



OXFORD PEDESTRIANS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER JULY/AUGUST 1997

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Welcome to Issue 15 of our Newsletter! This is being written at a time when pedestrian issues are beginning to get more of the attention they need and deserve. Ben Plowden of the National Pedestrians Association has ensured much press coverage, including an excellent article in a July publication of The Big Issue. If anyone would like to read a copy, please contact your newsletter editor. It is very important that we do continue to get the publicity we need, as in these times of endless cuts to public spending, pedestrians will suffer lack of attention to footpaths well before transport engineers will allow roads to get into a state of disrepair. The cuts tend to fall on the most vulnerable first. Our Press Officer, Corinne, is therefore to contact the local papers to suggest they get involved in the national 'worst/best pavement' competition. And all of you can get involved by sending your own descriptions of the worst and best pavements that you know, by September 30th, to the national address at the end of this Newsletter. And now, having got you all raring to get active, read on...

1) **Oxpens Action Planning Event** took place on the same day as our AGM (Sat June 21st). The public were asked for their ideas for the Oxpens site, and everyone enthusiastically had the area fully pedestrianised, and trees planted everywhere! Main priorities were reducing traffic and increasing pedestrian provision. So there is a lot of silent support for OxPA's aims out there. What will officers do with the results of the event? Please ring and ask City Centre Manager, Marcus Laphorn, on Oxford 252200.

2) **LMS update.** Oxford University is making a deal with Railtrack whereby the University and Mr Wafic Said will develop the station site into a 'world class' Business School (just what I'm sure we all feel is lacking in Oxford!). County planners are still adamant that their four-lane road needs to be built through the LMS building, but have failed to advertise it properly or legally, so are facing a challenge over why not. Could it be that they think it may be unpopular with the public? Residents of Botley Road area are worried that such a huge road plan will cut them off from the city centre, and there is general non-acceptance of the plan amongst those who have found out about it. Your newsletter editor and others are meeting with representatives of the university on August 13th to discuss the issue. We hope to persuade them to donate a fully restored LMS building, and a good pedestrian route on the site to the people of Oxford.

3) **On Tues Sept 30th from 10.30am-1pm, the City Council Access Sub-Committee** are holding a meeting in **Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre** entitled '**Pavements Are For People**'. Representatives of OxPA should attend if possible. Following this, representatives of OxPA are invited by the Conservation Advisory Committee to a meeting in October (date to be confirmed) to talk about street furniture in the city centre.

4) **Prison Site: Pedestrian concerns.** Plans for the old Prison Site show a pedestrianised Castle Street (realigned to run through where County Hall is at present). There is to be a big new department store, with a new County Hall occupying the top floors. A walkway is shown going from Westgate carpark to the prison site, but it is hard to see what car-free walkers are meant to do. Although in the pretty pictures the road is traffic-free, it will never



look like that, because there will be the buses from both Queen St and Cornmarket on it, and 'access' traffic, whatever that means. The road will be busier than Cornmarket currently is. We need to fight for crossings on desire lines, and keep a close eye on plans for this area.

5) **Structure Plan** As OxPA Transport Advisor, I attended the "Examination In Public" (EIP) on the Structure Plan. This document is supposed to set out the policies which the County intends to follow. We had already submitted written suggestions for policy changes, some of which had been taken on in part. At the EIP, various groups were invited to discuss issues arising from the document. OxPA was invited to 2 sessions, one on Transport and one on Shopping.

