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# CITY OF OXFORD



## A Balanced Transport Policy

REPORT OF CENTRAL AREA WORKING PARTY

TO COUNCIL - 5TH MARCH, 1973

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## I. INTRODUCTION

At its meeting on 19th June 1972 Council adopted the following amended report and recommendation of the Planning Committee (paragraphs 26 and 86) on Development Plan Amendment No. 2:-

"The Committee has resolved:-

(1) to RECOMMEND that no further action be taken to bring into effect or implement the Development Plan Amendment No. 2 pending consideration of the report referred to in (3) below;

(2) to request the Chief Officers to report on the practical and legal status of Amendment No. 2 and the consequences of abandoning it;

(3) to request the Central Area Working Party to consider and report on the implementation of a new planning and transport policy which recognised that the Eastwyke Farm Road would not be constructed in consequence of any decision to suspend further work on implementation of Amendment No. 2 and the need for balanced provision for public and private transport, pedestrians and cyclists.

The Central Area Working Party has now completed its detailed consideration, in consultation with representatives of City of Oxford Motor Services Ltd. and the Thames Valley Police Authority, of alternative proposals to deal with the transportation problem in Oxford and in accordance with the instructions given in paragraph 26 submits the following report.

In the following sections the Working Party reviews the previous planning aims for the City as stated in the original Development Plan and repeated in successive policy documents approved by the Council. It goes on to suggest how those aims need to be modified in the light of present circumstances and to show the need for compromise between some of the aims because they are not all necessarily compatible or within the control of the local authorities who will be concerned (Section II).

The Working Party then explains the transportation problem (Section III), the previous approaches to it (Section IV and Appendix J) and the present approach (Section V).

In Section VI the Working Party proposes a series of measures (summarised in Table I) which it considers form a viable basis of a transport policy, without resorting to major road construction except for a new western access road. The Section also sets out the financial implications of the proposals, so far as they can at present be estimated, and lists in its concluding recommendations those measures which it considers should be given priority.

A number of the measures proposed are considered in greater detail in the Appendices to this report, together with the reasons for proposing them.

All the measures described are based on the premise that a balanced provision must achieve a better environment for the whole of the City, by the reduction of the number of vehicles which require to use the City's road network.

Achievement of this aim will benefit all who have occasion to use the City, whether they be residents, workers, shoppers, visitors or students.

## II DEVELOPMENT PLAN AIMS

1. Previous planning aims for the City have stressed its historic aspects and have been concerned with the University, the regional centre or the movement of traffic in the Central Area, thus:

### WRITTEN STATEMENT 1955

"... to preserve the existing character of the City as a University City and at the same time to ensure that it continues to fulfil its other main functions as a Regional Centre, County and Market Town, Industrial City and Tourist Centre".

### WRITTEN STATEMENT AMENDMENT NO. 1 1967

"... to preserve and enhance the existing character of the City as a University City, to provide the Oxford Region with an adequate and efficient centre, to improve traffic distribution in St. Ebbe's and at Carfax, to provide its population with all necessary facilities and to maintain the City as a tourist centre".

### TERMS OF REFERENCE TO ENGINEERING AND PLANNING CONSULTANTS COMMISSIONED TO UNDERTAKE CENTRAL AREA STUDY

"... to determine appropriate environmental standards for the central area of Oxford and to decide what road and traffic system would be the most suitable for achieving those standards".

### WRITTEN STATEMENT AMENDMENT NO. 2 1970

"... to preserve and enhance the existing character of the City as a University City and to:

- (a) provide the population with all necessary facilities and make good those displaced by proposed development
- (b) provide the City with a road and transportation system which will not only be efficient but will also reduce the harmful effects of traffic and parking, particularly in the City Centre
- (c) continue to provide, in the City Centre, an adequate business and retailing centre for the Oxford Region
- (d) continue to attract tourists to the City."

2. Present day society contains many different groups of people who place differing values on things and therefore have differing views of what constitutes a problem and what is an acceptable solution. The complex nature of a city like Oxford makes it difficult to formulate aims for the city and to find means of achieving them all. Some compromise must be reached since not all of the aims can be fully achieved.

