

**To: City Executive Board**

**Date: 10 September 2015**

**Report of: The Scrutiny Committee**

**Title of Report: Report of the Cycling Review Group**

## **Summary and recommendations**

**Purpose of report:** To present the recommendations of the Cycling Review Group

**Key decision?** No

**Scrutiny Lead Member:** Councillor Louise Upton

**Executive lead member:** Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Executive Member for Planning, Transport and Regulatory Services

**Policy Framework:** Strong and Active Communities & Cleaner, Greener Oxford

**Recommendation** of the Scrutiny Committee to the City Executive Board:

**That the City Executive Board states whether it agrees or disagrees with the following recommendations:**

- 1. That the City Council's unallocated cycling capital budget (approx. £110k over two years) should be used to fund the lower cost Cycling Review Group wish-list items in order of priority. The highest priority is signing City Council route 5, extending to Littlemore and the Leys Pool. This should include signing cyclists onto this route from key destinations such as Oxford Business Park, Vue Cinema and Oxford Academy.**
- 2. That the wish-list of cycling improvement projects drawn up by the Cycling Review Group, with advice from Cyclox and Sustrans, should be used to decide how future City and County Council funding for cycling improvements is spent. Flexibility should be applied so that new opportunities can also be funded where this is appropriate.**
- 3. That the City Council encourages the police and Direct Services to proactively send reusable abandoned bikes to Broken Spoke and other bike shops that are happy to take part, so that as many of these bikes as possible can be refurbished and reused locally.**

**4. That the City Council ensures that developer funding can be used to contribute to cycling improvements where appropriate, including by:**

- a) Ensuring that the City Council's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) list is consistent with funding the higher cost cycling improvement projects set out in our wish-list, next time the CIL list is reviewed;**
- b) Using CIL funding as a local contribution to attract match funding, for example from the Local Sustainable Transport Fund, for cycling improvement schemes in accordance with the Council's CIL list (often these will be part of wider transport improvement schemes);**
- c) Alerting Ward Members when significant sums (we suggest >£5k) of the 'neighbourhood portion' of CIL have been allocated to their local area. We would encourage members to consider spending this funding on lower cost cycling improvement schemes from our wish-list where possible.**

**5. That the City Council ensures that its planning policies are consistent with its vision for Oxford to become one of the great cycling cities of Europe, including by:**

- a) Ensuring that cycling routes and provision are considered and included in all major new developments, prioritising cycling and pedestrian access;**
- b) Reviewing and updating planning policies relating to cycle parking standards for non-residential cycle parking, as part of the next full or partial review of the Local Plan.**

**6. That the Council Leader or Board Member for Planning and Transport writes to the County Council and requests that they do the following in consultation with the City Council:**

- a) Implement the Cycle Super Routes and Cycle Premium Routes as soon as possible;**
- b) Bring together cycling organisations, county highways planners and highway engineers to agree a set of specifications for cycle infrastructure design in Oxford, drawing on findings from the London Cycling Campaign. This should include priority phasing of traffic lights for cyclists;**
- c) Consider how cycle routes can be signed more consistently and what the standard should be. We suggest that destinations and distances, rather than route numbers, should be shown on cycle signage;**
- d) Agree that highway maintenance works should not be signed off until they are safe and suitable for cycling;**
- e) Work with Government and other local authorities to implement the All Party Parliamentary Group recommendation to achieve a £10 per head of population investment in cycling.**

**7. That the City Council nominates a Member Cycling Champion (a Councillor) to lead on work to improve cycling in Oxford at a political level and maximise the City Council's influence.**

**8. That the City Council brings forward proposals for additional staffing resources to enable the City Council to engage proactively with cycling groups, work smarter with the County Council, and support the member champion (see recommendation 7). We would suggest 1 FTE dedicated to cycling, with a creative solution to funding this post which may involve other organisations. This role should include:**

- a) Supporting the Member Cycling Champion (see recommendation 6) in convening a forum of the different cycling groups and representatives of other stakeholders such as schools to co-ordinate efforts and agree a common position when lobbying for cycling improvement schemes;
- b) Engaging with the County Council to maximise the City Council's influence as LTP4 is put into practice;
- c) Influencing the development of a set of specifications for cycle infrastructure design in Oxford (see recommendation 5e);
- d) Monitoring the County Council's Highway Asset Management Strategy (road repairs) to identify opportunities for cycling provision to be improved during planned maintenance works (we have identified 4 such projects);
- e) Examining existing evidence on what works for improving cycling take up;
- f) Promoting active travel to school through Bikeability training and advocacy, particularly at the beginning of every academic year. Excellence in this area should be recognised perhaps through the Lord Mayor/Member Champion going in to schools to give prizes, or inviting winners to attend civic events.
- g) Identifying ways to change motorists' behaviour.

