

## Campaigns and Activities

### **St Giles**

Together with Oxford Civic Society and Cyclox we are pressing for a major revision of what could be one of Oxford's most beautiful public spaces. See REPORT<sup>1</sup>.

#### **<sup>1</sup> OxPA's Hope for St Giles**

Many groups and individuals have long had aspirations for St Giles - to make this marvellous space worthy of the surrounding architecture, and to make it more of a public place and less dominated by space dedicated to traffic.



With tentative plans drawn up by Sushila Dhall, and the support of the Oxford Civic Society and Cyclox, we invited Ben Hamilton-Baillie to meet a small group of us to get ideas about how to proceed. We learned that plans were premature, that what is needed first is collection of data to establish current patterns of use by pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles. We need to define what is unsatisfactory about the present layout, both in terms of safety and in its failure to fulfil its potential as a beautiful public place. A group of volunteers has since counted pedestrian and cycle movements in all directions at several points throughout the length of St Giles at different times and days of the week (see below for data tabulated by Keith Frayn).

The campaign gained new impetus at our July meeting with the return of Ben to address a larger meeting of representatives from Oxford Civic Society, Cyclox, Sustrans, City and

County Councillors and officers, and many individuals, including Ted Dewan of Roadwitch, interested in creating a more beautiful place for people in the heart of our city.

Ben's general thesis was that the attractiveness and safety of a city's public realm, the space between and around its buildings, will determine economic survival in the age of on-line and out-of-town shopping. These ideas are shared by our City Centre Manager Gordon Reid, who has exciting ideas about future use of St Giles. City-centre shopping, cultural, and tourist attractions are important economic and social activities but will not survive well without a revolution in assumptions about traffic in city streets. In particular, the relationship between vehicles and other users - and uses - of city streets has to be re-examined.

The Buchanan report of the 1960s recommended segregation of pedestrians from vehicular traffic, which has led to unattractive urban centres and increasing dominance of motorised traffic. Transport planners are now re-examining this question. The recent DfT *Manual for Streets 2* promotes greater integration, and removal of unnecessary lights and signs, reduction of traffic speeds, and more sharing and reallocation of space are as ways of enhancing the experience of residents and visitors in our city streets. Examples such as Poynton, Exhibition Road and examples from abroad were shown to illustrate these ideas, and a sketch of the Beaumont/Walton Street junction revealed the potential benefit for Oxford.

Ben believes speeds of around 17mph are crucial to successful integration and that good design and application of behavioural psychology are better ways of reducing speeds than formal speed limits. New York City's experiment with cheap temporary materials to reduce vehicle dominance may be applicable to St Giles. Strong visionary political leadership will be essential if this project is to succeed.

### **Our survey**

The main point to come out of our survey work was the enormous volume of pedestrian traffic using St Giles. On a Tuesday afternoon, between 4:15 and 5:15 pm, we counted 736 pedestrians walking northwards, 894 southwards (for cyclists the numbers were 246 and 357). There are also a lot of people crossing (166 over the same period) despite the difficulty of getting across two lanes of traffic in each direction. We didn't make an accurate count of vehicles but from the County Council's automatic traffic counters on nearby roads, there are likely to be considerably fewer than non-car users. Bus movements at the southern (Martyrs' Memorial) end are complex, with buses and coaches taking almost every possible combination of directions. Almost all the south-bound car traffic, in contrast, makes a right turn into Beaumont Street, leading to queues (and hence air pollution) at those traffic lights.

On Sunday June 7th 2015 at lunchtime we conducted a "snapshot survey" in which we tried to count the number of people in St Giles at any one moment (rather than the flow of people). The results were clear; at any one instant, on a summer Sunday, there were on average 202 people on foot, 14 on cycles, and 75 in vehicles. These results confirm what we have been saying; St Giles is a street predominantly used by pedestrians.

For a fuller account of OxPA's St Giles survey work see the slides of Keith Frayn's presentation to the meeting convened by OxPA, the Civic Society, and CycloX on October 1st 2015 [delete this paragraph?].

## A Vision for the City Centre

This summary<sup>1</sup> of our hopes for the future has been produced in response to an invitation from the Leader of Oxfordshire County Council.

### <sup>1</sup> OxPA's vision for Oxford city centre

#### Carfax/St Aldates/Queen Street/ shopping area

- Tackle air pollution and overcrowding in St Aldates, both pavements and carriageway
- Leave Queen Street as it is now rather than move more buses to St Aldates
- Welcome John Lewis as part of the Westgate development **only without the 1337-space proposed multi-storey car-park** which will encourage and increase car and other vehicle journeys into Oxford along already congested and polluted routes. Make it easily accessible from Park & Ride instead.
- Create a phase at Carfax when all traffic is stopped so that pedestrians can cross in any direction.