3. The overall aim should, be -

"to secure a City which combines prosperity with stability, provides opportunities for social and cultural enrichment, and satisfies the general needs, both at work and at leisure, of those living in, and working in and visiting Oxford while at the same time conserving the fine qualities which already exist."

4. As a place Oxford (and by Oxford in this context is meant Oxford and its surrounding area and not exclusively the County Borough administrative unit) has several characteristics which make it a unique place, an interesting place, a visually attractive place in which to live.

Among these are:

- (i) the relationship of the City with the surrounding countryside as a whole;
- (ii) the relationship of the built-up area of the town to the unbuilt-up parts - the green wedges of the flood plain penetrating into the very centre of the town and the web of other open spaces; splendid, unique, enhancing the quality of living;
- (iii) the scale and relationship of the City's buildings - spoilt only by a few high and unsuitably designed buildings, not all of recent date;
- (iv) the wide range of people and types of job in the town, along with the economic stability and general prosperity enjoyed by the major industries.

5. Oxford has so much that is good that the key aim should be to husband present resources - physical, social and aesthetic-while improving areas where there are deficiencies. The following more detailed aims are appropriate for the City as a whole though they are not all necessarily compatible or within the control of the local authorities concerned:-

- (i) to provide satisfactory conditions for the existing economy to be maintained;
- (ii) to make allowance for changing needs in general economic activity to be accommodated;
- (iii) to limit a rise in the number of people employed within the City to that unavoidably resulting from any necessary expansion of essential social or economic activity;
- (iv) to limit a rise in space demands to that resulting from (iii) above and the application of new standards;
- (v) to limit an increase in journey to work movements;
- (vi) to maintain the City Centre as a business, retailing and entertainments centre;
- (vii) to maintain, and develop where necessary, the local centres for business, retailing and entertainment;
- (viii) to make provision within the City, so far as compatible with the other aims, for an increase of population to take account of (iii), (iv) and (v) above;
- (ix) to maintain, and improve where necessary, environmental conditions in all parts of the City, residential and other;
- (x) to minimise the disruptive effects upon the community of any changes either economic, social or physical;
- (xi) to maintain, the distinction between built-up City and open countryside;

- (xii) to maintain and improve where necessary the scale, character and grain of both the City structure and of its buildings;
- (xiii) to conserve the unique beautiful and historic parts of the City and areas of other special interest;
- (xiv) to encourage a wide cross section of people to live in the City;
- (xv) to ensure that a variety of living accommodation is available which is suitable for all sections of the community;
- (xvi) to maintain, and where necessary improve, the availability and accessibility of social and recreational facilities;
- (xvii) to provide the City with a transport and communications system which will cater for its activities.

6. These form a general framework of intent which needs to be developed more specifically to deal with individual problems.

7. The major conflicts which the planning aims show up are those between three elements:-

- (a) the concern for economic viability, usually but not necessarily showing itself as economic growth and physical expansion as set out in para. 5 (i), (ii), (vi) and (vii);
- (b) the concern for the economic, physical, social and aesthetic aspects where it is clear that there is a limit to the extent or degree to which changes should take place if the present qualities are not to be destroyed or rendered useless as suggested in para. 5 (iii), (iv) and (v) and (viii) to (xiii);
- (c) the concern for the improvement of the quality of life possible within the city shown in para. 5.

8. Pressures for economic growth will increase demands upon the space available - space for work and for living and recreation which for the most part is already in use for one of these purposes. The need to improve the facilities available for the present inhabitants, both daytime and night time, longstay and short stay, also places demands upon scarce resources. The pressures for space not only impinge upon the areas of open land which form the frame to the City but also show as demands for the redevelopment of existing buildings or the intensification of their use. In an historic and charming city such as Oxford (and one which finds its charm economically useful) there are large areas where economic growth and its attendant developments are, on any large scale, incompatible with a wiser but more conservative development of present resources.

