

The Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel Public speakers

21 November 2023



1. Robin Tucker has submitted the following address on behalf of the Coalition for Healthy Streets and Active Travel.

We all want to make our journeys safely, and although people walking and cycling may feel more vulnerable, but twice as many are killed in cars were as walking and cycling combined, so this really affects us all.

On our journey to Vision Zero, we would like to emphasise that there is much more that the City and District Councils can do to make our roads safer, and we would like you to take this message back for your planning policies and officers.

First, the number of crashes relates to the amount of motor traffic. You can change this by reducing the number of trips people need to take.

- Make sure new developments are built round 15-minute principles.
- Work to add missing services to existing neighbourhoods.
- Ensure footways and cycleways are easy and safe to use.
- Make sure developments are not cut off from their host towns – cowpat developments as Transport for New Homes calls them. Use CIL, S106 or S278 to deliver these vital connections.
- My colleague Danny Yee covers the importance of safe connectivity in his written address.

Second, the street design can make a difference to safety, from the layout to the radii and type of kerbs used. This applies from Design Guides to specific sites.

It's complex, and opportunities for safer streets get lost in the cracks between Districts and the County Council. The County's latest Street Design Guide should have addressed connectivity, but it didn't, and we await a revision. Despite better design guides, development proposals are still often car dependent, and we see many poor walking and cycling routes, and unsafe junctions.

We can help. We have in the active travel community a mass of technical and local knowledge and practical expertise. But we are often consulted once designs are mostly done and then told it is too late to change things – a ridiculous process. So we need to get engaged earlier, in the masterplanning process, in confidence if needed, where we can help identify problems and opportunities in time for them to be useful.

Instead of developments that create more cars and more danger, we should be working together, to build safer, healthier and more attractive communities for the future.

Robin Tucker, Co-Chair CoHSAT

2. Danny Yee has submitted the following address on behalf of Oxfordshire Liveable Streets

The most common statement of Vision Zero describes it as "a strategy to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries, _while increasing safe, healthy, equitable mobility for all_". I emphasize the last clause because too often road danger in the UK has been "solved" by deterring people -- and especially children and older or disabled people -- from even trying to walk, wheel or cycle many routes.

I want to make three points: busy highways sever communities and impede social connections; grade-separated crossings of such roads are needed to enable safe and accessible and inclusive walking and cycling; and county transport policies and district and city local plans need to be coordinated to ensure those get built.

The need for grade separated crossings is recognised by National Highways for the M40 and A34, but it is not just high speeds that are a problem: when there are long delays, multi-stage crossings, and many traffic lanes to cross, signalled crossings do not provide an inclusive solution. They create an unavoidable trade-off in the signalling between delays to people walking, wheeling or cycling, delays to motor traffic, and road danger. The crossing of the A40 at Barton Park illustrates the problem: long delays to cross six lanes of motor traffic, in three stages, with vehicles regularly doing more than the 50mph limit that may or may not stop for red lights. Residents hate it; some parents simply won't let younger children use this crossing at all; and it reduces the area reachable in fifteen minutes by nearly half. But it sits astride walking and cycling routes from Barton Park to schools, employment sites, shops and services.

The southern section of Oxford's ring road has a dozen grade-separated crossings in 7km. These are not all well designed, and there are concerns with personal safety, lighting, etc. but they provide key links, especially for walking, and they are all well used. In contrast, there are just three such crossings on the northern arc of Oxford's ring-road - one an extremely narrow canal path and one a flyover where people cycling have to mix with fast, dense motor traffic and pedestrians have to cross hostile slip roads. So the northern stretch of the A40 is a major barrier, but the developments at Oxford North - and Water Eaton, and Begbroke - are being allowed to proceed without provision of an underpass of the A40 to provide connectivity to Oxford.

A similar story could be told about new developments in Bicester, alongside the A41, or about the likely failure to get the two underpasses of the A40 needed to connect the Salt Cross development to Eynsham.

Addressing this needs clearer policy and better coordination. The Local Transport and Connectivity Plan offers no clear guidance as to when grade separation is necessary or desirable, and an Action on addressing the barriers created by Oxford's ring road is a glaring absence from the Central Oxfordshire Travel Plan. The district and city Local Plans simply should not allow larger developments unless they have -- or provide -- fully inclusive walking and cycling routes to the nearest service, employment and retail centres.

A final note. Underpasses have a bad reputation in England, as dark and dank and dangerous. But they require less elevation change for people walking, wheeling and cycling and are significantly more accessible than bridges. I encourage committee members to search online for photos and videos of Dutch underpasses to see how well they work when properly designed.