#### Traffic/pollution reduction

- Reduce motorised traffic through entire city centre; a further reduction in workplace parking may be necessary.
- Take the car parking out of Broad Street freeing up the space for other activities.
- Narrow the roadway on St Giles to create a beautiful wide space for other activities and a walkway between Martyrs Memorial and St Giles church.
- Make a pedestrian friendly direct route between the railway station and the city centre (current route too narrow, dirty, polluted, and congested with motorised traffic).
- Stop coaches parking outside the Taylorian on St Giles, and until this can be achieved, enforce the rule that engines are switched off when idling/waiting.

#### Buses

- Take buses out of Magdalen Street East, freeing up the cycle lane and reducing air pollution/congestion on this narrow street (in what other city would an ancient church and graveyard be a traffic island?).

- Add local stops into the route of the number 300 Park & Ride bus creating a north-south local bus.

### **Traffic lights at junctions**

- Remove traffic lights from Holywell/Broad Street junction and replace with raised crossing (this has been requested and promised for at least 15 years).
- Remove traffic lights from George Street/Cornmarket junction and also replace with level pedestrian priority crossing (eg four way zebras).

## **Health and Wellbeing**

Walking brings both social and health benefits to people of all ages. See the [evidence](#) we submitted to the Parliamentary Select Committee on Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs.

## **Pedestrians are not second class citizens!**

Transport policy has for too long given priority to the convenience and efficiency of motor traffic. We lobby local and national government to give specific consideration to the needs and rights of pedestrians in the use of public space. See our response<sup>1</sup> to the Department of Transport's consultation on "making Britain's roads the safest in the world".

### **<sup>1</sup> Response to Government Consultation: "A Safer Way"**

**Walking and cycling must be encouraged, not merely accommodated.** Both are important components in delivering the five key goals stated in 'Delivering a Sustainable Transport System'. Vulnerable road users (VRU) must be given higher status and protection. Policy must ensure that we are all more attentive when in charge of ourselves and of vehicles.

**'Road safety' needs to recognise and reflect the wider roles of streets as places - not just as links in a travel network.** The act of 'walking' describes the activity of being outdoors, not necessarily for travel. The role of streets is for more than just travel - they are places where social interaction occurs, and where communities develop.

**Safer streets need to enable the activity of walking to be undertaken at all times; and safer streets need to be walkable by everybody.** There are no age or competence limits for walking, and it should be made available 24 hours a day, 365 days each year.

**The pedestrian must no longer be considered a 'secondary' participant in the activities that take place in the street.** Accepted practices such as the pedestrian having to seek

permission to cross the road at light controlled signals, or pedestrian diversions at urban mini roundabouts reflect out of date attitudes that the pedestrian has lower status than the motor vehicle user. The government's 'Manual for Streets' confirms the higher status of the pedestrian and the cyclist. The law needs to reflect that.

**Key changes to road safety culture and law are needed to ensure that walkability is enshrined within design guidance**, as opposed to simply 'provision of walking facilities'. In particular:

1. The law needs to reflect the considerable potential for a motor vehicle driver (an adult who has passed or is training for a competence test) to injure or kill a VRU (of any age and untested competence). **In a collision between a vehicle and a VRU it should be for the motor vehicle driver to demonstrate that liability was not theirs**, rather than for the VRU to demonstrate that liability rested with the driver. This is necessary to underpin encouragement of walking and cycling, and to strengthen a culture of responsible driving and traveller behaviour.

**2. Twenty miles per hour limits are needed in more streets than those described as 'residential'**. Many streets are 'mixed priority streets' and many are bus routes. Most pedestrian activity takes place on such streets, and it is there that most street crossing activity takes place. They are the streets where the heaviest vehicles and the more complex vehicle movements - acceleration, braking, parking, loading, side road movements etc - are witnessed most. Not only is the kinetic energy of a vehicle at 30mph about twice that at 20mph, and the potential to injure or kill correspondingly greater; it is in such streets that drivers can be easily distracted, and where the ability for VRUs to assess drivers' intentions is so important in avoiding collisions.

## Pavement Parking

We have long campaigned against the obstruction of pavements by parked cars and have protested<sup>1</sup> against proposals to formalize pavement parking in East Oxford. **Pavement parking [link removed]** is antisocial, dangerous, damaging to the shared environment and, where causing an obstruction, illegal.

### <sup>1</sup> **SAY NO! TO PAVEMENT PARKING**

Space invaders are coming! The County Council wants to mark out pavements in East Oxford for pavement parking. If their plans are approved, some of the space that people use to go about their neighbourhood will be taken over for car drivers to store their private cars.

Highway robbery! The Council proposes leaving 1 metre for people on foot. But this will mean:

- Cars being driven on and off pavements
- Extra hazard from broken kerb stones
- No more walking side by side
- No more letting the children go down to the shops
- A hostile street environment that some people will feel unable to use

And it won't work! The evidence from William Street and Ferry Road proves it won't. There, despite white lines supposedly telling drivers how much of the pavement they can use, some simply take much, much more.

The streets are not just for car owners – children and many elderly people do not own cars, and their right to use safe and convenient streets must be protected.

Streets are for people – so don't be driven indoors! Say NO to Pavement Parking in East Oxford.