At the Transport session, I argued that new wording should be inserted to the effect that pedestrian needs should be included in all new road schemes; that pedestrian networks should be developed in both rural and urban areas, not just urban areas; that there should be comprehensive parking policies between towns, including using charging as a way of reducing car travel; that the "appropriate connection" between A34 and A40 was a commitment to massive road building which was inappropriate for a county supposedly committed to Sustainable forms of transport. There was also a heated debate about the role of Park & Ride, with the County Council claiming it reduced traffic in Oxford, and other groups such as CPRE, FOE, Oxford Preservation Trust, and OxPA saying that it was money spent on car drivers, was undermining rural bus routes, and was creating a "Grey Belt" not a "Green Belt" around Oxford. Finally I raised a laugh by quoting from a letter which OxPA received from the County engineer to show just how far the County needs to go. Referring to a demand for an essential pedestrian phase across a side road in Botley Road, which was supported by a petition of over 1000 residents, it says that "a pedestrian phase would reduce the capacity by a further 15-20% leading to a very significant deterioration in conditions for all users" !!!!

At the Shopping session, there was much less debate, however once again I made sure pedestrian issues were raised. I argued that the Sequential Test, whereby most development is sited in existing centres accessible to pedestrians, should be more strongly worded. I also argued that the test for new developments should not just state whether they are "accessible" but easily and safely accessible by walking. I also argued that there should be policies on parking relating to the location and size of the shopping centre. Finally I argued that the local shopping in new developments should not just "be permitted" but should be "encouraged". Copies of the 2 OxPA submissions are available on request by phoning me.

by Patrick Lingwood

6) **Following our AGM**, very many thanks to those of you who came and helped, and especial thanks to Jenny for arranging a delicious lunch. We had two inspiring speakers; Ken Spence, York Safety Officer, and Peter Barker, a representative of blind pedestrians. A motion is to be considered by Oxfordshire County Council on whether to subscribe to the **National Road Danger Reduction Charter**, which is, as Mr Spence explained, about identifying the cause of road danger, and minimising it. Mr Spence is working in conjunction with the group who submitted the motion for consideration. If this was accepted in Oxfordshire it would be a revolutionary step forward, as at present road safety means restricting the movement of all road users except cars.

7) **Stalls**. On Sept 6th we have one at the Greenpeace Fair in Wesley Memorial Hall. On

October 18th we have a stall at One World Fair in the Town Hall. Please contact Margaret or Jenny if you would like to help. It was agreed not to have one at Global Partnership in the Town Hall, as they are charging £25 plus vat for a stall.

8) We are planning to have **another demo at 'Death Row Crossing'** in front of Worcester College. The last time this was submitted to the County they admitted in writing that 'pedestrians daily put their lives at risk' whilst crossing there, but they have not done anything about it, and have no intention of doing so in the foreseeable future. This is going to go to the Ombudsman on grounds of negligence, and we plan to submit another petition on the subject to the next meeting of Environmental Committee in the autumn. Jenny is writing to the Ombudsman on this and on the Cripsey Road junction, also admitted to be 'a danger.'

9) **National Activists' Day, London.** Patrick and Jenny attended, and heard a talk by Alex Samuels, the solicitor who advises the National Pedestrian association, who said that a car parked on a pavement is a legal obstruction to the unimpeded use of that pavement, and this also applies to cycling on a pavement. Apparently a pedestrian 'is entitled to the full width of the pavement.' Patrick suggests that if we could find an unemployed person in East Oxford/St Clements to get legal aid, that person could take the Highway Authority to court, because they are allowing flagrant and obvious breaking of the law to happen, with all those cars on the pavements in that area.

10) **Another word on the worst/best pavements campaign.** Patrick rang the City Council and asked for the number of defective pavements, not including St Giles, main Roads etc. 1.3% are 'seriously defective' ie unusable; 4.8% are 'defective', with rocking surfaces, trip hazards, ups and downs etc; 1.5% are 'beyond their useful life' (about to go into the previous category; and 10.5% are 'not very good'. So altogether 20% of Oxford's pavements are not good enough, and this does not count individual hazards such as loose paving stones or single holes. So get writing and photographing; we have a lot to draw attention to!

Our next two meetings are Monday August 18th, and Monday September 15th, at 7.30 in the Town Hall. Please come, everyone is welcome, and bring a friend or anyone who may be interested.

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