

**Minutes of the Woodstock Traffic Advisory Committee (TAC)
held at the Town Hall, on Wednesday 9th October 2019 at 4pm**

Present:

CCllr Ian Hudspeth (Chair)
Roy Cox, Estate Director, Blenheim Palace
Mike Wasley, Oxfordshire County Council
Natalie Moore, OCC
Kyle Graham, Asst Transport Planner, OCC
Cllr Elizabeth Poskitt, WTC
Cllr Sharone Parnes, WTC
Dennis Allen, Wake up to Woodstock
PCSO Helen Keen, Thames Valley Police
Colin Carritt, Woodstock Safe Routes Project
Jo Lamb HOW
Alison Matthews HOW

1 Apologies

Cllr Mathew Parkinson, WTC
Cllr Peter Jay, WTC
Cllr Julian Cooper, WTC
Maria Wheatley, WODC
Mark Owen, Owen Mumford
Cllr Stuart-Clark, Bladon Parish Council

2 Declarations of Interest

None.

4 Minutes of Previous Meetings

The minutes of the meeting held on 3rd April 2019 were approved as a true record.

5 Matters Arising – items not listed elsewhere on the agenda

On behalf of a resident, Cllr Parnes raised the matter of a 'Caution, Children Crossing' sign in Shipton Road, near where Box of Delights used to be, which is facing the wrong way. Mike Wasley replied to say that matters of this nature can be reported on OCC's on-line Fix My Street facility.

5. Report from OCC Area Steward

A report from the Cherwell & West Oxfordshire Locality Team & a Highways Maintenance Programme update (printed at the end of these minutes) had been circulated prior to this meeting.

The following consultation is currently on Oxfordshire County Council's website:

A44 Oxford Road (Woodstock) - Proposed Toucan Crossing and 30mph Speed Limit

Oxfordshire County Council proposes to extend the 30mph speed limit (in place of the existing 50mph speed limit) by approximately 260 metres, towards Oxford on the **A44 Oxford Road, Woodstock** and to also construct the following feature, to help improve pedestrian and pedal cyclist safety in the area:

A **Toucan crossing** (signal-controlled crossing for use by both pedestrians and pedal cyclists) at the following location:

A44 Oxford Road – approx. 115* metres northwest of its junction with The Cow Yards.

* All dimensions are approximate, taken from the centre of the junction to the centre of the feature.

Objections to the proposals and other representations, specifying the grounds on which they are made, may be sent in by completing the online questionnaire, via email or in writing (quoting ref: JaC.12.6.413) to the address below by **01 November 2019**. The Council will consider objections and representations received in response and they may be disseminated widely for these purposes and made available to the public.

Contact Name	Jane Clark
Contact Email Address	jane.clark@oxfordshire.gov.uk
Contact Phone Number	0345 310 11 11
Contact Postal Address	Infrastructure and Delivery Traffic and Road Safety Oxfordshire County Council County Hall, New Road, Oxford OX1 1ND

The consultation is open from 3rd October – 1st November 2019.

Update on A44 Safety near Black Prince

Natalie Moore outlined information she had sent to Woodstock Town Council following an audit conducted by OCC on the A44 in July.

ACTION

The email from Natalie giving feedback from the audit will be circulated to all TAC members.

Jo Lamb said that traffic lights which are currently in place for the new development on the A44 give a good indication of what the traffic will be like if buses are going to stop on this road once the development is complete. Mike Wasley said that these temporary shuttle traffic lights were bound to cause delay and it was hard to predict the extent of demand and delay at the proposed bus stops. Jo Lamb continued to say that it does not take much imagination or common sense to see what impact or confusion will be caused by buses stopping at this location and she asked how the decision not to provide a lay-by can be overturned.

Mike Wasley explained that there was a consultation about the development when the planning application was submitted and that to change the outcome of that to provide a lay-by would be costly and time-consuming. Cllr Poskitt said that incorporating a lay-by at this section of road has been talked about by the District Council since the plans came out. Mike Wasley said that it is a complex issue as it involves S106 funding and the planning agreement would have to be changed. Jo Lamb asked for this to be considered as a high priority as it is blatantly obvious that there will be traffic problems in the future if a lay-by is not provided. Mark Wasley said that comments need to go through the consultation process – see details of OCC's on-line consultation above.