## Other pavement obstructions

In its Yellow Ribbon Campaign<sup>1</sup> Oxpa drew attention to obstruction of pavements by unnecessary or ill-designed clutter. Abandoned bicycles<sup>2</sup>, are another characteristic feature of Oxford life. Other obstructions [link removed] include wheelie bins, lamp posts, and thoughtless roadworks signs.

### <sup>1</sup> War is declared on obstructed streets

*Dan Hearn* (Oxford Mail Article: April 12th 2011)



Campaigners have revealed some of the "appalling" obstructions faced by pedestrians in Oxford. Members of the Oxford Pedestrians Association (OxPA) went around the city centre on Saturday and tied 20 metres worth of yellow ribbon around items which blocked access to walkers. The event came 10 years after the group first toured the city to highlight the problem - and members believe there is still a long way to go.

A-boards, poles, scaffolding and bollards were all targeted by the group, which claims Turl Street was one of the leading offenders. Association secretary Corinne Grimley Evans said Oxford's streets still had a problem with obstacles.

She said: "We found that some areas had improved, while others were still absolutely terrible. High Street is now much better because the pavements have been widened and there were not many obstacles that really blocked walkers. But in other areas, there were some absolutely appalling spots. In Turl Street, for example, there is a three-metre no-go area because of the sheer number of items on the pavement."

OxPA members met at Oxford Town Hall, in St Aldate's, before heading to streets including St Giles, High Street and Cornmarket. Mrs Grimley Evans said pedestrians need to be catered for because of their importance to the city. "Walkers can be tourists, shoppers or workers, all of whom are vital to Oxford and its economy. There needs to be more provision for pedestrians to help make their access around the city as easy as possible. In some places you see a whole group of people having to get into a single file line so they can edge past an obstruction. It is ridiculous when that happens. We would like the authorities to be more considerate about where they put things in Oxford."

OxPA was founded in the mid-1990s when a group of friends decided to campaign to make the city more accessible for those on foot. Its aims include promoting walking, campaigning for the safety and convenience of pedestrians and making sure the needs of walkers are recognised in transport planning.

Group chairman Sushila Dhall said other areas also needed improvement. "The Broad Street pavement was likewise very cluttered, with A-boards, poles, advertisements, a bench facing a car parking space and a rather smelly bin right beside it. An attractive old phone box was obstructed by clutter so one could not get into it."

Last month the Oxford Mail revealed how plans to pedestrianise large parts of the centre of Oxford had stalled. Oxfordshire County council had hoped Queen Street would be free of buses this year with much of the rest of the city centre pedestrianised by 2014, but now admits the scheme is unlikely to happen within the next 10 years.

## **<sup>2</sup> Oxford like a bike graveyard**

### **Transport expert criticises council for failing to clear abandoned bicycles**

*Chris Walker* (Oxford Times Article: June 11<sup>th</sup> 2009)



OXFORD has been left looking like a bike “graveyard” according to a transport expert criticising the city council for failing to clear abandoned cycles.

The chairman of Oxford Pedestrians’ Association, Paul Cullen, joined the Oxford Mail on a three-hour inspection of bike racks last week and discovered 40 abandoned bikes in the city centre.

Mr Cullen said they were an “eyesore” – many of which having fallen victim to theft and vandalism with missing parts or buckled wheels. He also warned that the problem discouraged cyclists by clogging up overcrowded bike racks and deterring bikers who would be fearful of similar damage happening to their property.

Mr Cullen said: “Oxford is a bike graveyard. It’s an eyesore to find abandoned bikes in the middle of the city. This isn’t the face Oxford should be showing the world.”

Although Oxfordshire County Council installs most of the bike racks, the city council is responsible for clearing up abandoned bikes. Last year the council said it removed about 300 bikes in Oxford, however our inspection uncovered an abandoned bike tagged by the council in November threatening removal if it was not claimed within 14 days. A ladies’ Raleigh cycle is still chained up in Broad Street almost seven months later.

Mr Cullen, an independent transport consultant who has worked on transport policy, operations and engineering within local government, added: “The city council are letting Oxford down and the people that live in it because they haven’t got to grips with the problem.”

**Our inspection showed the pavement in Turl Street almost completely blocked by bikes parked three abreast outside Jesus College.**

In March, Cyclox committee member Simon Banks published a report in which he calculated that 200 of the 1,194 cycle parking places in the city were blocked by abandoned cycles.

## **Broad Street**

We want to see Broad Street restored to its former glory. We would like car parking removed from the central area, with an appropriate number of disabled parking spaces around the periphery. Along with the Oxford Civic Society and Oxford Consumers’ Group we

conducted a survey of driver and pedestrian views in October 2002 (see [Report Summary](#)) and we continue to press for a design worthy of this important part of our historic City.

## **Lower speed limits**

Congratulations to the County Council for the 20mph limits on residential streets in Oxford. This is something for which we campaigned together with Cyclox, Life Begins at 20, and Residents' Groups. In an Oxford Times on-line poll 60% of respondents approved of the change.

**Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4).**

See OxPA's [response](#) to the latest [consultation](#) [Delete as now obsolete?].