



Walk Talk

Newsletter of Oxford Pedestrians Association
August 2021

Welcome to Newsletter 139

OxPA hits the streets again



Our June and July meetings took the form of walks to examine pedestrian issues in different parts of the city. On 22nd July we were in the city centre looking at access to Christ Church Meadow. On a fine evening, we discovered that the entrance gate from Rose Lane is completely inaccessible for wheelchair users and even parents with baby-buggies; the entrance beside Merton College has a step so is equally inaccessible; only the entrance from St Aldates is accessible. In the course of the walk, we realised just how bad the pavements are on Merton Street and nearby roads for anyone but the able-bodied. OxPA have started a campaign to improve access to Christ Church Meadow. There an OxPA YouTube video at <https://bit.ly/3yyGPCs>.

On 27th July Keith Frayn led a walk from Barton Neighbourhood Centre, through Barton and round the new development of Barton Park. We were accompanied by local County Councillor Glynis Phillips, who explained that the high proportion of social housing is completely integrated with the other housing. Although a proportion of the housing is already occupied, there is much building still on-going. Of the 885 new homes planned, 354 will be let at social rent, owned and managed by Oxford City Housing Limited. The development includes a new primary school and shops. We especially liked the new landscaping and linear park alongside the Bayswater Brook. At the end of the walk we were welcomed into Barton Neighbourhood Centre for refreshments – thanks to Tanya Field and Sue Holden for this.

(Thanks to Stephanie Jenkins/ <https://www.headington.org.uk/> for some information.)

Update on the non-rising bollards

Whilst OxPA members have continued to replace, in person, the failed bollards in Oriel Square, we have been submitting Freedom of Information requests to find out just why the bollards are not working. Correspondence with ATG, the bollard installers, and Oxfordshire County Council, the operators, have revealed that each blames the other for the highly expensive non-rising bollards which have failed to work in Oxford city centre over the past 5 years or so. As has been said so

often, the County Council now says that the bollards on Oriel Square and in other locations 'will be working in the coming 2-3 months.' Given that the cost of maintaining them without them working has been almost £600,000 since 2014 (they could have paid actual people to stand there for less) we hope this is true, and we will be continuing our Human Bollard actions until the bollards are working properly, however long this takes.

Timing of pedestrian lights – OxPA misinformed

We were told last year by a County Council officer that all pedestrian crossing lights in Oxford, other than those linked to traffic lights, had been retimed so that the maximum wait for a pedestrian would be 20 seconds. That seemed good news and a victory for our campaigning on this issue. However, it now turns out not to be true. Only some crossings were retimed. Many still have delays significantly longer than 20 seconds. We would like to collect information on this, so please send us reports of any crossings where you have timed the delay from pressing the button, to getting a green signal to cross, at more than 20 seconds.

Broad Meadow meets mixed responses



In July the City Council pedestrianised the western half of Broad Street, turning the street into a temporary new outdoor space containing wildflowers, trees and small lawns. The work to create the area was completed by Oxford Direct Services in four days. Muralist Bryony Bengel-Abbott has created a large flower-inspired artwork on the highway. There is still a through cycle route. There are many reasons to welcome this development: it is now a pleasant pace for pedestrians to relax and take refreshment without passing traffic (previously unobstructed because of yet more failed rising bollards), and provides a model for how further areas might be transformed, including ultimately St Giles. But this is only a temporary installation (closing end of September), and the eastern half of Broad Street is still dominated by vehicle movements and car parking. A City Council consultation on Broad Meadow is open until 29th October at <https://consultation.oxford.gov.uk/regeneration-economy/broad-street-summer-2021/consultation/intro/>.

New Highway Code on its way

In August last year (Walk Talk 135) we reported that “the Government have opened a consultation on a review of the Highway Code, to ‘improve road safety for cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders’.” The new Highway Code will come before Parliament later this year and puts forward a

hierarchy of road users, “based on the principle that those who can do the greatest harm have the greatest responsibility to avoid it”, meaning that “a presumption of blame for accidents will fall on motorists” and that “cyclists will be told they must look out for pedestrians”. Whilst we are sorry this is not coming more quickly (the proposals are set to come into force early next year), we welcome the changes in emphasis.

Our campaign for accessibility continues

OxPA members Don O’Neal and Deborah Glass-Woodin met with an engineer from the Environment Agency on 16th August 2021, to discuss the possibility of making wheelchair accessible the iron bridge between Port Meadow and the part of the towpath near the back of The Perch. A number of designs for adaptations were discussed, as well as potential obstacles to getting this done such as, is there money available to carry out any adaptations, who would pay for it and the fact that the bridge is Grade II listed. OxPA is currently investigating solutions to the potential obstacles. If you have any ideas or would like to be involved in this campaign, then please email us.



Meetings:

August 24th: Inaccessible Oxford Part II - Walk along Abingdon Rd. Meet outside the Police Station on St Aldates at 19.00.

September 28th: Details t.b.c.

October 26th: Details t.b.c.

Contacts:

Chair: Sushila Dhall, 01865 790783

Secretary: Chris Cowley

Treasurer and Membership: Don O’Neal

Newsletter Editor: Keith Frayn

Stalls goods: Deborah Glass-Woodin

Social media coordinator: Cinderella Lingwood

Email: oxford.pedestrians.association@gmail.com

Website: www.oxpa.org.uk

Facebook: Oxford Pedestrians Association - OxPA

Twitter: @OxfordPedestrians

Write to: OxPA, 12 Stable Close, Rewley Park, Oxford OX1 2RF.

Living Streets: 0207 377 4900