

Comments on the Access to Headington consultation from Cllrs Roz Smith, Altaf Khan and Ruth Wilkinson

The County Council's consultation process

The consultation on Access to Headington was not fit for purpose. We have decided to send in a written statement to the Cabinet Member to set out our concerns, and to suggest how future consultations on transport planning issues might be improved.

We have received an overwhelming number of complaints from our residents about what they see are the inadequacies of the consultation.

Pre-publication

1. A press release referring to the imminent publication of proposals about transport in Headington was issued over a week beforehand but no other details were released
2. County councillors were invited to a briefing but were told that content was embargoed
3. City councillors were invited to a viewing of the exhibition of plans 6 hours before the consultation was published on the website
4. We were informed that leaflets went out to affected frontages i.e. those in streets where it was proposed that on-street parking and verges and trees would be removed

Exhibitions of plans

5. A series of four exhibition events were held in a very short space of time: the first only 18 hours after publication on the website
6. These were held in different venues across the Headington area
7. County officers on hand were courteous and happy to answer questions
8. A5 leaflets for comments were available for people to fill in

Residents' concerns regarding the above

9. It became clear very early on that not all the leaflets reached the affected residents before the briefings took place.
10. Many residents complained that they had not known about the proposals or the dates of the briefings, including those in Osler Road which is an affected area, before the school holidays started and they went away.

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11. The maps of the areas were labelled in such a way that some residents didn't think the proposals would be relevant to them, for example the map labelled Headington Centre/Windmill Road actually contained a small box relating to Osler Road. So some people who needed to ask questions of the officers missed their opportunities.
12. The proposals came as a shock to many. Residents asked why neither they nor their representatives or residents' groups had been consulted.
13. The proposals affected every person in Headington, whatever their mode of travel, and one session in front of the area maps was not long enough for people to take in all the implications of what was being proposed.
14. Residents were unclear about the aims of the scheme as these did not necessarily chime with the transport priorities they thought were most important. From the consultation plans, some residents thought the project was seeking to reduce the number of cars in Headington. Others thought it was aiming to move traffic into a wider shorter space
15. Residents became concerned because no context was given for each of the areas, and local transport needs did not appear to have been identified.
16. Residents asked straightforward questions of the officers: "Where will I park?" "How many trees will be lost?" and officers could not give them that information.
17. Residents looked for traffic data to substantiate the aims of the project and couldn't find any on the website
18. Subsequently some traffic data was released from officers on request, and residents became concerned that this did not tally with data from different sources, specifically on traffic movements from the new build at Barton

Response from councillors

19. It soon appeared that relatively few of the resident population was aware of the existence of the Access to Headington proposals.
20. It became clear from street surgeries that a significant proportion of residents did not have internet access so had no idea what was being proposed
21. Councillors realised not all the leaflets had gone out and tried to find out who had received notification and who had not.
22. Councillors asked if transport planners could come out to further meetings with resident groups, these were declined. At the public meeting on 3rd August at which

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180 people turned up, councillors were asked to minute their distress that a county representative was not present.

23. Councillors held street surgeries and public meetings, and sent out a leaflet to try and raise awareness
24. The overwhelming response given to councillors at street surgeries and meetings was that residents were so incensed at the lack of consultation, they were predisposed to send back negative responses. Some were visibly shocked and/or angered by the proposals, many of these lived in side roads off the affected roads so had not been sent an OCC leaflet
25. Councillors started to wonder who else didn't know about the consultation. We notified schools and the City Council who had not been aware. We contacted the County's own department that deals with trees and verges, and had to send them the website address of the consultation as they hadn't seen what was proposed.
26. The published information does not specify who was consulted prior to the proposals being published. We have since learned that one consultation took place at the JR, but there were none at the Churchill Site. We know that the Headington Transport Group managed to arrange a meeting. However residents who work at the hospitals and Old Road sites have complained to us that they knew nothing of the consultation.

Subsequent Access to Headington consultations

In the next round of consultation, we hope that the County Council will have the following in place.

- Presentation events to be made available to the public with a minimum of two weeks notice
- Updates to the consultation page on the website to show Frequently Asked Questions and appropriate responses e.g. "What is the difference between a mandatory cycle lane and an advisory cycle lane?"
- Supporting evidence e.g. traffic flow and traffic volume data – actual and predicted) to be available on the website – to include double-checked data relating to the new Barton Park development
- Resource to enable county officers to attend meetings of local residents as required so that immediate questions can be answered knowledgeably

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- Prior consultation to be held in workshop form with representatives from local businesses, workplace representatives in the major employment institutions, representatives of resident groups, schools, and councillors to gain an understanding of day to day transport issues in each area

Prior to the London Road development, the County Council held a workshop with representatives from across the Headington Community with great success, and residents felt they had more of a say.

We believe that more engagement with those who encounter transport problems in Headington would lead to greater synergy and exchange of ideas. We have listed some of the ideas that local residents have put forward – there are some really good ideas here that could only have been gained through wider consultation.

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