



# Walk Talk

Newsletter of Oxford Pedestrians Association

April 2014

## Welcome to Newsletter 111



**A vision of a future St Giles, from the County's newly-launched initiative, *Connecting Oxfordshire*.** Presented by Cllr Ian Hudspeth on April 3rd, this "transport-enabled vision for the future" covers a wide range of exciting possibilities county-wide, but of greatest interest to OxPA members will be the transformation of St Giles into a pedestrian boulevard with tram or mass transit lanes either side. This bears some similarity to one of our own designs for this marvellous town place. We are continuing with our survey work and will be ready to contribute to the planning procedures when the time comes. The other development which will affect Oxford pedestrians is Frideswide Square. We were told that unlike St Giles, Frideswide Square is now fully planned and costed, ready for work to start this autumn, to be completed early in 2015 after a Christmas break. At the launch of the initiative, Councillor Ian Hudspeth explained that Oxfordshire is facing major transport challenges in supporting economic growth, new jobs and more housing, and must plan now for the essential transport improvements needed in the future. Doing nothing is no longer an option! While trams or similar mass transport systems have been rejected as too costly in the past, they are now back on the agenda, at least in Ian Hudspeth's personal vision. In the subsequent discussion, it was pointed out that a congestion charge or some form of rationing of road space could provide funds for a MTS. Several of the required changes involve rail, including the possibility of bringing the Cowley branch freight line into use for passengers coming into the city centre from the east of the city. To join the debate and keep in touch, visit [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/connectingoxfordshire](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/connectingoxfordshire).

*(Visualization shown above is by Blink Image, Oxford)*

### **A Future of Transport in Oxford City**

Councillor David Nimmo Smith, who chairs Oxfordshire's Transport Advisory Panel, and is Cabinet Member for Environment, will be our guest at our forthcoming meeting on April 22nd. This is an excellent opportunity for OxPA, and Cyclox to question the person in charge of Oxford's transport, and for us to explain our priorities. Please come

prepared to participate in a dialogue on the future of transport in Oxford.

**Guide Dog Charity demands ban on Pavement Parking** The charity Guide Dogs says that blocking the pavement is especially "inconsiderate and dangerous" for blind people. London already bans pavement parking and a recent poll carried out by

YouGov found that seven out of ten people would like this ban extended nationwide and eight out of ten local Councillors would back a new law to end confusion about pavement parking. OxPA has long advocated a total ban.

### **Westgate**

The latest proposals for the Westgate development have now been approved by Oxford City Council. The increased shopping centre will stretch down to Oxpens Road. A temporary car park will have to be created on Oxpens Meadow while the current multi-storey car park is demolished and rebuilt, mostly underground. There has been much local opposition to the proposals for reasons that include the inevitable increase in traffic on Thames Street and Botley and Abingdon Roads, roads already congested and polluted in excess of EU minimum permitted levels. Risk of increased flooding and insufficient housing, including affordable housing, on the site have also been grounds for objection. OxPA's contribution to the consultation focussed mainly on the traffic generation issues and the failure to create people-friendly, accessible facades along Oxpens Road. The increased bulk and height of the development will have a deleterious impact on iconic views of Oxford and its spires from surrounding areas. The demand by the developers for a ban on buses in Queen Street (in accordance with Oxford Transport Strategy 1999), is proving controversial. Traffic-related air pollution has risen in Oxford over the past year and especially on St Aldates, which has already had to accommodate buses re-routed from Queen Street. OxPA has maintained a preference for leaving the few buses in Queen Street as they are now, which travel at low speeds and respect the priority of pedestrians, rather than allowing St Aldates, a beautiful street in its own right, to be further degraded; it has already become unpleasant and dangerous for walkers owing to high traffic volumes and the polluted air.

### **20mph**

On grounds of safety for cyclists and walkers a call has been made by the DfT to roll out 20mph speed limits in all residential and urban streets in Oxfordshire. If hit by a vehicle travelling at 20mph you are likely to survive, at any faster speed you are more likely to be killed. Oxfordshire County Council is resisting the call on grounds of lack of resources and "lack of evidence" that lower speeds save lives. (There is in fact as good evidence for this as there can be - see [www.oxpa.org.uk/BMJabstract.html](http://www.oxpa.org.uk/BMJabstract.html)). OxPA's position is that the issue is not just about saving lives and preventing serious injury but also about quality of life and the built environment. We wish to see roads treated not as racetracks splitting communities, but as public space for all. 20mph limits would go some way towards making such space safe and pleasant for everybody.

### **Headington Neighbourhood Plan**

In common with several other districts in Oxford, residents in Headington are working towards creation of a Neighbourhood Plan. Keith Frayn of OxPA has been acting as secretary of the Headington Transport Group (chaired by Charles Young), looking at traffic and transport issues in Headington. At their next meeting, the Transport Group will consider a paper on pedestrian issues drafted by Keith. The main issues are discussed under the headings Education (into the health benefits of walking), Transport Planning, Pavements and Walking Routes, Issues for People with Disabilities, Rights of Way and other Paths, Road Crossings, and Pavement Obstructions. Keith would be happy to share his document with any OxPA member who is interested, and to receive any comments. Contact him at [keith.frayn@gtc.ox.ac.uk](mailto:keith.frayn@gtc.ox.ac.uk).

### **St Giles Winter Fair**

In response to complaints from drivers about inconvenience in the run-up to last Christmas, when St Giles was closed to traffic for a lantern parade, market and fair, Oxford City Council has decided that this year's public festivities will all be indoors. Once again, the driving lobby has been given priority over people who want to enjoy a special public space on foot, at least for a few days each year. Last year St Giles could be seen in its full glory for three days when a Victorian Fair was held there, and thousands of people came on foot to wander and enjoy it. Sadly it may be many more years until we have that pleasure again.

### **Stalls**

Our next stall will be at the Headington Festival on Sunday June 1st, 1-5pm in Bury Knowle Park. It is a good opportunity to meet people, publicise our organisation and gain new members. If you would like to spend an hour or two at the stall and enjoy the festival, contact Felicity on 01865 251212.

### **Next Meeting:**

**April 22nd** 7pm Town Hall, jointly with Cyclox "A Future for Transport in Oxford City". Guest speaker Cllr David Nimmo Smith, Chairman of the County Transport Advisory Panel and Cabinet Member for the Environment

**May 27th** An evening walk

### **Contacts:**

**Chair:** Sushila Dhall 790783

**Secretary:** Corinne Grimley Evans, 779663

**Treasurer:** Christine Hamand 559856

**Membership:** Michaele Philbin, 201541

**Website:** <http://www.oxpa.org.uk>

**Write to:** OxPA, 431 Meadow Lane, Oxford OX4 4ED.

**National Pedestrians Association** [Living Streets]  
0207 737 4900