



Walk Talk

Newsletter of Oxford Pedestrians Association

May 2019

Welcome to Newsletter 129



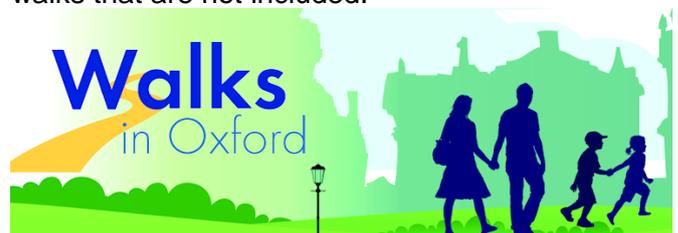
Street Audits

Following a presentation from Patrick Lingwood, Oxfordshire's Local walking and Cycling Infrastructure officer, OxPA has agreed to help with future pavement and footway planning by taking part in street audits. This means walking along various city streets noting air quality (or lack thereof), width and state of footways, obstacles, ease of crossing side-streets, benches and space to relax, and space to walk in general. Eight OxPA members piloted the first streets: Hythe Bridge St, George St, New Inn Hall St and Park End St. We realised that streets need to be broken into sections as, e.g., the west end of Hythe Bridge St is wide and level, although the street as a whole is one of the most unpleasant in Oxford despite being very highly used by walkers between the station and the city centre. Just as a chain is as strong as its weakest link, a footway is as walkable as its worst part. The aim of the audits is to improve built environment and therefore the experience of walking in Oxford so as to encourage people to choose to walk between and to places. Following the pilot, the form is to be simplified into maps of streets with a key so we can mark where issues arise in particular, as well as comment on the overall experience of each street. We will need help from members in carrying out the audits. If you do not have email, please ring Sushila on 01865 790783 to express an interest in helping, and she will call you before each audit to let you know where and when it is taking place.

On Foot in Oxford

This group has representatives from OxPA, Oxford Civic Society and Oxford Ramblers. It looks at issues concerning walking in the city, especially concerning walking for leisure and footpaths. Its main output is the website 'Walks in Oxford' (<https://www.oxfordwalks.org.uk/>) which lists, by category and distance, more than 70 published walks in the city. The website was launched publicly in March 2014, and the group are currently planning an event to mark its 5th anniversary. Keith Frayn represents OxPA and is

responsible for the database that underlies the website. Please have a look, and let Keith know (via OxPA, or via Feedback on the website) if you find any problems, or if you know of published walks that are not included.



New Oxfordshire Residential Roads Design Guidance

Graham Smith, OxPA member and expert in urban design, describes the background to this new document which is under development.

We started 'loving cars' in the 60s. The congestion from cars in our towns was growing significantly and led to a Study Group being set up by the government to deliver a major report, published as: 'Traffic in Towns', 1963. Known as the Buchanan Report it was so popular it was also published as a paperback.

Following on from thinking about how to accommodate the motorcar, a guidance for new residential development was published in 1977: 'Design Bulletin 32. Residential roads and footpaths, layout considerations'. The key proposal was a separation between roads for going places and roads which were places. This sounded attractive and is of course attractive still but, the manner in which this concept was taken up in DB 32 had far-reaching effects. Distributor Roads meant there are to be no mixed-use roads and no high streets. Nowhere, in fact, to walk to. Developments areas were to be either residential or commercial, education, or entertainment and were effectively separated. This logic, which accommodates the car, has also meant that the car has become a necessity to make a trip between origin, destination and return.

A growing concern about this inevitable growth in car use, at the cost of walking, cycling and public transport, led to a new national approach replacing the thirty-year-old guidance in DB32: this is Manual for Streets, 2007. It sought to transform the quality of our streets by "breaking away from standardised, prescriptive and risk-averse methods to create high-quality places". It has been in place now for twelve years.

The Oxfordshire County document under development is therefore of key importance for high quality places and to enable journeys made by walking, cycling, public transport and generally for sustainability. It is urgently needed because it replaces a 'temporary' 2015 publication which was little more than a reprint of a 2002 publication, which was solidly based upon the obsolete DB32.

More on enforcement (or lack of) in the City Centre

In the last newsletter we proposed that 'There is no point having traffic restrictions and rules [especially in the City centre] if they are not going to be enforced'. Since then Deborah Glass-Woodin has continued to pursue this issue and has received assurance from the Communities Directorate at Oxfordshire County Council that they will increase deployment of officers. They

say: "if you continue having problems with vehicles contravening the parking restrictions and you have not seen a Civil Enforcement Officer visiting the area please telephone NSL's Control Room on 0345 337 1138 option 3, and wherever possible an officer will be dispatched to the area". Deborah has also provided these photos showing the lack of thought for pedestrians when road works are carried out.



City Council should lead by example

Deborah Glass-Woodin noticed a City Council lorry driving the wrong way along Cornmarket Street. She wrote to Oxford Times on behalf of OxPA:

"Cllr Tanner is concerned about cyclists on Cornmarket and says they should be fined and yet at 10.45 last Tuesday morning a City Council refuse collection lorry was happily (I spoke to the driver) being driven North to South down Cornmarket - out of Ship Street, where there is a clear 'No left turn' sign - apparently a perfectly legal, regular event as the City Council has 'the Freedom of the City'. Lead by example, Oxford City Council!"



Meetings (all 7 pm):

May 28th: Walk in the Lye Valley, meeting point to be notified (in case of poor weather, meet in Town Hall)

June 25th: – t.b.c.

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