To take this matter further any comments on the consultation should be directed to one of the cabinet members, Cllr Constance.

6. Report from Blenheim

Roy Cox said that it had been a good summer for Blenheim, with consistent visitor numbers due to the fine weather. They are seeing sustainable growth outside of the peak months, which is mainly coming from the events organised for the Christmas period. Blenheim are continuing their policy of seeking out smaller, longer running events, e.g. Shakespeare's Rose Theatre, as these have less impact on the roads and infrastructure and deliver higher economic contribution locally.

Although events such as the Rose Theatre, which attracted the largest attendance for an Oxford theatre of approx. 38,000, was well received and Roy considered it to be a fantastic product, he said that it did not perform economically. This event and Countryfile Live, which enjoyed another successful year, will not be returning to Blenheim next year. Countryfile Live goes with Blenheim's best wishes as they look to open the show up to new audiences.

Roy said that hosting the Flower Show and the Music Festival on the same weekend had been their most significant challenge of the event calendar and had on the whole run well although is not planned to happen again next year. On the first day of these events, there were challenges for flower show arrivals up to 11am, and one exiting phased was exacerbated by a vehicle breakdown on the Bladon roundabout meaning some vehicles had to flow through the Town.

The Christmas events 2019 will start on 21st November – a Park & Ride service will be running again, along with the parking pad in the park. The Christmas Market will be open from 22nd November – 15th December and is free to everyone with parking charges being made after mid-day.

For many events Roy confirmed Blenheim have been using more temporary signage boards to direct the traffic and make use of other gates into the Park and residents will have also seen large VMS (variable messaging boards) out on the roads to help with traffic flows. Both of these interventions have worked well and allow instant movement of vehicles around the network.

Roy explained work which is going on behind the scenes to monitor in live time traffic flows and a dashboard which merges information from different traffic apps has been developed and adopted. This system updates every 5 minutes with accurate live data so that traffic flow can be monitored and send automatic texts to duty managers allowing Blenheim to respond quickly to any traffic hotspots. It also allows Blenheim to keep closer records of events arrivals and departures so that they can be reviewed, and any improvements made afterwards. He was able to show graphs of what information is available from the system.

Cllr Parnes raised the subject of the media referring to resident complaints about the traffic which implied that this was the reason that some events are no longer continuing. Roy replied to note that although he had seen the same comments the media reports were not attributed to Blenheim and that although Country File did encounter traffic problems on occasions, it was a BBC-led decision to move to another location based on other considerations, such as the event viability and audience numbers dropping.

The Literary Festival was not taking place this year, but Roy apologised as he did not know the reason for this, and he said they are hoping it will return next year. Dennis Allen said that he thought the Rose Theatre was a brilliant event and he hoped that Blenheim will not be put off having further cultural events. Roy was heartened by the comments made about the Shakespeare theatre and reiterated that they were extremely proud of the product.

7 Improved Cycling Infrastructure

Colin Carritt explained that a group has been set up called the Woodstock Safer Routes Project to look at walking/cycling infrastructure in the town and beyond. The group will be looking at possible alternative routes from Old Woodstock to the schools and town centre. The first formal meeting of this group will be on 24th October.

The route connecting Hanborough Station to Bladon & Woodstock will be looked at as a priority as the train route is critical for existing residents and those moving into new developments in this area.

The A4095 between Hanborough and Bladon is hazardous as it is very narrow in places, there is poor visibility and the footpath is in poor condition. If a 20mph limit was introduced through Bladon this would make cycling on the main carriageway better than it is now.

There is a difficult section to negotiate at the Hanborough end of the path which the group may ask Blenheim to help with. The group will explore the feasibility of improving the shared cycle/footway, bearing in mind that a significant amount of money needs to be spent on the footpath anyway. They will also look at the possibility of any funding available from the Hanborough developments. Woodstock Town Council and Hanborough & Bladon Parish Councils are already on board with this project.