**9. That the City Council promotes positive images of cycling in Council literature, particularly the soon to be signed route to Blackbird Leys pool.**

## **Appendices**

*Appendix 1 – Project Scope*

*Appendix 2 – Proposed wish-list of cycling projects in order of priority*

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## **Foreword**

If you lived in a city in Denmark, the chances are that each morning you would go to the cycle parking by your home, where you and your children would hop on your bicycles and then travel on a dedicated cycle lane to work and school. Riding alongside you would be all sorts of people, from businesswomen to builders. The traffic lights would be balanced in your favour. Pollution and congestion would be minimal. Your colleagues would be slimmer and healthier.

Oxford is one of the few cities in the UK where we have a chance of achieving something similar. With our large student population and restricted city centre parking we already have a near critical mass of cyclists. As well as active members of national cycling charities (Sustrans and CTC) we have our own organisations (Cyclox and Isis) to champion and encourage cycling here in Oxford. We have examples of good practise that are trumpeted nationwide (Cherwell School has the highest proportion of children cycling to school in the whole country).

However, many people find cycling in Oxford to be difficult and frightening. We have to find ways to get more people out of cars and on to bicycles. Everyone that we convert will be good for the city, good for the environment and good for the individual.

Many great resources are already available - from apps providing low traffic cycling routes to EU-funded research on incentive schemes. We don't need to reinvent the wheel, but we do need someone who can read the research and adapt it for Oxford! This is why we are proposing that we find a way to fund a Cycling Officer who can examine these resources, liaise with our cycling groups and schools, ensure County transport schemes bring maximum benefit to cyclists and that all new developments are not just cycle-friendly but cycle-tastic!

Councillor Louise Upton  
Chair, Cycling Review Group

## **Introduction**

1. The Cycling Review Group is a cross-party working group established by Oxford City Council's Scrutiny Committee during the 2014/15 municipal year. The Group's membership comprises Councillors Upton (Chair), Gant, Pressel & Wolff.

## **Background**

2. Oxford is acknowledged as one of the few true 'Cycling cities' in the UK but barriers to cycling remain including the limited availability of secure cycle parking and the general experience of cycling on heavily trafficked roads.
3. Oxfordshire County Council is the highways authority for Oxford but the City Council claims the right to maintain unclassified highways in the city. The County is leading on the development of a new Oxford Transport Strategy as part of Connecting Oxfordshire: Local Transport Plan 2015-2031 (LTP4) and Oxford City Council has submitted a response to the consultation on this strategy.
4. Oxford City Council established a four-year capital investment programme in 2012 totalling £300k, to support the objectives of Oxford Cycle City. A further £62k was added in 2014. This investment programme aimed to realise the City Council's vision for Oxford to become one of the great cycling cities of Europe, and in particular:
  - I. *To create an environment and culture that encourages cycling at all levels in Oxford, and which in particular encourages new cyclists. This will be achieved through effective promotion of cycling, and by completing a fully joined-up dual cycle network that is attractive to use and provides safety, convenience and directness.*
  - II. *For the total proportion of journeys to work made by cycle as the main mode of travel to be over 20% by the time of the 2021 Census<sup>1</sup>.*
5. The objectives of the Cycle City project did not include developing an overview of the process for the planning and development of a cycle strategy for the city. Its remit was restricted to identifying a package of cycle improvement and promotional measures over 4 years. Some of these improvements were things the City Council could achieve independently of the Highways Authority, and others were done in partnership with the County Council and the Canal and Rivers Trust.

## **Terms of reference**

6. The Cycling Review Group met four times from March to June 2015. At its first meeting the Group agreed that its primary focus would be to inform how the City Council can maximise the impact of its unallocated cycling investments and any additional funding for cycling improvements. The project scope was agreed by the Scrutiny Committee on 23 March and is included as Appendix 1.

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<sup>1</sup> [Oxford Cycle City Plan 2012-16, Oxford City Council, July 2012](#)

## **Methods of investigation**

7. The findings of the Cycling Review Group have been informed by verbal evidence provided by officers and stakeholders at meetings, as well as by written submissions and desk research. The Group has:
  - Met with representatives of Cyclox and Sustrans;
  - Spoken with a low-carbon transport planning researcher and watched [‘Making Sustainable Life Attractive’](#), which demonstrates the planning solutions that have been used in Copenhagen;
  - Cycled route 5 from The Plain to Cowley and then on to the Science Park, Kassam Stadium, the Leys Pool and Oxford Business Park;
  - Held discussions with City Council officers and reviewed reports and briefing notes provided by them;
  - Reviewed documentation relating to cycling, including:
    - Oxford Transport Strategy (OTS) – Oxfordshire County Council;
    - Connecting Oxfordshire: Local Transport Plan 2015-2031 Cycle Strategy;
    - OTS Consultation Response – Oxford City Council;
    - A Vision for Cycling in Oxford – Cyclox, Sustrans & CTC;
    - London Cycling Design Standards – Transport for London;
    - Increasing Active Travel to School – Sustrans;
    - Get Britain Cycling – All Party Parliamentary Cycling Group.

