

Coalition for Healthy Streets and Active Travel

Coalition for Healthy Streets and Active Travel (CoHSAT) *Connecting Oxford* response - October 2019

This response is made on behalf of the following ten organisations (with over 2000 members) and based on a workshop attended by 42 people:

- Cyclox
- Low Carbon Oxford North
- Low Carbon West Oxford
- Rose Hill and Iffley Low Carbon
- Oxford Civic Society
- Oxford Pedestrians Association
- Oxford Friends of the Earth
- Oxfordshire Liveable Streets
- Oxfordshire Cycling Network
- Pedal and Post

Overview

CoHSAT wholeheartedly commends both Oxford City Council and Oxfordshire County Council for their radical plans outlined in *Connecting Oxford*. Taking such bold steps to tackle demand is the only way to resolve the problems of travel in and into Oxford, with people stuck in traffic jams, creating congestion, air and noise pollution, and unsightly impacts on our beautiful city.

Congestion brings with it a cost in public health through increased noise and poor air quality and a perceived and real danger to active travel. It is crucial we tackle the root cause of transport problems – too many vehicles - in our City at a time when we should be addressing the climate emergency and championing and incentivising active travel and public transport above all else. *Connecting Oxford's* recommendations have come not a moment too soon.

There is an urgency, so that the City is protected before the impact of imminent new housing developments makes the congestion and pollution much worse. We recognize and endorse the need for residents to undertake major modal shifts and for freight to adapt to a completely new regime.

CoHSAT believes that the recommendations should be strengthened and made bolder: the Councils should seize the opportunity to completely transform the travel experience in Oxford.

Vision

- Members very supportive and want radical and bolder proposals. “Never thought I’d see something like this in my lifetime.”
- Great that demand management is finally being discussed and, hopefully, implemented.
- Create an overall vision, eg a completely traffic free City centre, with *Connecting Oxford* as the first, major step in the City’s transformation for climate change and zero emissions.
- The objective should be for everything to happen concurrently (overnight?) as in the pedestrianisation of Cornmarket. This should be possible with the traffic constraints (which we call

traffic filters) and new bus routes. The WPL could come in on the same date, as its impact will be slower to materialise. Other developments, such as the construction of the segregated cycle and pedestrian routes, will take time to be constructed, but should be subject to a strict, tight timetable, to encourage nervous cyclists onto their bikes, as cycling becomes safer.

- A primary objective is to reduce / eliminate air pollution from traffic, so that people in Oxford are healthier.
- We want to “make public transport cool”, through the provision of a comprehensive bus network that is cheap and includes new and frequent routes. Everyone in the City should be within 10 mins walk of a bus stop.
- Learn from Waltham Forest’s healthy streets and start implementing these as soon as possible, for instance in the Florence Park area, Walton Street.
- Make new public realm spaces, by pedestrianizing, planting, cafes, seats eg St Giles, Broad Street, Hythe Bridge Street, New Inn Hall Street (on a national cycle route).
- Incorporate findings from Phil Jones/Andrew Gilligan reports - don’t waste these.
- We support the working place levy (WPL), but believe that it should cover the whole city, not just the eastern arc. This is because the boundaries are rather fuzzy and to ensure that city centre parking, for instance the colleges (approx 1000 of the 2000 city centre places), is included.
- We do not understand why premises with less than 10 parking places should be exempt.

Suggestions

- Guiding principles for transformation - safe, pleasant, segregated, continuous cycle, pedestrian and bus routes to be designed first. The remaining space will indicate the necessary vehicle restrictions.
- The physical segregation of cyclists and pedestrians from motorised traffic and where possible, the physical segregation of cyclists from pedestrians; in both cases physical segregation means there is a barrier, not just white lines.
- Design for the nervous cyclist, to encourage much greater levels of cycling.
- There may need to be additional traffic filters (beyond the five) so that through routes are prevented, (eg near St Clements).
- The traffic filters to operate at the same time as the High Street (7.30am to 6.30pm). It is essential that the restrictions cover the peak commuting times and periods of heavy bus use, otherwise congestion will continue.
- General consensus that Uber-type taxis and large freight are not allowed through the traffic filters. Less certainty about the role of
 - black cabs (eg for the elderly and disabled) - assume exempt
 - private hire vehicles – assume exempt
 - small delivery vehicles (eg for covered market, cash to banks) – assume prevented during restricted hours.
 - Tourist coaches – controlling these is seen as a major challenge for the councils – assume prevented at all times?
- Freight consolidation and cargo bikes need to be actively encouraged.
- Bikes (incl electric bikes) should be subsidised.
- 20mph speed limit on all roads within the ring road. For greater safety, especially of cyclists and pedestrians. We do not want buses going faster than this.
- More public realm - total pedestrianisation (with or without bikes?), wider pavements, planting, seating and cafes.
- Safe N-S and E-W cycling routes through the city centre.
- Need clear comms strategy, so the public fully aware and involved. For instance,
 - why has a workplace levy been suggested instead of a congestion charge? We do not like the potentially regressive impact of the congestion charge.
 - What is the overlap with Zero Emission Zones?

- More info needed on background, modelling and evidence base for stakeholders to formulate considered response.
- What evidence was used for traffic restriction suggestions? A 25% reduction in traffic, to allow 'free flow' is not sufficient. If 40% of traffic is through traffic (not sure of the definition), surely the reduction should be of more than 40%? We believe that the needs of cyclists, buses and pedestrians come first and the traffic restrictions will follow from this. We are working towards a virtually traffic-free (no private cars or freight at a minimum) City centre. In *Connecting Oxford* we are promised 'a complete, high-quality, spacious walking and cycling network', based on 'dramatically' reduced congestion and pollution (both p3). We applaud these ambitions and look forward to their prompt delivery as a result of a reduction in traffic flows in excess of 60%.
- The redesigns of Botley, Woodstock and Banbury Roads are built on the assumption of current traffic levels continuing. These designs will now have to be recalibrated, based on the reductions in congestion and traffic flows proposed in *Connecting Oxford*.

About CoHSAT

The Coalition of Healthy Streets and Active Travel (CoHSAT) is a group of 10 voluntary and campaigning organisations, striving for efficient, active, low carbon and sustainable travel across Oxfordshire. We want to encourage healthy and thriving communities through reduced traffic, air pollution and noise. This will create attractive, accessible and people-friendly streets, where everybody can enjoy spending time. More details: <http://www.cohsat.org.uk>