Cllr Hudspeth said that cutting back the vegetation would help to utilise what space is available and mentioned that it would be good to get a road sweeper along to remove the detritus which collects in the kerbs and gets flicked up onto the footpath.

Roy Cox confirmed Blenheim are also looking at a connectivity project as part of their land strategy, which aims to connect communities in a network of permissive paths and cycle routes outside the park. VeloCity, a team of architects and planners, are producing a baseline assessment of Blenheim's existing connections over their 12,000 acres to see how the canvas can be knitted together. Their report which is engaging a number of stakeholders should be provided to Blenheim by February 2020.

The Gilligan report looks at cycling in Oxford City, coming out to towns and villages such as Kidlington & Eynsham. Colin Carritt wants to look at how Woodstock could be improved as well and make sure that what is planned fits in to everything else. He envisages expanding good cycle connections out from Woodstock to other places, such as Wootton and said that it is important to keep the impetus going.

Looking at the bigger picture, the 2050 plan provides a strategic view of the area. In 30 years' time the plan predicts that transport will move away from cars to public transport and more sustainable ways of getting around.

Colin Carritt has already met with the team at OCC to talk with this group and he would now like to look at all the options and he encouraged members of the TAC to put forward ideas.

8 Town Council Parking Review

(a) WTC has contacted WODC to ask whether they are able to circulate printed copies of the parking questionnaire to all households in Woodstock. A reply to this request has not yet been received, and as Maria Wheatley was unable to attend this meeting, it was not possible to discuss this matter any further.

The TAC urged the District Council to proceed with the questionnaire as soon as possible.

(b) Cllr Parnes said that the Town Council supports a policy of not charging for parking and he asked for this to be recorded as a reminder that this policy was agreed.

(c) Cllr Ann Grant had asked for the issue of motor cycles taking up a whole parking space to be raised again. As previously noted, this is something which is caught up in the parking review.

PCSO Keen said that recently she was in the car park, where someone who had parked their motor home was extremely cross because they had received a parking ticket. She continued to say that if tourists with such vehicles are to be encouraged, they need to be directed to Bladon Chains and she asked where else they can park. Cllr Hudspeth said that he thought they may be able to leave their vehicles at a Park & Ride, but this is an issue for the parking review.

9 Skip Licences

Cllr Parnes said that it has been brought to his attention that skips are being left in the town for a long time, they are taking up several parking spaces and sometimes overflowing. He asked what the ruling is on skips. Mike Wasley replied that licence applications are processed on the basis of what the applicant is asking for and not many questions are asked. It was generally felt that in places where parking is in short supply, issuing officers need to be stricter with the length of time that a licence is issued for.

A discussion followed about permits issued to those working on the roads.

ACTION

Mike Wasley will check with the Street Works Team that permits are not being granted unnecessarily and he will find out what enforcement is in place for permits issued to those working on the roads.

Mike Wasley will also ask Highways officers to question applicants seeking lengthy skip licences whether the time required is really necessary.

Cllr Parnes asked for scaffolding licences also to receive consideration. Jo Lamb asked whether licences are charged for on a sliding scale for length of time issued for – the Highways Team will look into this.

10 Coach Parking in the Town & coaches accessing Blenheim via the Town Gate

Jo Lamb said she has noticed many more coaches in the town this year, mainly dropping off tourists to the Chinese restaurant in the High St or going through the Town Gate. Some felt that Police notices have had some effect, but coaches parking in the bus lay-by and around the centre of town are an issue. Traffic flow is held up because buses are forced to park in the road.

Jo Lamb expressed the view that authorities need to think of a way of diverting coaches away from the town and encourage coach companies to go through Blenheim's main entrance and not go through the Town Gate.

PCSO Helen Keen has produced a map to direct coach drivers to Bladon Chains. She was given a list of coach companies coming into Woodstock and she has sent an email to most of them, which has improved the situation. She said that the lady at the Chinese restaurant is very obliging about asking the coach drivers to move on.