## **Findings and recommendations**

8. Our findings and recommendations are set out and explained below under the following headings:
  - The case for cycling
  - Unallocated investments
  - Priority cycling improvements
  - Alternative options
  - Developer contributions
  - Planning policy
  - Overall strategy for cycling
  - Cycling champion
  - The case for a Cycling Officer

### **The case for cycling**

9. Cycling is healthier, cleaner and cheaper than motorised forms of transport. In a historic city with spatial constraints and issues with congestion, it can also be a quicker and easier way of getting around.
10. The Director of Public Health for Oxfordshire’s annual report for 2014/2015 states that cycling has real, tangible, strong and lasting health benefits. The health benefits of switching to cycling as a form of travel to work result in savings of approximately £1,100 per year per person.

11. The City Council is keen to make cycling a more attractive option and to encourage new cyclists. It also has a specific aim to increase the proportion of journeys to work made by bicycle. We are fully supportive of these aims and of the valuable improvements the City Council's Cycle City programme has delivered.

### **Unallocated investments**

12. At the beginning of this review we were advised that the City Council had £50k of capital funding in its budget for cycling improvements in 2016/17 that had not yet been allocated to any specific schemes. A further sum was made available in 2015/16 due to the County Council agreeing to fund improvements on Willow Walk that the City Council had budgeted for within its Cycle City programme. Some of this additional spend was committed to upgrading Pembroke Street but approximately £60k remained unallocated. This raised the total unallocated cycling budget to £110k over two years.

13. The Cycle City project has delivered very valuable cycling improvements and we have identified some constructive ways of deploying the remaining budget. Our priorities for spending this capital funding are explained in the next section.

14. The City Council currently has a £10k revenue budget to support the delivery of Cycle City capital projects. This funding pays for 0.2 FTE of officer time but is due to end in April 2016. Any works scheduled for 2016/17 therefore need to be organised within the current financial year. Part of this revenue funding has been used to support events promoting cycling, this includes bike maintenance workshops in Low carbon Oxford Week, Tricky Trail bike course at FloFest and at the Leys Festival, to encourage children to cycle.

### **Priority cycling improvements**

15. There is no shortage of ideas for improving the city's cycling infrastructure. The Cycle City consultation exercise produced many ideas (some of which overlap with the priorities set out below), but there is often as much divergence as there is coherence. Infrastructure investment decisions are made, as often as not, with reference to sources of possible funding, with the aim of maximising the use and effectiveness of these grants. However, in the absence of an agreed strategy the investment choices do not necessarily reflect priorities that are broadly agreed by different stakeholders. For example, a recent £3.3m Cycle City Ambition Grant awarded to the County Council was spent on a new bridge which was not considered to be a priority by the City Council or the cycling groups we spoke to.

16. We initially came to the view that the two priorities for investing £50k on cycling improvements should be signage on the East Oxford route from The Plain to Cowley Centre via Iffley Road (25k) and white line painting on priority routes around the city centre (£25k). We also considered the options of investing in an abandoned bicycle reuse scheme and a cycling app (see next section), before producing a wish-list of priority capital schemes in consultation with Cyclox and Sustrans.

#### Signing the East Oxford Route – City Council route 5

17. We identified that signing this route should be a high priority because it is quieter and safer than cycling along the busy Cowley Road between The Plain and Cowley Centre. This route is currently little known and under-used, particularly

amongst student groups, partly because it is counter-intuitive to cycle up Iffley Road rather than Cowley Road from The Plain when travelling to Cowley Centre.

18. A member of the Review Group photographed this route to highlight where the 16 or so additional signs should be placed and highlighted the benefits of removing one-way restrictions for cyclists (currently the route splits in different directions due to such restrictions). We understand that the County Council may be amenable to removing these one-way restrictions, which would be very welcome as it would make the route easier for cyclists to follow.
19. We later agreed that signage on this the route should extend beyond Cowley Centre to Littlemore and on to the new pool at Blackbird Leys. To ensure this route can become more known and well used, cyclists should be signed onto it from important employment, education and leisure destinations, including those outside the ring road such as Oxford Business Park, Vue Cinema, and Oxford Academy.
20. The representatives of cycling groups we spoke to were strongly supportive of this priority and we cycled this route with members of Cyclox and Sustrans on 8 June. We agreed that signing this route in full should be the City Council's priority improvement scheme because it would benefit many of Oxford's cyclists (and other road users) for a relatively modest outlay.

#### White line painting

21. White line painting on major routes is a County Council function but we felt that in a number of key locations, the existing mandatory white lines were inadequate and potentially dangerous for cycling. Once re-painted, road markings are clearly visible for about 5 years. Upon further enquiry we learned that white line painting would require revenue funding. It could therefore not be funded from the City Council's unallocated capital investments. Instead, we suggest that the City Council calls on the County Council to consider the frequency road markings should be repainted as part of a wider piece of work developing standards and specifications for cycling infrastructure, in partnership with cycling stakeholders (see recommendation 5e).

