**Oxfordshire Local Transport and Connectivity Plan 5**

Harwell Campus Bicycle Users Group (HarBUG) represents cyclists who commute to the Harwell Campus from all around the Science Vale and further afield. We have a membership of over 300 cyclists.

We support the overall LTCP5 aim, to create a zero Carbon Oxfordshire and that the strategy is positive step forward with many good policies and ideas.

We feel that, although many of the challenges that need to be addressed have been listed, there are some fundamental issues that have, in the past, and will continue to inhibit Oxfordshire’s progress to net zero.

From responding to previous local transport plans and planning issues we feel that the following points listed below need to be dealt with:

1. The use of the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) as a default standard for highway designs. The standard states that it is specific to the design, assessment and operation of trunk roads, including motorways. We believe that DMRB has been inappropriately used in Oxfordshire despite County Council guidance to the contrary. The way DMRB has been applied in urban areas creates hostile environments for cyclists and pedestrians and severance of communities.

The County Council and its officers need to enforce its own guidance and ensure any design personnel knows which standards to use before starting a highway scheme e.g. Manual for the Streets.

1. There is still an overall ‘car first’ attitude in parts of the County Council, District Councils and with contracted Transport Consultants. This may be due to an aversion to change, not being up to date with the latest highway designs / standard or the possibility of being challenged by councillors.

We support the commitment to ‘mainstreaming cycling within the council’. However culture change is needed at all levels of local governance through to parish and town councils. Whilst this is not directly the County Council’s remit if it is not addressed some of the LCTP5 proposals will be difficult to implement.

1. Not challenging highway designs from Transport Consultants either employed by OCC or developers and missing quick, cost-effective cycle infrastructure improvements.
2. Poor connections from new developments to existing towns, creating car dependence and community severance. This was highlighted also by [Transport for New Homes](https://www.transportfornewhomes.org.uk/) who reported on Great Western Park in Didcot. Similar mistakes are being made in Didcot North East, Crab Hill Development in Wantage and for Valley Park in Didcot.

In addition, any connections planned are being scheduled too late in a new development’s build. Usually these are tied into S106, or similar, funding but by the time they are realised new residents have had no other option than to drive everywhere and changing this habit is very difficult.

Didcot North East is a good example, it is in its early build stage and the developer has built a shared use path with lighting from new houses (Nobel Park). The path however stops at the busy Didcot Northern Relief Road (A4130) with no crossing or onward connections into town.

1. Communication with motorists and residents about how new cycle schemes work and why they have been implemented. Where a scheme is being introduced, details about it should be communicated to motorists, local residents and businesses ahead of its opening:
	* Explain why the scheme is being implemented.
	* Explain the benefits to residents and businesses.
	* Explain the alternatives to car use and expectations (parking etc.).
	* Explain where the money is coming from.
	* Explain how the scheme works – cycle lane rules are not very clear.

Leaflets and posters work better than online communication.

HarBUG designed, paid for, published and delivered leaflets to shops and residents along Wantage Road in Didcot ahead of the opening of cycle lanes. This has worked well.

**Draft Active and Health Travel Strategy**

HarBUG intends to be actively involved the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP) for Abingdon, Didcot and Wantage & Grove.

3. Commitment and Governance

We agree with the actions and policies detailed in this section.

4. Cycle Network

We agree with most of the actions and policies detailed in this section. HarBUG has produced plans and a naming convention for the Science Vale Active Travel Network. We also detailed town cycle networks for Didcot and Wantage & Grove in previous Local Transport Plans. These are still current and we will include them as part of the LCWIPs.

4.1 – Do we need a separate Oxfordshire design standard. LTN1/20 is a very good document and can be applied to any city, town or anywhere in the U.K. Maybe we just need Oxfordshire annexes to LTN1/20 to cover new innovations.

4.6 – We are not keen on the dual network approach and think it should be abandoned. We believe that one well-funded cycle route should be suitable for all cyclists. Trying to create differentiated networks splits the funding and results in two poor quality networks. The focus should be one good safe route and help cyclists become more confident.

5. Managing Car Use

We agree with the policies detailed in this section and note the only action listed is for cycling parking policy and no actions concerning managing car use.

We think that this section should also mention other motorised vehicle use e.g. delivery vans and H.G.Vs supplying local small supermarkets e.g. Tesco metro, Sainsbury’s Local, Co-ops. This issue may be dealt with in the freight section but they do affect how safe a road is perceived to be and hence whether cyclists will use it.

We support 20mph speed limits however these mean nothing without adequate enforcement.