It was mentioned that there are no directional signs in the town to Bladon Chains and Roy Cox stated that whilst not innocent in the conversation, the proportion of coaches visiting Blenheim through the town are far less than those coming into town for the Chinese restaurant. Roy confirmed that when coach groups book for the Palace they are requested to enter via the Hensington Gate and most do although occasionally some tour companies want to show their clients the Town and 'the finest view' which means they ignore the instructions.

Dennis Allen said that if the coaches are unable to bring tourists to the Chinese restaurant, the business will be hit hard. He continued to say that it is great to have visitors to the town and that the more coach drivers that get given the Bladon Chains map the better. Cllr Hudspeth said that there has to be a balance of coaches providing trade to the town.

It is recognised that Blenheim, the Police and Wake Up to Woodstock are all 'doing their bit' with regards to this matter.

PCSO Helen Keen left the meeting at 5.20pm.

11 HGVs accessing Blenheim via the Town Gate

Roy Cox said that due to the approach HGVs cannot enter through Hensington Gate entrance. Damage has been caused to this historical structure a number of times over recent years from HGV drivers.

Alternative gates of Gorrel Doors to the North and Bladon to the South are now used as the primary HGV entrance for larger event builds. A picture showing a HGV at Hensington Gate was, Roy thought, an HGV which arrived for the Salon Privé event and he acknowledged despite best efforts some will slip through.

The recently opened warehouse at Park Farm to the North now receives HGVs and deliveries to the Palace using the Gorrel Doors northern entrance. Temporary signage has been erected and this will be replaced to permanent signage shortly. Roy noted Blenheim are working hard in the rare weeks to re-educate drivers and there are still one or two vehicles turning up at the Town Gate but this hub is designed primarily to reduce vehicle movement through the town and reduce the traffic near the Palace where there are lots of pedestrians.

Roy Cox was asked about the vehicles for Gifford's Circus, which usually arrive during the evening, which he said he would check to find out which entrance they will be using.

12 Dangerous Exit onto A44

Christine Lea has written to OCC about dangerous access onto the A44, but as no information was available on the exact location referred to, this matter could not be discussed.

13 Vehicle Speed along Flemings Road/Princes Ride

A discussion took place about traffic calming measures that could be put in place along this road. There are already speed humps and it was agreed that if parked cars were moved, this would have the effect of speeding up the traffic, not slowing it down. If a 20mph speed limit were introduced, it raises questions about who would enforce this. The TAC could think of no immediate solutions to this problem.

ACTION

Mike Wasley said that he will have a look at this area to see whether anything can be done.

14 Relocation or Substitution of Bike Racks lost from Library Demolition

Since Cllr Parnes asked for this item to be included on the agenda, it has been decided to leave the cycle racks in situ at Hensington Road as it was felt that if they went into storage they may get lost. A discussion took place about the provision of more cycle racks at various locations in the town; the Cycling Group will look into this further, as it seemed to Colin Carritt that the cycle racks could be better used elsewhere instead of simply standing unused in the library compound. He will report back to future meetings.

A question was raised about the cycle racks which were purchased with S106 money and used to be outside the Box of Delights. No-one at this meeting knew what had happened to these, but it is likely that the builders developing the site disposed of them.

15 Untidy Appearance of Town Centre and Road Closure Signage

Cllr Parnes raised this item as a result of recent graffiti which had been sprayed on the roads before the Salon Privé event took place and he also mentioned signage which was erected for the Fair. He asked where people can report such unsightly issues and he was reminded of the Fix My Street facility where matters can be reported, each report is logged and the initiator will receive feedback on what action taken.

16 TAC agreement for draft and approved TAC meeting minutes to be displayed on the Town Council's website

The Town Council had approved in principle a motion put forward by Cllr Parnes at their last meeting (WTC43/19) suggesting the above and this was agreed by TAC.

17 Date of Next Meeting: The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 1st April 2020, 4pm in Woodstock Town Hall.

Cherwell and West Oxfordshire Locality Team

Wootton Turn – Informal Park and Ride

After careful consideration of the above suggestion Oxfordshire County Council officers have decided against pursuing this proposal.