9. In the specific context of this report incompatibilities arise in relation to the proper use of the existing roads and the extra flows which may be imposed upon them because of the increase in movement generated by increases in activities. Some of these increases are the results of circumstances beyond our control - the growth in the demand for private car usage and the growth of leisure time movement - but some, for instance, the journey to work, the journey to shop or the journey to education (particularly higher education) may be a direct result of the growth of these economic

activities. The maintenance of "the City Centre as a business, retailing and entertainments centre" or the provision of "satisfactory conditions for the existing economy to be maintained" may well be found to be incompatible to a degree with the aims "to provide the City with a transport and communications system which will cater for its activities", and at the same time "to maintain, and improve where necessary, environmental conditions in all parts of the City, residential and others."

### III THE TRANSPORT PROBLEM

1. The gradual evolution of the City as a regional centre, a University and industrial city, and a world wide magnet for tourists has created a situation in which large numbers of people need to make frequent journeys to, from and within the City for various purposes.

2. Two main courses of action are open to the Council in trying to meet the problem of congestion i. e. attempt to accommodate the private car by building new and expensive road networks, or take steps to limit the use of private cars and persuade people to use public transport or bicycles, and/or walk.

3. The detrimental effects of traffic congestion on the environment of the City and on the daily lives of its citizens are readily apparent and in the case of the radial roads this is illustrated by Table Av in Appendix A. This table shows that the desirable environmental levels of traffic flow are greatly exceeded on all the radial roads and that even in 1966 the peak hour flows were greater than those which the roads can carry without undue delay or congestion (the practical capacity). In this situation the delay and difficulty experienced by pedestrians crossing the road is unacceptable, noise and fumes are intolerable and essential and emergency services are unable to function properly.

4. The general problem caused by the journey to work is accentuated in Oxford by the physical constriction of its commercial and historic centre, including the large number of buildings of great historic and architectural merit, and by the rivers that divide the City and confine the traffic movements to a restricted number of bridges.

5. Furthermore the success of the green belt policy has severely limited the number of people able to live within the City and its immediately adjacent built up areas; and the Council has been unable to limit the growth of employment within the City to the extent necessary to avoid large numbers of those employed in the City having to seek accommodation in relatively distant villages and hamlets.

6. Consequently a significant proportion of those employed in the City live in places which cannot be served by public transport within its existing economic constraints and have, therefore, to rely on the use of the private car for their journey to work.

7. Recent monitoring of traffic flows in the central area has shown that off peak traffic flows have further increased during 1972 and the average off peak hour flows during the working day now amount to about three quarters of peak hour flows.

8. This indicates that journeys in off peak hours between the morning, mid-day and evening peaks could well increase to such an extent that peak hour congestion prevails throughout the working day, and thus extends the period over which the peak problems are experienced. These journeys appear in the main to be made for the purposes of education, shopping, health, entertainment, and servicing. Even the present off peak flows are too high for the desirable environmental conditions to be achieved in many parts of the City.

9. A further problem arises because the bus company could not economically provide enough buses to give an adequate service at peak hours unless the additional capacity then available was taken up to a large extent between the peak hours.

10. Accommodation of the private car, without any restriction on its use in urban areas, requires the provision of roads and extensive car parking facilities within the central area which creates pressures on valuable central area land.

11. One of the problems of exercising control over parking in Oxford is the proportion of parking spaces which are currently in private control. Out of the total of about 13,000 existing spaces in the central area, 7,800 approximately are privately controlled off street spaces and only a little over 3,000 are at present under Council control, though the balance is in areas such as East and South Oxford, Jericho and Walton Manor/Park Town for which residents' parking schemes have been approved or are under consideration.

12. In addition to the above problems, which relate mainly to movements to and from the central area, there are also problems of considerable magnitude but of more local impact; these include those relating to the suburban Shopping Centres, the movement of traffic through predominantly residential streets and the traffic generated by major uses such as the hospitals, the Polytechnic and industrial premises.

#### IV PREVIOUS APPROACH TO TRANSPORT PROBLEMS

1. The criticism of previous approaches to the solution of Oxford's traffic problems need not be laboured. In general, the proposals contained in the Second Amendment to the Development Plan and the schemes 'D' and 'G' of the Oxford Central Area Study have been criticised on the grounds of favouring the private motorist at the expense of other sections of the population and involving major road construction without achieving environmental improvements outside the central area.

