

To: Cabinet
Date: 9 July 2025
Report of: Director of Economy, Regeneration and Sustainability
Title of Report: Making Oxford a Truly Walkable City

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To respond to Council motion of 25 November 2024, which requested (subject to a Cabinet decision) a plan for making Oxford a truly walkable city.
Key decision:	No
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Anna Railton, Deputy Leader, and Cabinet Member for a Zero Carbon Oxford
Corporate Priority:	Zero Carbon Oxford, Thriving Communities
Policy Framework:	Zero Carbon Plan, Air Quality Plan, Net Zero Oxford Action Plan, Green Spaces Strategy
Recommendation(s): That Cabinet resolves to:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Note the Council motion of 25 November 2024 and note those elements which do not rely on additional resources beyond those in the Council's budget which are currently being implemented. Not to support the production of a new plan for walking or a walking map for Oxford as these are County Council responsibilities and would duplicate what is currently available through online and retail outlets. 	

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Walkable Oxford Existing resources

Introduction and background

1. On 25 November 2024, Council passed a [“Making Oxford Truly Walkable” motion](#)
 - A. *Council resolves to request the Cabinet Member for Healthy Oxford (Noting that there could be financial and resourcing implications, meaning that implementation would be subject to a cabinet report setting out those implications):*
 - i. *discuss with officers the designing of a plan for improving walking in Oxford, based on local knowledge and existing research.*
 - ii. *Works with the Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon and the Cabinet Member for Culture and officers to create a walkable map of Oxford for tourists and locals alike.*
 - iii. *Writes to the new Transport Minister on behalf of Oxford City Council, urging rapid release of the 2020 pavement parking consultation*
 - iv. *Proposes the idea of a “Kerbside Strategy for Oxford” to the County Council.*
 - B. *To request the Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management reviews opportunities to invest in public infrastructure to improve the city’s walkability to enable bids in the budget process.*
 - C. *To request the Cabinet Member for Planning reviews mandating Dutch entry kerbs for residential drop kerb conversions planning conditions and considers this through the Equality Act 2010.*
2. All of the motion conforms with existing Council policy (see the next two paragraphs). Council officers have investigated all parts of the motion. A Cabinet decision is required to resolve the right approach for the Council, in light of the resource implications of parts Ai. and ii. The Council’s 2025-26 budget does not include any allocated resource to pursue i. and ii. The other parts of motion are addressed briefly in the paper, as they are to note, because no decision is required.
3. Oxford Local Plan 2036 [Oxford Local Plan 2016-2036 | Oxford City Council](#) “prioritises walking, cycling and public transport to help tackle congestion and pollution on our streets”. At paragraph 1.56, it lists Objectives:
 - To ensure growth in the proportion of people walking and cycling to access jobs and facilities.
 - To provide enhanced facilities for walking and cycling, ensuring they are the primary modes for travel around the city.
 - To ensure walking and cycling routes are complemented with well managed and attractive public transport routes, and that car use is minimised.
4. The City Centre Action Plan 2022 [city-centre-action-plan-volume-2-action-plan-and-implementation](#) (includes two work streams which support improving the pedestrian experience of Oxford. On “Connectivity & Access”, objective 1.4 is to “deliver better walking and cycling infrastructure, capitalising on the city centre’s human scale and accessibility, and responding to the existential threat of (climate emergency.” On “Public Realm & Animation”, objective 2.2 is “re-prioritise road space to create

opportunities for different uses, and to create new civic spaces where people can meet, relax, celebrate and be creative.”

A plan for improving walking in Oxford

5. There are a number of existing plans that promote, encourage and support improving the walking environment in Oxford. The Oxfordshire County Council's Local Cycling and Walking Improvement Plan (LCWIP) [Active travel | Oxfordshire County Council](#) which was approved in March 2020. The LCWIP will analyse the current network and identify opportunities for improvements, contain a network plan for walking and cycling which identifies preferred routes and core routes for further development, and prioritise programme of infrastructure improvements for future investment. The County Council has also completed a draft framework Central Oxfordshire Movement and Place Framework (COMPF), that sets out a high-level vision for improving public spaces and reimaging Oxford's public realm with an ambitious vision for how the street space will be reclaimed for people with improvements to pavements, seating, play space and greenery.
6. The City Council is a stakeholder in the County Council's work in this area and will continue to discuss these plans at an officer and member level, internally and with the County Council.

A walkable map of Oxford for tourists and locals alike

Existing walking maps/ information

7. Oxford has several existing walking guides and maps available online and through retail outlets covering the city centre which are provided by various organisations free of charge. (See Appendix 1) Some of the maps such as the Oxfordshire Community Rail Partnership and City Sightseeing Oxford have linked active travel information and recommended routes to explore the city centre and beyond.
8. The City Council's website has several resources promoting walking and a description of recommended walks around the city centre. The Council's website also has links to the Oxford Pedestrian Association's online map which was launched in 2023, a dedicated online walking map with information of types of surfaces, location of seats and toilets.
9. Oxfordshire County Council has a dedicated active travel web page with [Active travel | Oxfordshire County Council](#) information on LCWIPs (local cycling walking infrastructure plans) for Oxford and other towns in Oxfordshire. It also has walking design standards for infrastructure and related policies e.g LTCP (Local transport connectivity plan) and a COMPF (Central Oxford Movement Place Framework) draft.
10. The maps are of varying degrees of quality, accuracy, and usability and some would require pre- purchase or access to the internet.
11. City and County officers have discussed the proposal of creating a city centre walking map and the consensus view was that there isn't an obvious gap to be filled by the City Council, given the range that is already available.

