Access to Headington

Personal response from Richard Mann, Transport Paradise, transport analyst and consultant with more than 20 years experience of local transport policy.

Summary: support with caveats, especially concerning the removal of street trees from Headley Way

General remarks:

I support the wholesale review of the principal roads in the Headington area, with improvements to journeys on foot, by bicycle and by bus. There has been significant growth in people walking and cycling to work, particularly to the hospitals, and this is likely to be the best prospect for further modal shift.

I support the removal of residential parking from the principal roads, unless it can be accommodated in parking bays. Residential parking benefits a small number of people while inconveniencing thousands, and severely inconveniencing hundreds of cyclists. Some overnight residential parking is acceptable, where overnight traffic flows are low enough that the inconvenience caused is small. However it is better to accommodate parking in side roads, unless that really is impractical. In some situations this may lead to additional requirements to cross the main road, and I would support the provision of additional Zebra crossings, both to facilitate crossing, and to moderate traffic speeds.

I support the provision of continuous cycle lanes on the principal roads. This provides a coherent network that is easy to understand, and will help make cycling an acceptable option for a larger proportion of the community. Wider cycle lanes, or segregated cycle tracks are obviously more comfortable, but the first objective should be to make continuous provision. To that end, I would like to see more continuity, in particular by using floating zig-zags at pedestrian crossings (as per the forthcoming TSRGD), resuming cycle lanes immediately after bus stop clearways, limiting bus stop clearways to 12m long, and painting dashed cycle lanes across signalled junctions and around left turns.

At 20mph, adequate cycle lanes can be provided in roads as narrow as 7.6m, and care should be taken to avoid merely facilitating faster traffic speeds. There are considerable noise-reduction benefits from limiting traffic to 20mph, as well as safety and other amenity benefits, and I strongly support reducing traffic speed. The omission of the centre line has been shown elsewhere in Oxford to reduce speeds, and I would like to see it omitted throughout this scheme. One of the main influences on traffic speed is the sense of enclosure, and so I am extremely reluctant to see the removal of road-side trees. A certain amount of cutting into the verge may be necessary to provide the width for cycle lanes, but this should not be at the expense of mature trees.

I strongly support the provision of raised crossings at side roads. These make walking along the main road much less fraught, and also serve to slow speeds on the main road, as it gets interrupted by turning traffic. I would encourage you to build them quite tight to the main road, with the pavement level achieved within 0.5m of the main road. This gives a strong sense of visual continuity to the pedestrian, and is very effective at reducing turning speed.

I support the conversion of the junctions to traffic light control with cycle lanes. Traffic lights allow the capacity to be fairly allocated between the different directions. It is difficult to make

roundabouts that are cycle-friendly, and the sites are quite confined. The four-arm junction at Marston is quite large, but is probably necessary.

While I am generally supportive of reducing delays to buses, I don't think you have made the case for the bus lane on Cherwell Drive, or for widening Osler Road. The delay saving on Cherwell Drive is unlikely to be large, and parking bays and trees may well be preferable. If there is a problem on Osler Road, it is caused by excessive use by cars accessing the hospital. Parking on that side of the hospital should be reduced, or accessed from the other side.

Specific Comments

Plan 1 Cherwell Drive / Headley Way

1. Widen footway into grass on corner of Cherwell Drive / Oxford Road to provide a legitimate link from Marston Ferry cycle track to Oxford Road service road.
2. Maintain/enhance link from Marston Road cycle track to Copse Lane. In particular by making the two-stage crossing by Copse Lane straight, which will require a 4m central reservation, based on the Maid Marian Way (Nottingham) precedent. This will probably require alterations to the existing cycle track on the corner of Marston Road, and an Except Cycles exemption to the No Entry on the service road. Ideally, this would be properly linked back to the east-side cycle track on Marston Road, by removing little-used parking on the east side of Marston Road (for 150m).

Plan 2 Headley Way / JR Access

1. Narrower cycle lanes are acceptable.
2. Additional pedestrian crossings would be a good idea.

Plan 3 Headley Way to London Road

1. Narrower cycle lanes are acceptable.
2. Continuous eastbound cycle lane across London Road junction should be retained (reduce size of yellow box markings).
3. Westbound cycle lane (on pavement) needs to link to cycle lane across Brookside junction. This will require alteration to traffic light pole (set a little further back, on the segregating line), and give way markings prior to the crossing of the Brookside junction.
4. This westbound cycle lane should continue on the road to the bus stop and the Gipsy Lane junction, with the centre line removed, and possibly the bus lane narrowed slightly (but this is probably out of scope). Hardly anyone uses the diversion via the service road.

Plan 4 London Road, Windmill Road

1. Support the lead-in lane on London Road to the Windmill Road junction. The removal of the cycle lane on London Road through the shopping area was unfortunate, particularly eastbound (uphill) approaching the junction. Would like to see a similar lead-in lane in the westbound direction (very little traffic turns right in practice).
2. Support the provision of a cycle lane on Windmill Road approaching the junction.
3. Southbound cycle lane can start from the end of the bus cage.

4. Would support southbound cycle lane starting from the junction, if that could be achieved by compromising on northbound cycle lane width.

Plan 5 Windmill Road, Old Road

1. Support the filling in of the bay opposite Margaret Road. Since there is a cycle route crossing at this point, would support relocation of crossing to between Margaret Road and Mattock Close, conversion to toucan, with additional signal heads facing the side roads (as on Ferry Hinksey Road). If that not considered acceptable, provision of dropped kerb opposite Margaret Road and shared-use footway (unsegregated) between that point and Mattock Close (using small roundels on bollards, not poles).
2. I suspect removal of parking south of Mattock Close will be difficult. It may be necessary to cut into the pavement to make enough room for proper bays. Minimum dimensions acceptable are a 2.3m deep bay and a 7.6m road, with cycle lanes and no centre line.

Plan 6 Old Road, Girdlestone Road, Churchill Drive, Roosevelt Drive

1. Cycle lanes should be continuous across Gipsy Lane junction, and along Warneford Lane to where they currently start.
2. Consider diagonal cycle crossing at Gipsy Lane junction (NW to SE corner) with links to Cheney Lane behind the current fence (also giving access to the school cycle shed), and to Demesne Furze (through Warneford Hall car park).
3. Consider new cycle route from ORC access road to Massey Close, crossing Roosevelt Drive, then around north and east side of car park (on grassy bank) to the access road on the south side of the ambulance station.

Plan 7 The Slade, Horspath Driftway

1. I do not support the central cycle lane on the mini-roundabout. Anyone confident enough to pull out would be much better advised to use the vehicle lane (and will probably be more than capable of doing so).
2. Suggest marking cycle lanes around the corners, to make them continuous. Eventual solution for this junction is a bus gate on Hollow Way, but that is out of scope.
3. Suggest removal of centre turning lane on Horspath Driftway, with cycle lane remaining on the road. Reduces speed, avoids transitions onto and off pavement.
4. Southbound cycle lane on Horspath Driftway needs to link to ring road cycle track. This pavement also serves to link Nether Durnford Close to the ring road cycle track. The transitions onto and off the road should be straight and flush (on both sides).