2. On the whole major road construction is a long term process, geared to accommodate trends rather than cure or divert pressures - its immediate effect within a close knit urban area is disruption and chaos - it is excessively future orientated, designed to cope with what might happen whereas problems are here and now. The reasons for this approach are clear and understandable - road construction is inflexible. The provision of roads in small parts is unsatisfactory since only the whole will work effectively - thus the need to assume that one knows the nature of the future problem or that the present problem will stay long enough to be solved.

3. The social objections to major road construction in urban areas suggest that on the whole any benefits to be derived from the provision of roads are more than outweighed by disruption and disturbance of community life in the affected areas.

4. Road construction has high capital costs, and uses up considerable resources both men and material. It is inflexible in that it may inhibit the flow of resources to other measures and is relatively permanent. (Even worse, it may inhibit thought about other measures to combat present and immediate problems). It has a degree of robustness in that a given set of road lanes can take a wide range of traffic volumes - from zero upwards - and types of vehicle, but it presupposes that existing habits of car acceptance and car usage in cities will persist. This is not to deny the importance of some construction to achieve a basic level of functioning without which activity would decline.

5. The proposals in the Development Plan Amendment No. 2 as modified by the Secretary of State would, in the long term, bring benefits to the car owning population, but these may well be far less than imagined since new roads provided to relieve an existing street network will not achieve that object without associated traffic measures and controls to direct existing traffic to the new road and prevent additional traffic being attracted to the old road network in its place. This is particularly so where supply is less than demand, a permanent situation with the modified version of the transport package which the Secretary of State has decided to approve and even more so without the traffic management measures needed to produce the high level of private car restraint implicit in the scheme. Indeed, looking at these proposals for the town as a whole they would do little to improve conditions anywhere other than on the Botley Road and in the Central Area. The remaining suburban areas would, with the scale of parking proposed and without other restraint measures which have not been specified by the Secretary, still carry traffic on the major roads in excess of their existing practical capacity and greatly in excess of the environmental flows which are desirable.

6. Thus the capacity of the road system (in the modified scheme G approved by the Secretary of State) is less than needed for the complete acceptance of private transport usage so that even in the long term, the desires of the motoring public would not have been satisfied and the small degree of satisfaction obtained would be at the expense of social upheaval and continuous traffic disturbance during the years of construction.

7. Similar objections may be made of the submitted amendment, although this did have the merit of providing, in the very long term, for the alleviation of conditions on the northern and southern radials as well as the western.

## V THE APPROACH TO TRANSPORT PROBLEMS & THEIR RELATIONSHIPS TO LAND USE

### THE APPROACH

1. The previous sections have considered the aims which should guide the solutions to the problems of Oxford and have set out the objections which may be made to earlier proposals in the light of these. Two general points arise from this consideration; that solutions which are seen as taking a one sided view of the problem, in that they seem to concentrate on major road construction or to ignore the diversity of interests involved, do not prosper; and that on the whole the major problems are not technical ones but problems of human behaviour; in the end the solutions to problems depend upon such things as change in human behaviour.

2. The change of emphasis of the approach - the desire to achieve a 'balanced provision for car, public transport, cycling and walking' - the need to recognise the complex nature of present day society - demands a flexible and immediately effective set of solutions. On the whole, road construction is long term, inflexible, resource consuming and irreversible and provides a solution to only a limited part of the problem. It is suggested that more beneficial solutions, especially in the short term, may be found in a series of linked measures or experiments which when added together have considerable and progressive impact not only upon the traffic problems of the town but on the environment as a whole.

3. It is considered important that the measures should add up to a substantial attack upon the problem, should be publicly acceptable, consistent, feasible, practical, and flexible. The achievement of the last is made easier by adopting a solution which in itself is made up of many small measures which may be extended, supplemented readily or, if necessary, abandoned.