5.5 Cycle Parking Policy

* We believe there should be provision for charging electric bikes in main cycle parking areas as listed in policies 32 and 33.
* We would like to see the provision of public lockers at shops, leisure centres and bus/train stations. This will allow cyclist to store helmets and other kit rather than having to carry them around shops etc.
* We would like to see safe convenient access to cycle parking through car parks. Many shopping areas have cycle parking close to entrances to shops, as it should be, but it involves cycling through the car park to get to the parking. Car parks are particularly hazardous for cyclists as motorists are reversing out of spaces with limited visibility.

6 Cycling Culture

We agree with the actions and policies detailed in this section.

Ideas to increase cycling and cycle safety:

* We would like to see the Oxfordshire Cycling Challenge to be revived. Many organisations on the Harwell Campus took part in 2012 and 2013. In 2014 it was changed to a general Oxfordshire travel challenge which did not have the same impact or participation. Maybe look for businesses to sponsor this event.
* Organise adult ‘cycling with confidence’ courses. As you have identified, perceived safety is an issue and running classes for adults may help overcome some of the reservations. This may have additional benefits in that participants become more aware of cyclist as motorists and more likely to let their children cycle. Classes could be organised in towns or business parks and run in lunchtimes or in the evening. Businesses may be willing to sponsor events for their employees as part of their commitment to encourage sustainable transport.
* In conjunction with district and town councils create mini road layouts in parks to allow children to cycle around and get use to the idea of cycling on roads.



* Encourage ‘older’ Oxfordshire residents to come back to cycling with organised rides for those who have not cycled for years. Organise demonstrations of electric cycles and other cycles and accessories that will make cycling accessible for all.
* Engage with year 11 students throughout the County (before they start to learn to drive) and explain transport options available to them now and in the future. Explain the how and why of choosing the most appropriate transport mode(s).

6.6 Maintenance

Where new cycle infrastructure schemes use existing roads ensure that the surfaces of the roads are repaired so that they are suitable for cyclists and are part of the scheme.

The new Icknield Greenway is an example of this. Some of the country lanes that form part of this route are badly potholed and have unacceptable amounts of surface mud. This is hazardous to cyclists and could have been easily and cheaply upgraded whilst the rest of the route was being built.

6.7 Disability, different types of cycles and barriers

We would like to include a policy that reviews existing barriers and allows residents to challenge their existence and get them removed.

If a barrier was installed to slow cyclists down when approaching a hazard or road crossing, look at alternatives e.g. in Milton Keynes, yellow bollards on Redway cyclepaths denote a road crossing. The bollards are visible to both cyclists and motorists and this is a standard approach throughout the city. Maybe having a similar standard for Oxfordshire?

**LTCP5 – Walking & Cycling**

We are pleased that a transport hierarchy has been adopted as key policy of LCTP5.

We will continue to support the Science Vale Cycle Network and work with the County Council on LCWIPs for Abingdon, Didcot and Wantage & Grove.

Greenways

HarBUG has been involved with the Icknield Greenway from its concept. We think that Greenways are a good use of public rights of ways but we don’t believe that a one size fits all approach is acceptable.

Greenways should be built and surfaced to be appropriate to their function. The Icknield Greenway was originally conceived as a commuter route between Wantage and the Harwell Campus to give cyclists a quality alternative to using the A417. However it has been built with an unbound surface, this is not appropriate for cycle commuting and cannot be used by road bikes. The surface is slow requiring extra effort from the cyclist and creates a lot of dirt on cycles and cyclists, especially when wet.

We realise that the greenway is in an area of outstanding natural beauty and there was a reluctance to have a bound black ‘Tarmacked’ surface in the countryside. There are many examples of where Tarmac surfaces have been treated to be more in keeping with a rural setting e.g. The Didcot to Upton section of Sustrans route 444 and the first section of the Icknield Greenway from the Harwell Campus. Sustrans have considerable experience and guidelines in building cycle routes in rural areas, perhaps Sustrans should be consulted when designing greenways in the future.

HarBUG will continue to campaign for a bound surface on the Icknield Greenway.

We object to the term ‘leisure commuting’. Commuting is all about getting to work in shortest time or distance whatever transport mode is used it is not a leisure activity. Please amend policy 9 to remove ‘leisure’ from ‘leisure commuting’.

HarBUG looks forward to working with the County in making cycling and safe, convenient and quick mode of transport in the Science Vale and throughout Oxfordshire.

Regards

Kevin Wilkinson

HarBUG Chair