Options

Option 1 - Design and produce a walking map in-house. This would require internal resource to co-ordinate a number of disciplines e.g. graphic design / web design /

cartography etc. Any walking map would also require editing and updating regularly to maintain its accuracy and would require additional ongoing funding / resource. Officers estimate a one-off cost of £30,000 to create the map, as well as approximately £5,000 per year ongoing.

Option 2 - Commission an external design consultant to design and produce walking map. This would still require an internal resource to manage the commission process and project manage the consultant. Any walking map produced would also require editing and updating to maintain its accuracy and would require in-house expertise or additional external commission. Officers estimate a one-off cost of £35-40,000 (including consultant fees and internal project management costs) and then £5-£10,000 per year ongoing.

Option 3 – Do nothing. This option notes that walking maps are currently available through online and retail outlets. Cost - £0

Recommendation

Option 3 is recommended on the basis that any walking map for Oxford would be a County Council responsibility and would duplicate what is currently available through online and retail outlets.

Other elements of the motion, to note

Pavement parking consultation letter to Secretary of State

12. The City Council's Inclusive Transport & Movement Focus Group contributed towards the County Council's response to the Government's national pavement parking consultation in November 2020. The group endorsed the 'option 3' which would allow pavement parking only in exceptional circumstances. Pavement parking particularly causes issues for more vulnerable footway users (including people with visual or mobility impairments, learning difficulties, and people with buggies or mobility scooters), for whom many journeys in Oxford are currently difficult or impossible due to blocked pavements.

13. In March 2025 the Cabinet Member for Planning wrote to the Secretary of State for Transport, asking for the 2020 consultation results to be released.

Proposing a Kerbside Strategy to the County Council

14. A kerbside strategy considers how to better balance the different kerbside uses. The County Council has already set aside a budget in the 25-26 financial year to consider developing a Kerbside Strategy for Oxford.

Investing in public infrastructure to improve the city's walkability

15. The City Council invests in making Oxford a more pedestrian-friendly city and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management continues to welcome further proposals as part of the budget-setting process. Investments in recent years include:

- £33,000 towards Oxford Greenways Project, a collaboration with the University of Oxford and the County Council to progress designs for active travel routes into Oxford from nearby settlements.
- £500,000 towards the Infrastructure Place Study commission within the wider Cowley Branch Line project – this piece of work ensured that designs were progressed for active travel connections to the two proposed stations in south-east Oxford.
- £120,000 on “Broad Meadow” the temporary pedestrian-friendly scheme on Broad Street in 2021.
- £248,000 on the improvement of Market Street, which has delivered more seating and a less vehicle-dominated environment as part of a trial scheme.
- £397,000 on the permanent improvement of the road surface on part of St Michael’s Street, which is largely funded by UK Shared Prosperity Fund, so that the street remains fully accessible for all, while enabling outdoor seating for hospitality businesses.
- Delivery of walking and cycling improvements at Marsh Park, St George’s Field and Boundary Brook, funded through the Growth Deal.
- Work with the Oxfordshire Pedestrian Association to install benches in the city centre.
- Council agreed in the 2025/26 budget to provide funds for pavement works and street furniture for which proposals are currently being worked up

16. In addition to these investments, we also undertake a number of activities to promote walking in Oxford. Our City Health Walks are co-ordinated by the Physical Activity and Wellbeing Team and delivered by a group of volunteer Walk Leaders. We promote access to walking maps and walking opportunities through social media and align resources such as these with initiatives such as National Walking Week. We are a partner in the Countywide Cycling, Walking Activation Plan working group which has a focus on supporting more people to walk and wheel around the city.

Mandating “Dutch” Style entry kerbs

17. Currently to convert a footway to a vehicular access there is a requirement for the City Council to assess whether planning permission is required (only on classified roads). The County Council are responsible for granting permission to construct the vehicular access and for providing the specification. The current specification for the type of kerb is a tapered dropped kerb which when installed reduces the height of the footway and provides vehicular access on a slopping footway that should be no greater than 1:12. The proposal for replacing the current specified tapered kerb with a ‘dutch’ style entry kerb provides safe vehicular access over the footway whilst maintaining a relatively flat footway making it easier access for wheelchair users.
18. As the city council only grants planning permission (if required) and not the specification for constructing the vehicular access it is not therefore possible to make ‘dutch’ style entry kerbs a planning condition.

19. City Council officers will liaise with Oxfordshire County Council on whether 'dutch' style entry kerbs could be an optional alternative specification for the construction of vehicular access across a footway both for retrofits and in new developments.

Financial implications

20. There are no financial implications if the recommendations are approved. However, choosing option 1 or 2 would have a financial implication which there is no allocation for within the council budget for 2025/26 financial year.

<u>Option</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Initial Cost</u>	<u>On-Going Annual Cost</u>
Option 1	Design and produce a walking map in-house	£30,000	£5,000
Option 2	Commission an external design consultant to design and produce walking map	£35,000 - £40,000	£5,000 - £10,000
Option 3 (Recommended)	Do nothing	£nil	£nil

Legal issues

21. There are no legal implications if the recommendations are approved.

Level of risk

22. There is minimal risk to this recommendation, however there is a risk that not taking the initiative and relying on others (County Council) to improve conditions for walking could have a negative impact on the council's reputation. There is clear evidence however that the council is committed to investing and improving the quality of the walking environment in the city as set out above.

Equalities impact

23. The Council has a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to consider the how the decisions and functions affect people with different protected characteristics. The recommendations set out in this paper do not support the production of a new plan for walking or a walking map for Oxford as they are properly County Council responsibilities or would only duplicate what is currently available through online and retail outlets. The council does however, support improvements and has invested in the pedestrian environment making the city more accessible for all especially those who have restricted mobility and encourages participation in public life.

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Background Papers: None
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