### PUBLICITY

4. The approach suggested has two other aspects besides the actual implementation of the proposals. These are publicity and monitoring. Since the major problem is one of behaviour, the chief weapon for its achievement will be persuasion. A major characteristic of the programme must be publicity. From the start the public must be involved and informed and the totality of the programme and its advantages must be demonstrated. The public should not be presented with small parts of the programme in isolation but must be shown how each measure proposed is designed to fit into an overall scheme, how it is hoped it will work and should be encouraged to help make it work. It is considered that the policy may need to be explained to the public in general by means of a full scale professional public relations campaign.

5. The Working Party wishes to emphasise however that the extent to which, and the speed with which, the measures proposed in this report can be implemented will depend very much on the following:-

- (i) a general acceptance by the public of the fact that in an historic City the size of Oxford it would never be practicable to provide road space and car parking for all who would like to use the private car for all their journeys and that restriction of travel by private car is, therefore, inevitable whether new roads are provided or not; and

- (ii) recognition by all who have occasion to journey into or within the City of the need to use public transport or travel by bicycle or on foot rather than use a private car unless this is really necessary.

6. In this connection the Working Party feels that Council should not underestimate the strength of resistance to any measures which impinge upon the freedom of the individual to drive and park where he pleases, even though such measures may have general public support.

7. The measures proposed in this report are almost without exception the subject of statutory procedures which afford individuals the right to object and have their objections considered by the local authority concerned though some may not require the holding of a public inquiry.

#### MONITORING

8. The second aspect, monitoring, is also vital to a process which is experimental, since it is the means by which performance may be judged and by which unforeseen side effects may be recognised. In this connection, the Working Party wishes to draw Council's attention to the difficulty of predicting the results of a series of measures designed to influence or change people's habits or behaviour. Fortunately most of the measures proposed are relatively inexpensive in comparison with the cost of major road construction, they can be monitored and, unlike major road construction, they can in most cases be modified or even abandoned if the results indicate this to be necessary. For this monitoring process to be effective the aims of the plan need to be clearly defined and the criteria against which its achievement may be measured carefully determined and agreed.

#### IMPLEMENTATION AND STAFFING

9. The measures proposed are mainly of a kind which can be implemented more quickly than major road construction, and will be required to some extent whether major road construction is undertaken or not. Their implementation however will depend not only on the necessary finance being made available by Council, possibly at the expense of other projects which have to be met out of the Council's circular 2/70 allocation, but also on the staff resources available to investigate the measures requiring further study, to prepare and process the necessary Traffic Regulation Orders and other administrative or legal procedures through all their stages and to enforce the measures when they are in operation.

10. In the ordinary way it might have been possible, given the necessary financial provision, to take on sufficient additional staff to enable all those measures which are inter-related and to some extent inter-dependent (e.g. the timing of increase in central area car parking charges so as to coincide with the introduction of bus lanes on the radials wherever feasible, and the provision of peripheral car parks) to be brought into operation simultaneously. The Working Party is advised however, that this is ruled out in present circumstances by staffing difficulties including the virtual freeze on appointments to additional posts which has been imposed by the Local Government Staff Commission in connection with Local Government Reorganisation.

11. Much the same problem arises in other organisations which will be concerned with the implementation of the measures proposed. For example, the Working Party is advised that the Police are at present unable to maintain even the existing traffic warden establishment at full strength.

12. It is therefore inevitable that some measures which ought ideally to be introduced in conjunction with others will have to be introduced independently. The Working Party hopes however that this report will, if approved by Council, serve to demonstrate to those likely to be affected by a particular measure that it is an integral part of a phased implementation of an overall policy and not merely a piecemeal ad-hoc solution to one isolated problem.

#### THE CITY PLAN AND THE COUNTY

13. The Working Party is aware that some of the measures proposed may be regarded by some living outside the City as favouring the urban car owning-residents, who have in many cases a viable alternative in the form of public transport or bicycle, at the expense of those rural car-owning residents who may have no such reasonable alternative to the use of their cars, in making journeys into the Central Area. The Working Party therefore wishes to make it clear that it fully recognises the need to make balanced provision for those who come from surrounding rural areas to the City to work, to shop or for other purposes. Under the overall policy proposed in this report the majority of those who are intended to be discouraged by the measures proposed from bringing their cars into the central area live within the City and its adjacent built up areas which can be efficiently served by a supplemented public transport system.

