

## The Friends of Old Headington



<http://www.foh.org.uk>

(Committee Chairman: Veronica Hurst 9 Stoke Place, Oxford OX3 9BX tel. 01865 750484)

The Friends of Old Headington would like to make the following comments with regard to the Headington Transport Development Strategy.

### Background

The Old Headington *Conservation Area Appraisal* (July 2011) makes clear the vulnerability of the conservation area to traffic. The following is taken from p. 67:

“The village’s road network is not designed for the needs of modern transport and concerns have been expressed through the consultation process about the negative impact of traffic at peak times – noise, movement, appearance. Indeed, the threat of an increase in traffic to the character and appearance of the conservation area was identified in 77% of responses received to the consultation draft of the appraisal.”

The number of responses to the consultation draft of the Appraisal was unusually high, reflecting the degree of public concern about the effects of traffic (and particularly the ‘rat running’ variety) on the conservation area and on the quality of life of those who live there.

### Observations and suggestions

1. Ensuring that traffic using the main arteries of London Road, Headley Way, and Marsh Lane flows freely at all times will be key to preventing rat running through the conservation area, reducing drivers’ desire (or need) to cut through the narrow roads and lanes of Old Headington.

‘Rat running’ during rush-hours has adverse effects on the conservation area daily, and (particularly in St Andrews Rd. and Old High Street) causes regular traffic jams since there are long stretches which become single-lane when cars are parked. Traffic taking shortcuts via these roads includes large commercial vehicles which increase the existing risk to cyclists. This is a problem likely to increase now that the Oxford cycle strategy has routed cyclists down St Andrew’s Road. The high kerbs mean that cyclists cannot take evasive action in an emergency.

2. Traffic-calming measures should be considered for the most vulnerable streets in the conservation area, for example in Old High Street, where a substantial single-lane stretch between the Black Boy and the corner of North Place encourages drivers to accelerate hard before someone comes the other way. This kind of scenario is a prime cause of the frequent flouting of the 20 mph limit in this and other parts of Headington.

Improving traffic flow on those main roads surrounding this part of Headington, together with the adoption of such traffic calming measures as would be appropriate in the context of the conservation area could achieve a significant improvement in the quality of life, safety

and well-being of the community as well as a reduction in the deterioration of the physical environment (road surfaces, kerbs, and listed buildings).

Residential streets both inside and outside the Old Headington conservation area could benefit considerably from these two measures alone.

3. The barrier allowing buses access to the John Radcliffe Hospital via Osler Rd must only be opened for permitted vehicles. When this is broken, many vehicles access the lower JR car parks through Old Headington and Osler Rd. generating a marked increase in traffic. The use of buses in small residential streets should be reconsidered, as should the size of vehicles allowed to use (or try to use) the narrower roads in this part of Headington. There is no grid-pattern here, but narrow pavements and roads, sharp bends, and houses fronting traffic just a few feet away.
4. Planning permission should only be given for new developments in Headington which are designated as car free. Traffic is already at such a level that even small increases in traffic will place intolerable pressure on the local road network. Developers should as a matter of course be required to make substantial contributions to support the local infrastructure – including traffic-calming measures, as has happened elsewhere in Oxford, e.g. in Jack Straw's Lane – as a condition of planning permission being granted.
5. There should be no further increase in parking spaces at any of Headington's disproportionately large number of hospital and University sites. The expansion of these facilities, and the transfer of the Radcliffe Infirmary to the area has already resulted in an increase in staff traffic, outpatient and visitor traffic that is unsustainable in a residential area.
6. Alternatives need to be considered and encouraged: more effective campaigns to persuade people to cycle, supported by the implementation of measures that force motorists to slow down to a safe speed, and by the creation and maintenance of properly designed and safe cycle tracks, separated from car lanes wherever this is feasible, should be included in the Transport Strategy. Car-sharing schemes should be publicized and the benefits made clear. Design and maintenance are both significant: poor repair is the cause of minor accidents, as well as preventing people adopting a healthier mode of transport.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this important debate; we hope that there will be further opportunities for consultation and community response as the transport strategy for Headington is developed.

Veronica Hurst

Committee Chairman of the Friends of Old Headington

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