are seeking approval to implement the scheme.
39. The feedback and officer response to each of the elements of the scheme is set out in annex 2.

Bus Lane Reversal ETRO

40. There were 114 online responses to the Phase 1 - Bus Lane Reversal ETRO. Of those who responded via the online survey, 42 per cent who stated support or strongly support, and 30 per cent who stated oppose or strongly oppose. Key themes raised in the consultation;
 - *Concerns that the bus lane reversal will increase southbound congestion/ delays for buses and/ or that southbound bus priority in morning peak period should be the priority*
 - *That the bus lane reversal will have a negative impact on people cycling southbound who currently use the bus lane*
 - *Concerns at removal of a southbound bus stop (Wolvercote roundabout)*
 - *Concerns measures will increase congestion and delay at Wolvercote Roundabout northbound*
 - *Concern that a 'Yellow Box' junction should be introduced for those exiting from First Turn*
 - *That the council should see how the trial traffic filters work first before amending any bus priority*

Bus Stop Clearway

41. There were 111 online responses relating to the bus stop clearway proposed on the western side of Woodstock Road north of St Giles. Just over 50 per cent of online respondents supported or strongly supported with 21 per cent opposing or strongly opposing. Key themes raised in the consultation;
 - *That measures could create additional delay for buses/ that the measure was not needed*

Side Road Entry Improvements

42. There were 112 online responses to the proposals to implement new and improved side road crossings at the following side roads: Bevington Road, St. Margaret's Road (East), South Parade, Little Clarendon Street, Observatory

Street, St Bernards Road, Plantation Road, Leckford Road, Canterbury Road, Farndon Road, St. Margaret's Road (West).

Over 50 per cent of online respondents supported or strongly supported each of the side roads proposed, and the percentages and responses were very similar for each of these. Between 16 and 20 per cent of people stated oppose or strongly oppose across the locations. Key themes raised in the consultation;

- *That proposals do not represent value for money and are not needed.*
- *That Side Road Entry Treatments should be implemented as continuous footway designs with entry kerbs*
- *That measures should be prioritised in alternative locations*

Zebra Crossing – near Observatory Street

There were 113 online survey responses to the proposals to implement a Zebra Crossing across Woodstock Road near Observatory Street. Of these online responses 73 per cent supported or strongly supported this measure and 20 per cent opposed or strongly opposed. Key themes raised in the consultation;

- *The measures are not necessary*
- *Measures are prioritised in the wrong locations, and suggested alternatives*

Re-location of parking bay – Belysre Court, experimental trial

There were online 111 responses to the proposal to relocate as an experimental trial, a parking bay outside Belysre Court on the Woodstock Road. Of these 41 per cent of people supported or strongly supported proposals and just under 30 per cent opposed or strongly opposed. Key themes raised in the consultation;

- *Concerned about negative impact to the businesses, and those with disabilities*

Off Road Cycle Provision – Frenchay Road to St. Margarets Road

43. There were 111 online responses to the proposals to extend the off-road cycle provision on the western side of Woodstock Road between Frenchay Road and St. Margarets Road. Of these, 63 per cent of online survey respondents supported or strongly supported the measure and 22 per cent stated oppose or strongly opposed.

Whilst some responses to the consultation provided support for the proposed footway/cycleway on the grounds that it will provide improved facilities for people cycling compared to the existing infrastructure, others objected or expressed concern on the grounds that they believe cyclists should be physically separated from pedestrians and should not just be separated by pavement markings or share space with pedestrians. Key themes raised in the consultation;

- *That the proposed off road footway/cycleway extension should be wider to accommodate people walking, wheeling, and cycling and/ or should physically segregate cycle users*

Further comments received

44. Various other comments were received summarised below.

- That there should be a bolder more comprehensive strategy to improve active travel
- That more should be done to prioritise measures for car users, and people commenting that they do not support the policy approach and other measures such as the trial traffic filters
- General support for active travel and /or proposals
- That the condition of the footway/ cycleway and markings on Woodstock Road are poor and should be prioritised, particularly;
 - South of Bainton Road
 - At northern end of the corridor
- That there are too many roadworks and that these measures will increase congestion
- That measures do not represent value for money
- That bolder proposals are required (suggestions offered)
- That there should be better enforcement of speed limits/ and or that measures should include a reduction to 20mph for the route

Next Steps

45. Feedback from this consultation will be used by the project's design consultant to complete the detailed design. As part of the design process, an independent road safety audit will be carried out ensuring that the audit recommendations are incorporated into the design as appropriate.
46. That subject to approval, detail and final design of the scheme will be delegated for approval to the Director of Environment and Highways in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport Management.
47. If approved, delivery of works on both Phase 1 (Bus lane reversal the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order) and Phase 2 (Active travel measures) works will commence in early August 2024. Thereafter works are planned to be phased in their delivery in order to minimise network disruption through to early 2025.
48. If approved, the council will undertake scheme monitoring as part of the ongoing ETRO process and post implementation monitoring of the other elements. Monitoring will be undertaken to assess performance against the scheme objectives of;
- Increase walking/ wheeling trips
 - Increase cycle trips
 - Improve walking and cycle safety
 - To improve public transport journey times
 - Enhance placemaking
 - Help new residents and employees travel in and out of the city more sustainably

49. If measures are approved a public consultation will be necessary on the experimental trial elements of the scheme. This will be undertaken for a minimum six months with a formal Cabinet Member Decision required no sooner than six months but no later than eighteen months after the experimental trial has commenced.

Paul Fermer

Director of Environment and Highways

Annexes

Annex 1: Consultation plans

Annex 2: Consultation responses

Annex 3: Equalities Impact Assessment

Annex 4: Climate Impact Assessment

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July 2024