#### Wish list of cycling improvement schemes

22. We identified that there needs to be a more strategic approach to cycling improvement schemes to maximise the opportunities for improving the experience of cycling in Oxford. We recognise that there is a need for some flexibility in order to be able to fund new opportunities that present themselves, but where possible future investments in cycling improvements should be guided by a wish list of priority schemes. Ideally, this priority list should be based on broad agreement amongst the various cycling stakeholders.
23. We started to produce our own wish-list of cycling improvement schemes based on member suggestions but in discussions with Cyclox, it became clear that they already done considerable work on producing a more comprehensive wish-list, which could be updated and used as the basis for a unified wish-list of priority improvement schemes. This wish list is included as appendix 2. It lists lower cost schemes in order of priority, with signage of the East Oxford route being the number one priority.



***Recommendation 1 - That the City Council's unallocated cycling capital budget (approx. £110k over two years) should be used to fund the lower cost Cycling Review Group wish-list items in order of priority. The highest priority is signing City Council route 5, extending to Littlemore and the Leys Pool. This should include signing cyclists onto this route from key destinations such as Oxford Business Park, Vue Cinema and Oxford Academy.***

***Recommendation 2 - That the wish-list of cycling improvement projects drawn up by the Cycling Review Group, with advice from Cyclox and Sustrans, should be used to decide how future City and County Council funding for cycling improvements is spent. Flexibility should be applied so that new opportunities can also be funded where this is appropriate.***

### **Alternative options**

24. We looked at the options of investing in a cycling mobile app and reconditioning abandoned bicycles.

#### Cycling app

25. There are already a number of mobile apps available that can provide cyclists with tools for route planning, ride mapping and logging, reporting pot holes, monitoring fitness, and information about cycle hire. A list of the best cycling apps for iPhone and Android has been published by [Cycling Weekly](#). We did not identify an obvious need for a specific app unique to Oxford.

#### Reconditioning abandoned bicycles

26. The majority of abandoned bicycles that are currently collected appear to be in poor state. Most are damaged in some way and many have been exposed to the weather for extended periods of time, so the percentage that could be restored is quite low. Reconditioning those bicycling that could potentially be reused would require revenue funding. We were unable to identify a proven model in operation elsewhere that could be replicated in Oxford.

27. Direct Services currently provide some reusable abandoned bicycles to organisations such as Aspire and Broken Spoke as and when they make contact. The remainder of the abandoned bicycles collected are scrapped and count towards the Council's recycling credits. We would like to see the City Council working more closely with cycle shops in the city, many of which are staffed by genuine enthusiasts, on issues such as abandoned bicycles. We suggest that the Council considers whether it can be more proactive in engaging with cycle shops so that more abandoned bikes collected by the Council can be restored and reused locally. There may be a case for investing some revenue funding at a later stage if there is potential to scale up this initiative, for example to include a bike shop in every community.

***Recommendation 3 - That the City Council encourages the police and Direct Services to proactively send reusable abandoned bikes to Broken Spoke and other bike shops that are happy to take part, so that as many of these bikes as possible can be refurbished and reused locally.***

## **Developer contributions**

28. Developer contributions are a potential major source of funding for cycling improvement schemes. The developer funding regime is currently changing, with the Community Infrastructure Levy replacing Section 106 agreements from April 2015.

### Section 106 (S106)

29. S106 agreements were based on a case by case negotiation led by the County Council, and focused on large development schemes. A number of S106 legacy items are on-going and some S106 funding has not yet been committed. The County Council was unable to advise us precisely how much S106 money has been spent on cycling improvements because these have normally been incorporated into larger transport works.

### Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

30. CIL funding is collected by District Councils and is not ring-fenced for a particular type of infrastructure. The City Council has more control over the use of CIL funding than S106 agreements, although CIL covers County Council as well as city council responsibilities. The level of CIL funding developers are required to contribute is based on a floor space calculation but there are a number of exemptions, such as for charitable uses. The CIL payable on redevelopments can be much lower than on green-field developments because existing floor-space is subtracted from new floor-space as part of this calculation.

31. 15% of CIL funding is top-sliced and allocated to neighbourhood areas. The remainder goes into a central pot and is not ring-fenced for a specific geographical area. The City Council estimates that it will receive £2.5m to 3m of CIL funding annually and officers advised us that this projection is looking accurate. A slow start had been expected and although £1.4m of CIL funding was in the bank, none had yet been spent as of May 2015. The only allocated CIL funding that would include cycling measures was for wider public realm improvements at Frideswide Square.

### The Council's CIL list

32. The 85% of CIL money that is held in a central pot has to be spent in accordance with the City Council's [Community Infrastructure Levy \(CIL\) list](#), which is agreed by full Council alongside the Council's annual budget. The CIL list sets out strategic infrastructure improvements that can be funded from CIL. There are many competing demands for CIL funding, including education, community services and environmental improvements, as well as transport schemes. The CIL list currently includes generic headings related to cycling such as 'improved city centre cycling environment' and 'orbital and radial cycle routes'.

33. We suspect that the cycling schemes set out in our wish-list would be compatible with the Council's CIL list but suggest Council Officers double check this, next time the CIL list is reviewed. This would provide assurance that all of the priority schemes we are proposing could potentially be funded through developer contributions.

