



Response to Connecting Oxford consultation

The Friends of Old Headington agree with the broad objectives of improving connectivity, reducing congestion, and addressing climate change and air quality problems.

We recognise that the problems are complex and solutions may have a profound impact on daily lives. As an organisation we exist to 'protect the special character of Headington village', i.e. the Old Headington Conservation Area. One of the blights of the area is that roads through this once-rural village do not have the capacity or space to cope with high volumes of traffic. Changes to Oxford's overall traffic system need to be implemented with protections for living neighbourhoods, including Old Headington.

We note that without much explanation the Council does not propose to introduce congestion charging: we feel it is worth considering a solution that combines charging and selective road closures - the solution does not need to be entirely of one type.

In general, the residential area in Old Headington has four main access points: Barton Road, Old High Street, Osler Road, and via Copse Lane. At present, the east-west road (Barton Lane - St Andrew's Road - Dunstan Road/Northway) and the two north-south connectors to the London Road (Old High Street and Osler Road) carry peak-hour traffic that probably exceeds or reaches the capacity of the roads to carry them (as defined by Buchanan and others' criteria).

We are concerned that solutions aimed at changing traffic flows at the Marston Ferry Road and Hollow Way could result in increased traffic rat-running through the Conservation Area. It will be important that traffic modelling done in preparation for the proposed changes addresses adequately the impacts on through routes in this and of course other affected neighbourhoods (e.g. Quarry and New Headington).

Measures may have to be introduced to actively discourage through traffic in these neighbourhoods, and there are examples elsewhere in Oxford where this is done, e.g. around Old Marston and the residential areas in that quarter. A goal might be to achieve the status of a living area (*woonerf* in the Netherlands), something akin perhaps to the Laurel Farm Close development in Old Headington, but on a wider scale. Other solutions might revolve around influencing how SatNavs redirect traffic in real time: is there a forum or facility where the council can influence SatNav systems to avoid designated residential areas?

There needs to be adequate enforcement. Already there are problems in central Headington with pavement parking (at the south end of Old High Street and streets around London Road) and we need to see enforcement increased to address these and any restrictions that are introduced to ease traffic flows through residential areas.

Concern has been expressed on the implications of closing certain routes for access to schools and other facilities on the far side of closure points. The system should be carefully designed to avoid disruptions and not introduce unintended consequences of increased traffic on routes to the ring road or rat-running in residential areas. In Headington the Green Road roundabout is already at capacity (SODC Local Plan notes this).

The introduction of more chicanes or pinch points on the through routes in Old Headington can be used to bring in more greening of the neighbourhood in order to replace lost street trees (in Old High Street) and to bring in more trees elsewhere. Chicanes provide the opportunity to plant new trees without interfering with underground services.

Opportunities exist to encourage use of pedestrian routes into Old Headington from London Road along the Coffin Walk (beside Bury Knowle Park), North Place, and The Croft and also along Osler Road and The Croft. If the goal of reducing traffic and avoiding rat-running in residential areas is successful then the village road routes should become safer for use by cyclists to connect to other points in the area.

The introduction of a Workplace Parking Levy needs to be accompanied by monitoring and enforcement of parking in nearby residential areas. In Old Headington changes in parking policy at the JR hospital could have profound effects on nearby streets in the Conservation Area and beyond. It is not stated how far the Levy will be implemented, but on the most generous assumption (18,000 staff parking places at £600 p.a.) the revenue might reach £10.8m. By comparison, Access to Headington has cost £16.7m (itself approximately 30% over the original costing), and has taken a long time to deliver. Revenues from the Levy scheme will be lower if the car parking spaces are reduced and if the levy is applied selectively to the Eastern Arc only. This could threaten the viability of the scheme for residential areas in the area, and a realistic assessment of the costs involved need to be presented, together with sources of funding.

The Friends of Old Headington (FOH) was formed by a group of local residents in 1959 to protect the special character of Old Headington village, what is now the Old Headington Conservation Area. FOH is an active membership organisation with elected trustees which meet regularly to promote our aims, which include

- retaining Old Headington as a village, with special emphasis on preserving its lanes, walls, grass verges, and trees;
- ensuring that new buildings and alterations are in keeping with the existing character of the village;
- co-operating with the Oxford Preservation Trust and the City Council in their declared policy of preserving the village; and
- involving as many as possible to achieve these aims successfully.

The Friends also organise local community events, including an AGM.