

Supplementary Papers

The Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel

held in the Virtual meeting viewable by weblink
on Tuesday, 21 November 2023 at 6.30 pm

3. **Public participation** (Pages 2 - 4)

Public addresses submitted by Robin Tucker on behalf of Coalition for Health Streets and Active Travel and Danny Yee, Oxfordshire Living Streets relating to Vision Zero.

5. **Update from Councillor Andy Graham on the initial work of the Planning Advisory Group** (Pages 5 - 10)

Copy of the draft work programme for the Planning Advisory Group as considered at the Future Oxfordshire Partnership Focus and Delivery Workshop on 26 September. This is provided as background information and does not reflect more recent amendments, as set out in the Future Oxfordshire Partnership Work Programme agenda item.

**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.

PROPOSED WORK PROGRAMME FOR PLANNING

Planning Project 1: Opportunities for a joint approach to viability assessments

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

When property developers propose large scale developments, LPAs require a range of contributions to be made (via s106, CIL and other methods) to maintaining and developing local communities, transport links, community infrastructure, social housing etc. This will now include a commitment to biodiversity net gain at a minimum of 10 percent, although many would like to see it at 20 percent or higher still. It is not uncommon for developers to make claims that some, or all, of the above can make a development not commercially viable and, therefore, to negotiate down the requirements.

Although all of the LPAs have done some local work on challenging these viability assessments, there has not, to date, been a county wide, robust approach to challenging these assumptions. The project proposes to look at work already done by partners; share best practice; and consider options for developing a robust way of measuring and challenging viability assessments, in order to get the maximum social, environmental, educational and cultural benefit for local residents in, and close to, major housing developments.

LINK TO THE OXFORDSHIRE STRATEGIC VISION

This project supports:

- our **natural environment** being left in a better state than in which we found it.
- our **residents being healthier, happier** and overall wellbeing improving.
- our county becoming a more equal, fair and inclusive place for everyone.
- providing **energy efficient and affordable homes**, in the right number, location and tenure.
- our **county's connectivity being transformed** in ways that enhance wellbeing.

DELIVERABLES

- Minimum: sharing of best practice
- Maximum: a new piece of work to robustly assess and challenge viability assessments.

ROUGH TIMETABLE

To be confirmed.

GOVERNANCE, REPORTING AND RESOURCING

To be determined.

Planning Project 2: Opportunities for a joint approach to Biodiversity Net Gain

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In partnership with the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership.

Biodiversity Net Gain is a new planning policy that will require developers to increase the amount of nature on their site by at least 10%. If they can't deliver this onsite, they have the option to purchase credits (derived from offsite habitat creation) to meet their shortfall. This becomes mandatory for nearly all new developments across England from November 2023.

BNG has the potential to contribute significantly to nature recovery ambitions in Oxfordshire, but there are some threats and challenges to overcome in order to achieve this. OLNPN has created a set of guiding principles that, if applied, would help LPAs to maximise the benefits to nature that this policy can deliver.

Local Authorities across Oxfordshire, working together, could share the costs and burdens associated with implementation of biodiversity net gain to ensure better outcomes. This could manifest in shared production of a template Section 106 agreement and associated processes and guidance. It could also include a shared programme of monitoring and enforcement, to ensure what is promised is delivered. Further, this shared working could explore the potential for policy alignment (to the extent that this is practical and desirable), including a move towards a requirement of at least 20% or greater (instead of the mandatory 10%, which has been shown to only ensure no net loss in practice).

Currently there are insufficient offsite units available to meet expected demand. This could lead to delays in granting planning permission, and a further slow-down in housebuilding. It is suggested Councils jointly support a project to boost provision of high integrity offsite BNG units.

LINK TO THE OXFORDSHIRE STRATEGIC VISION

This project is crucial to:

- leaving our **natural environment** in a better state than that in which we found it

It also supports:

- accelerating towards a **carbon neutral** near term future, and a **carbon negative** longer term future, and
- our **residents being healthier, happier** and overall **wellbeing** improving.