### Using CIL to attract match funding

34. It was noted that CIL funding could be used as a local contribution when bidding for match funding, for example to the Local Sustainable Transport Fund. Using

CIL monies to lever in additional funding is likely to be the most effective way of using these developer contributions to improve cycling in Oxford.

#### Neighbourhood portion of CIL

35. We looked into the element of CIL that is top-sliced for geographical areas and found that in un-parished neighbourhood areas of the city, contributions are allocated to ward areas. With the exception of the Carfax ward, which had benefitted from the new Westgate Shopping Centre, few wards had substantial amounts CIL funding allocated to them as of May 2015.
36. Where appropriate, we would encourage ward members to spend this local funding on low cost cycling measures, preferably from our wish-list. To this end, members should be alerted once spendable amounts of CIL funding have been allocated to their ward. We suggest a £5k threshold for informing members.

***Recommendation 4 – That the City Council ensures that developer funding can be used to contribute to cycling improvements where appropriate, including by:***

- a) Ensuring that the City Council’s Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) list is consistent with funding the higher cost cycling improvement projects set out in our wish-list, next time the CIL list is reviewed;***
- b) Using CIL funding as a local contribution to attract match funding, for example from the Local Sustainable Transport Fund, for cycling improvement schemes in accordance with the Council’s CIL list (often these will be part of wider transport improvement schemes);***
- c) Alerting Ward Members when significant sums (we suggest >£5k) of the ‘neighbourhood portion’ of CIL have been allocated to their local area. We would encourage members to consider spending this funding on lower cost cycling improvement schemes from our wish-list where possible.***

#### **Planning Policy**

37. The City Council is able to improve the experience of cycling in Oxford through its planning policies. For example, the Council can set minimum standards for cycling provision and promote better integration with public transport when granting planning permissions. We spoke with a Planning Policy Team Leader who advised us that the City Council has no single planning policy document for cycling. Such policies are instead spread across different policy documents as a result of various national legislative changes over recent years.

#### Major developments

38. We would like the City Council to ensure that cycle routes and provision are embedded in all major development plans. We welcome the proposed layout of the new Barton Park development and suggest that a pedestrian and cycle bridge over the ring road from the new Barton Park development could be a hugely positive step towards getting residents to choose cycling over their cars. A good example of this is York’s Millennium Bridge that links two residential areas across the River Ouse. This bridge enables residents to make short trips without having to negotiate the heavy traffic on the other city centre bridges.

#### A cycle hub at Oxford Station

39. The [Leeds Cycle Point](#) was the first of its kind when opened a couple of years ago. It provides secure cycle parking with hire and repair facilities, as close as possible to the station. Other stations are now following suit and we would welcome Oxford having a similar cycle hub at the redeveloped Oxford Station. This would mean that longer distance trips could be made more easily by bike.

#### Cycle parking standards

40. The City Council has separate cycle parking standards for residential and commercial properties. The residential standards have been reviewed relatively recently, in 2013, as part of the Sites and Housing Plan. The cycle parking standards for non-residential properties are older and were not applied recently in the case of the major redevelopment of the Westgate Shopping Centre. We suggest that this policy is reviewed, updated and applied consistently.

#### Compliance with planning conditions

41. We considered including a recommendation about the need to ensure that planning policies and conditions relating to cycling are followed and implemented. However, at our request, planning officers checked compliance with a sample of recent planning conditions relating to cycling measures or facilities. This exercise demonstrated that officers are aware of the Council's cycling policies when considering planning applications. Planning officers then conducted a further check of planning applications that had been granted over recent years to see whether the details required by planning conditions had been submitted and approved by the City Council. It was not possible for officers to conduct site visits to check whether these conditions had been implemented due to resourcing pressures in the planning team at the time.

***Recommendation 5 - That the City Council ensures that its planning policies are consistent with its vision for Oxford to become one of the great cycling cities of Europe, including by:***

- a) Ensuring that cycling routes and provision are considered and included in all major new developments, prioritising cycling and pedestrian access;***
- b) Reviewing and updating planning policies relating to cycle parking standards for non-residential cycle parking, as part of the next full or partial review of the Local Plan.***

#### **Overall strategy for cycling**

42. For Oxford to become a leading 'cycling city' comparable to those on the continent, it would need to have an overall strategy and plan for cycling that is broadly supported by all parties.
43. The County Council is developing a new Oxford Transport Strategy (OTS) as part of Connecting Oxfordshire: Local Transport Plan 2015-2031 (LTP4). We support the aim of achieving a further modal shift to cycling and walking by making journeys easier, safer and more cost and time efficient in comparison to other modes. However, the OTS is very broad-brush, containing little detail.
44. We reviewed Oxford City Council's response to the consultation on this strategy. We fully endorse this document and have some further suggestions relating to, or building on, the strategic direction for cycling in Oxford that has been set out to date.