The primary use of the Wootton Turn is as designated bus turning point for Stagecoach bus services wishing to turn around and head back south along the A44. The objectives of the scheme (which were approved in late 2017 and supported at the time by Woodstock Town Council and Councillor Hudspeth) was *“to improve the amenity of public transport and increase its attractiveness on this busy corridor by providing an appropriate turning place to aid bus journey time reliability”*.

Officers at Oxfordshire County Council are concerned that opening up the space for cars to use the area as an informal park and ride could potentially undermine any such infrastructure which is currently in place to encourage public transport uptake.

An additional point to consider is that the majority of the land around the Wootton Turn is not owned by the County Council, but by several bodies and members of the public. To use land that is not the County's would involve land agreements or purchasing which do not have the funding to do. Copies of the Highway Records map, and Land Registry data is available upon request.

Traffic Lights on the A44 near Land East of Woodstock

An email sent to Councillor Hudspeth and Mr Collingwood on Wednesday 4th July 2018 explained that the decision to install a signalised crossing was made at the planning application stage. This decision was deemed necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms and will be subject to public consultation (in addition to the extension of the 30mph limit) at the beginning of October 2019.

To formally downgrade the crossing to a refuge would require the Section 106 Agreement to be varied, which would need to be justified as it is a costly and time-consuming activity. Additionally, were we ever to require the refuge to be upgraded to a signalised crossing in the future, it is highly unlikely that we would ever secure funding to do so. Therefore, we sought the most appropriate crossing type based on the development it will serve at planning application stage.

Shared Footway/Cycleway between Bladon & Long Hanborough Station

Officers are keen to meet with Blenheim Estates and Woodstock Town Council to discuss how walking and cycling routes in and around Woodstock can be established (including to and from Bladon and Hanborough Station and linking in with the proposed housing developments north of the town).

We can also confirm the following work / investigations are currently taking place:

- Expedition's VeloCity Team are currently assessing the area in and around the Blenheim estate, looking at demographics and the state of the transport system with a focus on cycling, to get a detailed picture of the area. This will then inform any suggestions of changes the area, in particular new / modified cycle routes. Hanborough Parish Council have highlighted an interest in being involved with this project.
- Councillor Bartington is working with Hanborough Parish Council (using the County's Cycling Infrastructure Evaluation mapping toolkit) to investigate and improve possible cycle routes in the area.
- A Hanborough Station Transport Infrastructure Report is being prepared by officers in the Infrastructure Strategy and Policy Team at Oxfordshire County Council, which will also look at opportunities for improving cycle / walking routes from the north east into the station.

- Officers from the County Council will be meeting with Blenheim Estates to discuss Blenheim’s Grass Routes Project which is one of their five strategy projects and looks at connectivity through the countryside.

Through the multiple workstreams currently taking place on walking and cycling around the Woodstock, Bladon and Hanborough areas, there is the opportunity to learn from one another, and possibly link into each other. Officers are aware of the importance of shared pedestrian and cycle routes and will continue to look for opportunities to fund work in this area.

Area Operations North

Highways maintenance programme update

Carriageway patching for the A44 by Churchill Gate.

Signing and Lining

Vermont Drive	DYL MISSING FROM BUS STOP TO NO4 & BY NO7 BUS STOP MARKINGS NEARLY ALL GONE. Double yellow lines missing & bus stop markings faded.
Causeway zebra crossing	Re mark all crossing markings
Brook Hill j/w Union St & Green Lane	All junctions and approaches
High St, opposite Chef Imperial	Restriction markings
Hensington Rd, Union St, Banbury Rd, Brook Hill, Upper Brook Hill, Green Lane	Refresh road markings as detailed on plan (to inc parking restrictions, APMs, no entry, keep clear, yellow box junction, Stop, junctions, Rd humps, turn left, arrows)
Rectory Lane/Cadogan Park area	Refresh road markings in area shown as detailed on plan (to inc no entry, arrows, hatching, turn left, junctions)
A44 (Manor Rd, Oxford St, Oxford Rd)	Lining as detailed on plan (to Inc. hatching, roundels, arrows, parking bays, bus stops, yellow box junction, keep clear)
Town centre area as detailed on plan	All road markings as detailed on plan
Hensington Close	Refresh KEEP CLEAR at end of cul de sac