14. After 1st April, 1974, traffic management and car parking, both on and off street, will become the responsibility of the new County Council, though the District Council will have a concurrent power to provide off-street parking places subject to the consent of the new County Council and to a right of appeal to the Secretary of State in the event of a decision by which the District Council is aggrieved.

15. It will accordingly be necessary, if Council approves the policy proposed in this report, to discuss it with the new County Council with a view to its accepting the policy as an on-going commitment after 1st April, 1974.

#### EXTERNAL FACTORS

16. Although the primary concern of this report is transport and the problems arising from it, it is significant that the objectives discussed in the first part concern the City as a whole. Transport has only a linking function and the size of the problem it creates is determined by the extent of activities within the City. If it is an objective of the City to avoid major new road building in the built up areas and to limit traffic flows on the existing road network to acceptable environmental standards this implies both a control of the amount, type and location of development and a transfer of journeys to more efficient (i. e. Public Transport) and less environmentally destructive forms of transport. (e. g. walking/cycling)

17. Roads within the city are carrying more traffic than is generally thought desirable on the grounds of safety and reasonable driving conditions and very much more than may be considered as consistent with good environmental conditions taking into account the uses which flank them. A corollary of the proposition that no more road space or very little more will become available in the short-term is the need not only to attempt to change the pattern of movement in the manner suggested by this programme but also that any proposals which would increase the need for movement particularly at times when the roads are fully used should be curtailed. A major tool available is the refusal of planning permission and enforcement in the case of unauthorised changes but the Council should itself be careful not to put forward proposals which run contrary to this need.

## VI THE PROGRAMME OF PROPOSALS

### MEASURES

1. Nearly all the problems caused by traffic in Oxford show up as conflict situations of various sorts: conflict between vehicles or conflict between vehicles and other things, people and places. These occur at specific times and places, the main ones being readily identifiable.

2. It is possible to suggest many ways of improving the situation or curing the ills. Some will be expensive, destructive, long term and irreversible, others will be cheap, reversible and immediate in impact. They range from large scale road building and parking structures, through less costly ideas introducing new facilities, such as providing more buses, to management measures to make best use of existing facilities, such as road closures, parking restrictions and one way streets.

3. Consideration of the problems and the measures possible shows that improvement may be obtained without resorting to large scale road construction. There is, however, no universally applicable measure which will achieve these ends. A series of measures tailored to individual aspects of the problem or to specific areas, which when added together form an overall attack is suggested. Most of the measures are relatively cheap to implement compared with road construction, easily carried out, possible to implement speedily if not opposed, but most, if not all, need quite a while to design and set up.

4. The programme which follows is not a comprehensive one but the items included form part of a consistent approach. Some of the proposals are already in the pipeline, some await the final 'go-ahead' and others are in a formulative stage. The development of the latter should be considered in the light of the overall proposals set out here. None can be considered as isolated measures and all must be subject to testing against objectives, public consideration and monitoring. (Most are discussed in greater detail in the Appendices).

5. It will be seen that the measures which it is proposed should be given immediate priority are intended in the main to reduce the proportion of private car travel to, from, and within the City by making specific provision for public transport as the major mode of transport for access to the central area.

6. Two important parts of the approach are firstly traffic management measures to give public transport priority over private cars on the existing radials and in the City Centre, thus making it more reliable and effective and therefore more attractive; and secondly alterations in the amount, location and cost of public parking space in the central area to make the use of the private car for access less attractive, particularly for journeys from within the City and adjacent urban areas.

7. It is proposed that these measures should be supplemented (a) by residents' parking schemes which would have the effect of stopping commuters from parking in areas adjacent to the City centre; and (b) by the provision of peripheral car parks to give alternative park and ride facilities for those commuters travelling from outside the City and its adjacent built up areas who do not need their cars for operational purposes during the working day.

8. The Working Party emphasises that physical controls for restricting access to the central area by the existing radial roads at peak hours will be fairest to all sections of the community. It therefore recommends that methods of imposing such controls and restraints be investigated as a matter of urgency. In this connection the Working Party has already accepted an offer made by the Department of the Environment to the deputation from the























































