## Enhancing the cycle network

*“The really great thing to bear in mind is that once a cycle path is in place, the pay-back in terms of health goes on increasing for decades”<sup>2</sup>*

45. Enhancements to the route network proposed in the OTS are aimed at providing safe and direct access to educational and commercial destinations, and extending coverage across residential areas. The OTS proposes a cycling network based on a hierarchy of Cycle Super Routes, Cycle Premium Routes and Connector Routes.
46. Cycle Super Routes will provide continuous and uniform provision for cyclists travelling in both directions. Complete or semi-segregation will be provided wherever possible (otherwise mandatory cycle lane markings will be used). We note that the Director of Public Health for Oxfordshire’s annual report for 2014/2015 advocates separating cyclists from other road users and building this into selected new transport schemes whenever possible. The following routes have been classified as Cycle Super Routes:
- A420 Botley Road, Oxpens Road, St. Aldates & High Street;
  - A4144 Woodstock Road & Abingdon Road (Sustrans route 5);
  - A4158 Iffley Road;
  - B4150 Marston Road;
  - B4495 Headley Way, Cherwell Drive & Weirs Lane;
  - B4495 Windmill Road, Hollow Way & Church Cowley Road;
  - Longwall Street, St. Cross Road, South Parks Road & Parks Road.
47. Premium routes will also feature uniform cycle lane provision in both directions free from obstruction but these are likely to be shared with bus lanes. Dedicated cycle lanes should continue through junctions. These routes include:
- A420 Headington Road/London Road to Thornhill Park & Ride;
  - A4165 Banbury Road to Kidlington;
  - B480 Cowley Road/Watlington Road from Howard Street to Blackbird Leys;
  - Morrell Avenue, Warneford Lane & Old Road.
48. Enhancing these direct routes will provide the best value for money and serve the most cyclists. We would like the Cycle Super Routes and Cycle Premium Routes to be implemented as soon as possible. Longer term, we would also like to see improvements to quieter routes being emphasised too. For example, leisure areas could be connected by quieter routes to enhance Oxford’s leisure offer.

## Specifications for cycle infrastructure

49. The route classifications set out in the OTS could be developed into a wider, coherent and consistently-applied set of design specifications for the construction of cycling infrastructure. The production of such specifications would need to be led by the County Council but we would strongly argue that these should be co-produced with the City Council, the cycling lobby and other stakeholders.

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<sup>2</sup> [Director of Public Health for Oxfordshire Annual Report VIII, June 2015, p. 21](#)

50. The development of detailed specifications for cycling infrastructure design should draw on lessons from the London Cycling Campaign and Transport for London's [London Cycling Design Standards](#). We suggest that specifications should be produced for the following types of infrastructure (this list is not exhaustive):

- Segregated and semi-segregated cycle lanes, including whether to use parked cars as a barrier between moving traffic and cycles without loss of road width;
- Cycle lanes on pavements and on highways, including standards for when cycle lanes on pavements cross side roads;
- Junctions and right turns;
- Routes designated as being suitable for children aged 12+ to get to school;
- Locations where shared use is suitable and where it is not (cycles and pedestrian; cycles and bus lanes and what happens at bus stops);
- Maintenance schedules including frequency of repainting road markings and the clearing of snow and ice.

#### Signage

51. Signage on cycle routes in the city is inconsistent, with signs on some routes display the destination, while others show the route number. Similarly, some signage shows the time a route takes to cycle while others provide the distance. Again, we would like a signage standard to be developed and applied consistently across the city. As the Highways Authority, the County Council would need to lead this work, in partnership with the City Council and other stakeholders. We would suggest that signage should show the distance to the destination, be that the city centre or a major destination away from the city centre such as district centres, park and rides, Blackbird Leys Pool.

#### Maintenance standards

52. In some cases, highways maintenance works are not completed to a high enough standard to be safe for cycling. We believe that all maintenance works should be suitable for cyclists before they are signed off, and urge the City Council to seek the agreement of the County Council on this point.

#### Investing in cycling

*“Dutch cities reap massive economic benefits because of a consistently high level of investment for several decades (now £24 per person per year)...England outside the capital still spends less than £2 per head; far too low to seriously increase cycling levels”<sup>3</sup>*

53. An All Party Parliamentary Group report entitled ‘Get Britain Cycling’ recommended a cycling budget of at least £10 per person per year, increasing to £20. The County Council’s Cycle Strategy states that the County will work with Government and other local authorities to achieve a minimum spend of £10 per person per year by 2020-21. We fully support and would like to reinforce this aim, whilst recognising that the County Council cannot achieve this alone.

