

City Executive Board - 16 October

Addresses and Questions by Members of the Public

Question by Alex Curtis in relation to Item 11, Lucy Faithfull House

"As you will be aware, upwards of 50 rough sleepers can be found in Oxford city centre on any given night. Given that winter is rapidly approaching, what provision will you be making for these individuals in the form of hostel accommodation? There are 61 perfectly appropriate beds in Lucy Faithfull House. Why can't these be used this winter?"

Response by Councillor Rowley, Board Member for Housing

Oxfordshire County Council decommissioned the Lucy Faithful House hostel in 2015 and its 61 beds have re-provided through a dispersed housing service around the city run by Mayday Trust (31) and Connections (31). The building itself is in poor condition and no longer suitable for use as a hostel. The City Council will be developing the site for much needed affordable housing.

There is no funding to operate LFH as a homeless shelter. It cost Oxfordshire County Council £500,000 a year to operate the service previously, and unfortunately this amount of funding is not available.

We believe that our planned winter provision together with the churches' 'winter shelter' initiative should be sufficient to meet demand.

Our strong preference in planning and managing emergency winter capacity is to work with existing providers in hostels where services are currently being provided or where we can work with established organisations, eg. Simon House, O'Hanlon House, St Mungo's or The Porch to plan and deliver a safe service from a suitable temporary location.

Attempting to open another facility could compromise the safety and effectiveness of core Adult Homeless Pathway and Outreach services, including planned emergency winter provision, by stretching staff capacity too far, across too many different locations and with reduced staff/client ratios. This view is shared by our voluntary sector partners.

Address by Sarah Lasenby in relation to Item 13, Oxford Station SPD

“Good evening; I am speaking because you are being asked to consider the new station development.

I am sure you do not want to be part of the discriminating behaviour of the County Council in relation to those who are frail elderly or disabled and find walking across central Oxford between bus stops very difficult.

By the way for every wheelchair user there are ten people with walking difficulties. They have damaged hearts, poor lungs, terrible pain including bad feet I am sure you can think of more ways that cause people to find walking difficult.

At present these long distances, some over 600m between bus stops in central Oxford, are acting as a bus interchange and if Queens Street does not stay open to buses there are going to be even more bus stops in St Aldates and Norfolk Street.

Of course there should have been a proper bus station built on part of Gloucester Green in the 80s but now we have the chance of partially correcting the problems of distances between bus stops and making it possible for those with walking difficulties to change buses with greater ease than is possible at present.

I know that the plan is to build a new bus interchange on Beckett Street after the station is built.

It will take some years to do the work necessary for the new rail station so all I am asking is that the order in which parts of the new plan are developed is changed so that the bus interchange with 18 bays will be built first. This will help quite a few people by reducing the distances they have to walk to change buses.

As you age, you too might be helped by a new bus interchange. I am hoping it will be built before I am housebound by the present distances between bus stops when I shall have to use taxis when I can afford them. But if my bus can link me up with the bus I need to go onwards at the Beckett Street bus interchange then I shall be able to travel on the buses much longer and be happier.

Please ensure that the Beckett Street interchange will be built as soon as possible, before the new station is built and thus reducing the deplorable discrimination by the County. Frail and disabled people need your help. “

Response by Councillor Price, Board Member for Economic Development

The purpose of the Oxford Station Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is to provide design advice and guidance for the development of a new Station, transport interchange and other supporting commercial uses. The SPD builds on the advice set out in the West End Area Action Plan and the Core Strategy. It sets out key design principles within which development proposals will be assessed. The SPD therefore provides advice on broad concepts and principles at this stage. The new

transport interchange including the bus station is an important component of the creation of a 'transport hub' which will help bring access for passengers, including people with disabilities, to both bus and train facilities in closer proximity, to limit the distance passengers need to travel between transport options.

The creation of a high quality public realm as part of the regeneration of the Station Area site is an important design principle. Some pedestrian mapping was carried out as part of the earlier master planning work, however there is a recognition that further detailed work will need to be carried out, which is acknowledged in the SPD. The City Council will therefore continue to work in partnership with Network Rail, the train operating companies and the bus companies on developing the appropriate design solution for ensuring that safe and convenient access arrangements are provided for all members of the public including the elderly and people with disabilities. The detailed design solutions and access arrangements between the bus station, proposed parking arrangements and the rail Station will therefore be explored further in a comprehensive Design and Access Statement.

The phasing of the development is dependent on funding coming forward for particular elements of the scheme. The City Council has been successful in securing some funding from the Local Growth Fund towards the rebuilding of the Botley Road bridge (Phase 1) which is a key priority for the redevelopment of the Station area; together with the construction of the multi-storey car park which then allows for the development of the Becket Street site. it is therefore anticipated that the proposed new bus station would be programmed as part of an early phase ahead of the new rail Station building. However there will need to be flexibility and it is possible that they could be done at the same time.

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