In turn these will contribute to:

- enabling our **diverse and vibrant communities to thrive**, and
- enabling our **local economy to be globally competitive, diverse and sustainable**, and also
- our county being a **more fair and equal place** for everyone, and also
- supporting our **vibrant, rich and diverse cultural offer**

DELIVERABLES

- The production of high integrity policies and processes across Oxfordshire LPAs, ensuring maximum biodiversity benefit is realised from BNG.
- A proposal for a shared BNG resource to help ensure smooth implementation, monitoring and enforcement of BNG.
- A proposal for council support to stimulate supply of offsite biodiversity units, removing potential delays to the planning system.

ROUGH TIMETABLE

TBA

GOVERNANCE, REPORTING AND RESOURCING

TBA

Planning Project 3: Opportunities for a joint approach to advanced methods of construction

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Advanced, or modern methods of construction, describes the design, planning and manufacturing of construction components in a factory controlled setting, that than using traditional on-site construction techniques.

This includes methods such as modular construction, panelised construction, off-site fabrication and 3D printing, amongst others. All factory made elements are then assembled on-site for a faster build time and improved quality control.

There is a reduced need for large teams of on-site workers, resources, materials and vehicles. This means faster turnaround times with less disruption to local residents and communities in the vicinity. Because components are often made with high grade materials such as timber, steel, concrete and bamboo fibres, they require less maintenance over their lifetime and can last longer than traditional buildings.

Another major benefit is safety. Risks are reduced by ensuring that all materials used meet safety standards; meaning that there is less risk of errors or costly reworks during installation. Additionally, prefabricated elements that are constructed off-site, and then assembled on-site, reduce the risk associated with working at heights, or on scaffolding, as well as associated risks to the public.

Sustainable building practices are an important consideration when it comes to any new construction project. Because most components are manufactured offsite, there is less impact on the environment from transportation emissions and noise pollution from heavy machinery. Using prefabricated components also reduces waste by using only what is necessary for the job, instead of excess supplies, or ordering too much material that will go unused and possibly end up in landfills later.

It is proposed that a project is initiated to explore how these advanced methods might be encouraged across Oxfordshire.

LINK TO THE OXFORDSHIRE STRATEGIC VISION

This project supports :

- having **energy efficient and affordable homes**

And also to:

- our **natural environment** being in a better state than in which we found it
- working towards **carbon neutrality** and then **carbon negativity**

It will also help

- our county's **connectivity being transformed** in ways that **enhance wellbeing**, and
- enabling our **diverse and vibrant communities to thrive**.

DELIVERABLES

TBA

ROUGH TIMETABLE

TBA

GOVERNANCE, REPORTING AND RESOURCING

TBA

Planning Project 4: Support the engagement of local planning authorities with the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board to support the provision of healthcare infrastructure.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The NHS has its own internal mechanisms for strategic planning and provision of healthcare services. Over many years, LPAs have faced challenges in understanding these, and liaising with the NHS on provision of services, particularly on new developments. This has led to significant gaps in knowledge, for example the most recent iteration of OxIS did not contain a comprehensive suite of planned, or needed healthcare infrastructure.

The BOB ICB are part of the Planning Advisory Group and are keen to reach a better understanding of the challenges everyone faces in planning. As an initial phase, the BOB ICB will provide a short paper to the group, followed by a fuller session to discuss the issues. A project can be established from there to enable better joint working between the LPAs and the BOB ICB. It is recognised that this piece of work is important and could bring multiple benefits to all parties, but we are not yet in the position of identifying a clear project scope for it.

LINK TO THE OXFORDSHIRE STRATEGIC VISION

This project particularly supports:

- our residents being **healthier, happier** and overall **wellbeing** improving

It also supports:

- our county will becoming a **more equal, fair and inclusive** place for everyone.
- our **diverse and vibrant communities thriving**, with a strong sense of identity.

DELIVERABLES

Minimum: better understanding of the planning issues faced by the BOB ICB and enhancing their understanding of LPA planning issues

Maximum: a more defined project to help with planning for health infrastructure

ROUGH TIMETABLE

TBA

GOVERNANCE, REPORTING AND RESOURCING

TBA