***Recommendation 6 - That the Council Leader or Board Member for Planning and Transport writes to the County Council and requests that they do the following in consultation with the City Council:***

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<sup>3</sup> [Get Britain Cycling, All Party Parliamentary Cycling Group, April 2013](#)

- a) **Implement the Cycle Super Routes and Cycle Premium Routes as soon as possible;**
- b) **Bring together cycling organisations, county highways planners and highway engineers to agree a set of specifications for cycle infrastructure design in Oxford, drawing on findings from the London Cycling Campaign. This should include priority phasing of traffic lights for cyclists;**
- c) **Consider how cycle routes can be signed more consistently and what the standard should be. We suggest that destinations and distances, rather than route numbers, should be shown on cycle signage;**
- d) **Agree that highway maintenance works should not be signed off until they are safe and suitable for cycling;**
- e) **Work with Government and other local authorities to implement the All Party Parliamentary Group recommendation to achieve a £10 per head of population investment in cycling.**

### **Cycling Champion**

54. We think there is more the City Council could do to maximise its influence on cycling matters in the city. We suggest that a member champion would provide a focal point for people to approach about cycling issues, for example with concerns over the effects of policies and planning applications on cycling. This Councillor could also champion cycling initiatives with schools and businesses and convene a forum of representatives of cycling groups and other stakeholders.

#### The case for a Cycling Forum

55. There has for many years been a lack of coherence in the responses of the cycling lobby to consultations on highways schemes and cycle infrastructure, for example in the case of the roundabout at The Plain. A recent academic study has suggested that there is sufficient disagreement about infrastructure specifications as to cause the cycling lobby's contributions to public consultations to effectively undermine each other, leading to decisions being made that favour the stronger and more organised lobbies, notably the bus companies. A Cycling Champion would be well placed to convene a forum of the different cycling groups and other stakeholders such as schools to co-ordinate efforts and agree a common position when lobbying for cycling improvement schemes. The wish-list of improvement schemes could also be reviewed annually with the forum.

56. A forum would also provide a means for stakeholders such as schools to promote cycling initiatives and share best practice. We note that Cherwell School is recognised nationally because 60% of pupils cycle to school (compared to 2% nationally) and only 10% travel by car. The school runs cycle maintenance workshops, has an active cycling club and even campaigns to improve road conditions for cyclists. We would like to see other schools and employers following this lead with similar initiatives.

***Recommendation 7 - That the City Council nominates a Member Cycling Champion (a Councillor) to lead on work to improve cycling in Oxford at a political level and maximise the City Council's influence.***

#### **The case for a Cycling Officer**

57. There are opportunities for the City Council to make an increased contribution to developing an environment that encourages cycling at all levels in Oxford. This



would require a real but relatively modest increase in the amount of officer time focused on cycling (currently 0.2 FTE which is due to end in April 2016). We would ideally like to see 1 FTE dedicated to cycling, ideally an officer with highways planning credentials. We appreciate that the Council is operating within a difficult financial climate so it should explore the option of part-funding such a role with the County Council, the universities (who already have "Sustainable Transport Officers") and other large employers.

Maximising the City Council's influence on the Local Transport Plan (LTP4)

58. The initial period following the adoption of a long-term Highways Authority strategy and the development of a detailed strategic plan for the cycling network in our city will be critical. The city's urban environment, intense traffic pressures (particularly the concentration of bus traffic), air quality concerns and potential volume of cycle usage creates a need for closer cooperation between County and City.
59. The County Highways Authority sometimes operates with little or no reference to the City Council or to cycling groups. The County does not currently employ planners with specific cycle infrastructure planning experience and does not tend to consult on proposed schemes or seek views on their overall design. This may change, given the emphasis in the countywide Local Transport Plan on developing a modal shift to cycling and walking. Until then, the City Council needs to have a coherent and consistent voice in the process on behalf of the city of Oxford. This will be difficult to achieve within existing resources, with one officer supporting the delivery of Cycle City capital projects one day a week until April 2016. The County, under severe financial pressure, might value more consistent practical support from the City.
60. We believe that as an urgent necessity, the City Council should deploy additional staffing resources to engage with the County's highway planners to achieve the best possible outcomes for cycling in the city as LTP4 is rolled out and money becomes available. This will enable the City Council to maximise its influence. It could also help to ensure that all the good work done by many experienced and concerned people with a deep knowledge of the city is coordinated and channelled such that it is able to shape both the plan and the specifications for the cycling component of that strategy.

Improving cycling provision during maintenance works

61. Opportunities to improve cycling provision are not always taken when maintenance works are carried out. This may be because engineers "think maintenance" and reproduce what was there before, rather than looking for opportunities to improve cycling provision at the same time. This underlines the need for a clear line of communication between the two local authorities. We feel the City Council could work smarter and more proactively with the County Council in this area.
62. The County Council's Highways Asset Maintenance programme lists planned works within the next 3 years at Pembroke Street (St Aldate's to St Ebbe's), Derwent Avenue (off Headley Way), Marston Road West side, and Giles Road (behind Oxford Academy). These locations are all on our wish list and we believe these four items present an opportunity for the two authorities to work together on improving cycling provision.



