

Response from the Wolvercote Neighbourhood Forum

Overall policy

The Wolvercote Neighbourhood Forum is pleased to comment on the consultation on *Connecting Oxfordshire* and welcome many of the aspirations expressed in it. However, it is difficult to respond to the consultation in any detail at this stage because there is frequently, and perhaps inevitably, a lack of specificity regarding proposals for implementation. We have recently responded to a City Council Consultation on Community Involvement. This consultation has the same problems as those we highlighted in City consultations. It would be interesting to know how many private individuals as distinct from organisations have been able to comment. Consultations of this size are not easy to access even by those, and it is certainly not everyone, able to access the documents electronically.

We are concerned too that there is evidence that County Council consultation with the City Council in preparing some of the proposals in *Connecting Oxfordshire* has been less than adequate. There seems, for example, to have been no agreement about the closing of Part and Ride sites and the development of new sites further out. We have reservations about this both because we doubt its effectiveness and because of the effect on the Green Belt. It is not clear that there has been proper consultation on the proposed bus tunnel under the High Street. As you will see later we are also not satisfied with the lack of proper co-ordination in the proposed development for the Northern Gateway.

We appreciate the recognition that there is a relationship between these proposals and Neighbourhood Plans and are encouraged by references to engagement and consultation. As a Neighbourhood Forum we are very keen to be involved in consultation about proposals that affect us. We have at this stage of a number of reservations about some of the proposals as they affect the Wolvercote area.

OTS: Managing Traffic and Travel Demand

The predictions of increased traffic volume, especially of HGVs, with the affect on the already unacceptably poor air quality and the maps indicating the convergence of roads already over capacity makes clear the need for a strategic link road. There are no clear plans or full funding for this and it is consequently difficult to see how either of the two different dates for its completion will be achieved. The not yet designed improvements at the Pear Tree Roundabout have an equally unlikely date of 2021. It is hard to see how the County Council can accept the City Council's claim that this road is not necessary for the Northern Gateway development which is much larger than that proposed in the Core Strategy when the inspector said that mitigation was necessary before development. This road is an absolute necessity to avoid chaos. Its use by private vehicles should be encouraged and obligatory for HGVs.

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Workplace Parking

We are not convinced by proposals for work place parking levies. Measures like this and proposals to 'nudge' people not to use their cars by, for example, providing residential parking away from houses are, we consider, very optimistic ways of limiting congestion.

Mode Strategies – Freight

We, of course, support the wish to transfer freight to the railways. We consider the proposals to 'encourage' and 'deter' freight traffic from using anything other than strategic routes as insufficiently robust. Of course encouragement to use these routes is sensible but there should also be a clear commitment to making HGVs use these routes by imposing weight restrictions. Through traffic, especially HGVs, should be diverted from Sunderland Avenue to improve the air quality and the quality of life on what is essentially a suburban road. The provision of a dedicated HGV lane should be considered for the A40 to the M40 after a strategic link road has been constructed. The proposals should also insist on the use of smaller low-emission vehicles in sensitive environments and on deliveries being, as far as possible, outside rush hours.

OTS: Mass Transit

Buses

We support the provision and improvement of public transport, especially in relation to cross-city routes, though it is very difficult to see which of the proposed types of buses would be most effective.

OTS: Walking and Cycling

We welcome the encouragement of cycling as a mode of transport and the proposal for teaching cyclists. However, the establishment of a 'fully joined-up, coherent and safe network' in Oxford is a longer-term objective envisaged as taking place some time after 2020. This should be prioritised. Given the greater risk to cyclists highlighted in the consultation it is especially important that safety is improved as soon as possible.

Crossing major roads

We are not convinced that the measures to be implemented at the Wolvercote and Cutteslowe Roundabouts will make cycling any safer. Toucan crossings will also not prevent the severance of one community from another by the ring road. The crossings disrupt the flow of traffic and stop-start traffic causes increased air pollution. What is needed is high-level bridging of the road like that at the Hovenring roundabout at Eindhoven.

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Cycle Super Route between the Northern Gateway and the City Centre on Woodstock Road

The cycle route from Wolvercote to the city centre currently peters out part-way down Woodstock Road. Considerable improvements, especially to provide smooth and level surfaces, and increased capacity are required. Segregation between cyclists and pedestrians is essential but difficult to enforce consequently paths need to be wide enough to make possible both cycling and walking in opposite directions along one path.

Sharing space with HGVs and Buses

Cyclists should not share road space with large vehicles

Cycle Super route- Northern Gateway to Oxford Parkway

There is no date for this in the OTS. It needs to be constructed to provide the opportunity for sustainable travel at the earliest possible time.

Cycling to Schools

There is a reference to cycling to schools: but it is rather vague, simply talking about promoting awareness of cycling. It would be good to have some more direct reference to the Wolvercote-Cherwell School link, and the optimum route to promote this link.

General Comments

We are concerned that the policies give no attention to the control of rat runs used by motorists frequently speeding through residential areas. This has a detrimental affect on the life of suburban and village communities. The problem routes should be identified by consultation with local residents and measures implemented to provide solutions.