



To: Council

Date: 6 October 2025

Report of: Director of Law, Governance and Strategy

Title of Report: Public addresses that do not relate to matters for decision – as submitted by the speakers

Introduction

1. Addresses made by members of the public to the Council put to the Cabinet members or Leader, registered by the deadline in the Constitution, are below.
2. The text reproduces that sent in the speakers and represents the views of the speakers. This is not to be taken as statements by or on behalf of the Council
3. This report will be republished after the Council meeting as part of the minutes pack. This will list the full text of speeches delivered as submitted, summaries of speeches delivered which differ significantly from those submitted, and any further responses.

Addresses to be taken in Part 2 of the agenda

1. Address from Dan Glazebrook

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Almost 2000 people, the vast majority of them local residents, have now signed the petition against Oxpens River Bridge and its connecting paths. There are many reasons people are up in arms - the ecological destruction involved, the lack of democratic consultation, the fact that there are already two excellent pedestrian and cycle bridges within quarter of a mile of the site, the misuse of £10million of public money intended to facilitate affordable housing - but what I want to focus on today is how the bridge singularly fails to meet its own intended purpose - to provide a floodproof connection from Osney Mead to Oxpens.

The local plan specifies the need for both a new bridge linking Osney Mead to the other side of the river, and a floodproof route out of Osney Mead. These two things have subsequently been combined into plans for a single floodproof connection reaching all the way from Osney Mead across the river, as is made clear in several official documents.

The problem is, to reach the bridge from Osney Mead, users would have to go across a stream and under a railway bridge along a section of the towpath that frequently floods.

To solve this problem, the City Council commissioned Stantec to develop a project called Osney Pathworks, to create a new floodproof path linking Osney Mead to the planned new bridge. The preferred plan was to erect floodwalls under the railway bridge. But the Environment Agency vetoed this proposal in 2021, as it would cause further flooding elsewhere. Stantec's report admitted there is no solution available which adequately addresses the flooding issue whilst also meeting current safety standards for cycling and walking.

This remains the case today. There is still no solution to the issue of flooding on the path between Osney Mead and the proposed new bridge.

This makes the bridge completely redundant, as it utterly fails to provide the new floodproof connection from Osney Mead across the river without which housing cannot be built on the site and which was the whole point of the project in the first place. Indeed, the diversion of £1.5million Homes England funding for precisely such a floodproof route out of Osney Mead to instead build connecting paths for the bridge in Grandpont Nature Park means the Council now stands in breach of the terms of that grant and the criteria under which it was allocated, a matter we are pursuing with Homes England themselves.

The City Council is now right on the verge of committing up to £14million of public money, and causing irrevocable damage to a cherished piece of countryside on our doorstep, for a bridge that singularly fails to meet its basic purpose. We urge you - please do not be a party to this shocking waste of money and biodiversity. Surely no further funds should be committed so long as there remains no viable plan to floodproof the connection between Osney Mead and the new bridge.

I would also like to address the issue of the University's funding commitments to the scheme. A spokesman for the University told the Oxford Mail back in January that, the University, quote, "last year agreed to make a contribution of around 10 per cent of the cost of the new bridge after learning that cost increases had put its viability at risk."

10% at that time equated to more than £1 million of the project's projected costs. If the University had already committed more than a million pounds last year, why is this financial commitment not appearing in the figures before us today? Why is the public purse being asked to guarantee the full £3.7million in increased costs, and not, say, £2.7 million, given that a million from the University is already in the bag? Have the University now reneged on this commitment? And if the Council is willing to commit the entirety of the increased costs from the public purse, what incentive is there for the University to contribute any money at all?

Finally I would also like to address the issue of Balfour Beatty's position in the delivery of the scheme. If all goes according to plan, Balfour Beatty are set to be awarded the construction contract next month. Balfour Beatty are a notorious company. They are involved in the imposition of near-slavery conditions on their migrant workforce in Qatar; just four years ago they were fined £49 million for massive fraud against the US government after it was revealed they had been systematically falsifying data in order to get bonus payments - and in this country their failure to comply with statutory safety requirements led in 2020 to the death of one construction worker and serious injuries to another, according to a [ruling](#) by the Health and Safety Executive last year.

But as well as being criminally unethical, they are also just not very good builders. On trustpilot, they are rated 'bad' with just 1.7 stars out of 5 and student residents have had to be moved out of their accommodation in Bethnal Green recently due to significant defects which have been blamed on the contractor, and which have cost its owner over £34million to address.

Why is the Council so keen to work with these incompetent criminals that it is prepared to set aside its usual tendering process and guarantee the contract to Balfour Beatty

without any tendering at all? And is it's willingness to do so the reason why the company feels confident enough to hike its bill by over 35%, from £10 to £14 million in just a few months?

After all, the company do have form here - in 2016, one of their employees [revealed](#) how they had been extorting the taxpayer by systematically inflating their costs. The company responded by sacking the whistleblower, for which they were later forced to pay £137,000.

I will end there but if you would like to be in touch about this, or to see any of the documentation I have referred to today, please do not hesitate to be in touch with Friends of Grandpont Nature Park at gnptrees@gmail.com

More information is also available at our website - savegnp.org

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