

**Written submission opposing the ‘boulevard’ idea set out in Item 22 on the agenda for Full Council 19/12/2011.**

We would like to register our strong objection to the proposal to “transform the A40” near Headington, Barton, and Northway, into something the planning policy team calls a “a street running through the city”, on the grounds that this is completely unrealistic and is a potential disaster in the making.

Section 5 in the Draft Submission for the BAAP contains a series of ideas based on planning theory rather than on the reality of the situation north of Old Headington.

The A40 is a main road carrying heavy traffic round Oxford as quickly as possible, and as such it is a masterpiece of town planning which current proposals would completely destroy.

Far from being what the document describes as “a noisy and visually dominating physical barrier that separates Barton and its surroundings from the rest of the city” it is in fact almost completely invisible from Headington, Northway, Barton, and the land to the west of Barton.

Thanks to sensitive engineering which took advantage of the natural dip in the land, and the retaining of belts of green along the perimeters, backed up by planting of shrubs and trees, this road has as little impact as could reasonably be asked of a four-lane bypass.

There are currently three green buffers which defend Northway, Barton and Old Headington from the worst of the traffic and pollution: mature trees and shrubs each side, and a thick green central reservation in the middle, which keep all these areas reasonably free from noise and pollution. The development west of Barton will benefit from this as well. Doing away with all this to create a ‘boulevard’ so that residents on either side of four lanes of traffic feel that they all form part of the same community is wishful thinking.

Furthermore, the green fringes lining the northern bypass provide a cushion between the Old Headington conservation area and the A40; and we need to bear in mind that these and all the fields and green spaces within the ring-road round Oxford are vital not just as a natural local amenity but as providing the wider landscape setting of Oxford; they must be preserved at all costs, and not sacrificed to an unproven theory of “integration”.

The Draft Submission suggests that “New residential frontages will be built on the northern side of the ring-road” and says “To ensure that there is no sense of separation between the new neighbourhood and the rest of Oxford, new homes will be built fronting on to the ring-road”.

We know for a fact that residents either side of Sunderland Avenue facing the noise, pollution, and traffic which is part of their daily existence don’t feel this way, and until there is real evidence to underpin the proposals in this document for the future of the A40 we urge Councillors to demand a complete re-think of this idea.

Clive and Veronica Hurst

9 Stoke Place, Headington, OX3 9BX