## Promoting cycling take up and training

*“Cyclists in England are around four times more likely to be killed than they would be if they cycled in the Netherlands”<sup>4</sup>*

63. Perceptions that cycling is unsafe are a major barrier to increased take up and too often this is the reality. We hope that the new strategy and a sensible and widely agreed set of specifications for cycling infrastructure will go a long way to improving cycle safety in the city. In addition to this, part of the role of a dedicated cycling officer could advocate cycling and cycle training.
64. We were advised by an expert in low carbon transport planning policy that cycling can move from being relatively niche activity to being a mainstream mode of transport through the following steps:
1. Demonstration effect – showing how things will be
  2. Legitimation – people perceiving it to be mainstream
  3. Creating coalitions to provide a unified approach
65. A cycling officer would be able to make a difference in each of these respects, working in partnership with the County Council, city schools and other stakeholders
66. Schemes for encouraging cycling take up should be evidence-led. A lot of existing research and evidence already exists so there is little need to ‘reinvent the wheel’ locally. For example, [Eltis](#) is an extensive EU-funded resource that includes a wealth of case study examples such as the [Nordic Cycle Cities](#) project. Officer time would be needed to examine these in detail. A dedicated officer could also draw on resources such as the Sustrans resource for teachers, parents and governors called “[Increasing Active Travel to School](#)”. In addition, a Cycling Officer could contact all City schools at the beginning of each academic year to promote these kinds of initiatives and motivate the school community to walk and cycle.
67. We would also like to see more active promotion of [Bikeability](#) training (“cycling proficiency’ for the 21st Century!”) to both children and adults. We would ideally like Bikeability training to be offered all Year 6 pupils in the city. Schools that offer good quality (on-road) cycle training, storage and promote cycling can achieve spectacular results. Research has suggested that adults are more likely to take up cycling again if they had cycle training as a child, so Bikeability training could provide long term benefits.
68. We also suggest that the City Council considers whether it could do more to promote positive images of cycling in its own literature. For example, once signage has been installed on the East Oxford route, this route should be promoted to leisure users in Council literature and on the Leys Pool and Leisure Centre website. We need to promote changes in behaviour not just of cyclists but of motorists and pedestrians too. Research has found that although, on average, a cyclist will sustain a minor injury once every 20 years, they will have an

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<sup>4</sup> [LTP Volume 4: Cycle Strategy and Bus and Rapid Transit Strategy, Oxfordshire County Council, p. 5](#)

unpleasant or frightening interaction with a motorist once a month<sup>5</sup>. A cycling officer could lead on putting out positive messages in our publications, on bus stops, encouraging other road users to be considerate of cyclists.

***Recommendation 8 - That the City Council brings forward proposals for additional staffing resources to enable the City Council to engage proactively with cycling groups, work smarter with the County Council, and support the member champion (see recommendation 7). We would suggest 1 FTE dedicated to cycling, with a creative solution to funding this post which may involve other organisations. This role should include:***

- a) Supporting the Member Cycling Champion (see recommendation 6) in convening a forum of the different cycling groups and representatives of other stakeholders such as schools to co-ordinate efforts and agree a common position when lobbying for cycling improvement schemes;***
- b) Engaging with the County Council to maximise the City Council's influence as LTP4 is put into practice;***
- c) Influencing the development of a set of specifications for cycle infrastructure design in Oxford (see recommendation 5e);***
- d) Monitoring the County Council's Highway Asset Management Strategy (road repairs) to identify opportunities for cycling provision to be improved during planned maintenance works (we have identified 4 such projects);***
- e) Examining existing evidence on what works for improving cycling take up;***
- f) Promoting active travel to school through Bikeability training and advocacy, particularly at the beginning of every academic year. Excellence in this area should be recognised perhaps through the Lord Mayor/Member Champion going in to schools to give prizes, or inviting winners to attend civic events.***
- g) Identifying ways to change motorists' behaviour.***

***Recommendation 9 - That the City Council promotes positive images of cycling in Council literature, particularly the soon to be signed route to Blackbird Leys pool.***

## **Conclusion**

69. Our review primarily focused on helping the City Council to achieve maximum benefit from its unallocated cycling capital investments and we have provided a prioritised wish-list of improvement schemes that we developed in consultation with cycling groups. Beyond this, we have set out our suggestions as to how the City Council could work more effectively with partners and achieve a step-change in making its vision for Oxford to become one of the great cycling cities of Europe a reality. Our recommendations are for the City Executive Board to consider and, if agreed, we look forward to monitoring implementation over the year ahead.

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<sup>5</sup> [Investigating the rates and impacts of near misses and related incidents among UK cyclists \(2015\) Aldred and Crossweller. Journal of Transport and Health 2:379-93](#)

## **Acknowledgments**

70. The Cycling Scrutiny Group would like to thank those who have provided evidence that has informed the findings of this review:

- a) Mai Jarvis – Oxford City Council
- b) Adrian Roche – Oxford City Council
- c) Richard Wyatt – Oxford City Council
- d) Shaun Hatton – Oxford City Council and Oxfordshire County Council
- e) Craig Rossington – Oxfordshire County Council
- f) Simon Hunt – Cyclox
- g) Cecilia Fry – Sustrans
- h) Yannick Cornet – Technical University of Denmark

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**List of background papers: None**

**Version number: 1.0**

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