

From Cyclox
c/o 44 Southfield Road,
Oxford, OX4 1NZ

14 December 2009

Cllrs Hudspeth, Rose and Fatemian
Oxfordshire County Council,
County Hall, New Road,
Oxford, OX1 1ND

cc: Steve Howell, Craig Rossington, Aron Wisdom, Joy White, Martin Kraftl

Dear Ian, Rodney and Arash

I am writing on behalf of Cyclox, with regard to Queen Street. Firstly, Cyclox would like to offer its congratulations to Oxfordshire County Council on the noticeable improvement to Queen Street as part of Transform Oxford. Since the removal of the bus stops and the associated work to redesign the road, Queen Street has become significantly less crowded and more pleasant. We welcome the additional bicycle parking.

On behalf of a huge number of cyclists who expect to follow the most obvious and quickest route on their journeys east and west, Cyclox now strongly urges the County to review the present cycling regulations in Queen Street. The current arrangements are confusing for all road users and pedestrians, are not driven by any evidence, and are extremely inconvenient.

At present, cycling is forbidden on Queen Street between 10 am and 6 pm daily between the St Ebbe's Street junction and Carfax. After 6 pm, cycling is permitted in both directions. Cycling is also permitted at all times across Queen Street between New Inn Hall Street and St Ebbes Street (Sustrans' NCN route 51), and also between this crossing and Castle Street at all times (this part of the road is technically New Street rather than Queen Street).

Queen Street matters to cyclists because it allows quick and easy east-west access. Alternative routes are unrealistic and fraught with bus traffic. When a safe and direct route exists along Queen Street, who would cycle all the way down St Aldates to Brewer Street, then up St Ebbes Street to appear a mere 100m further along Queen Street from Carfax? If you've arrived at Carfax and you see the safe and direct route along Queen Street is closed, are you really going to go back to Turl Street, detour along Broad and George Streets, to get to the station?

Given the County's decision to create an improved space in Queen Street, with more room for all users, with lower bus speeds and no stationary or overtaking buses, we believe now is the time to reopen Queen Street to cycling. Cycles were previously banned between 10 am and 6 pm because the road was busier and more dangerous when it was filled with two lanes of buses. This danger has been partially removed, and it will soon disappear altogether. Cyclox believes it is in now everyone's best interests for Queen Street to be available to cyclists at all times and in both directions. The reason for this is that cycling is a vital part of the city's transport network – but the daytime closure of Queen Street represents a surprisingly large barrier to cycling. Where barriers to cycling exist, people are discouraged from cycling, which is bad because more people will then use buses. Buses are better than private cars in a city centre of course, but they still add to congestion, they pollute and they are expensive. Cycling causes almost no congestion, it is clean and it is

cheap to provide for – and to use. That’s why we believe that any unnecessary barriers to cycling should be removed: so that this benign form of transport can be encouraged.

There is no evidence that banning cyclists promotes safety, as your own Roads Safety Team will tell you. Most European countries encourage cyclists and pedestrians to share space in city centres. A good example can be found in the centre of Cambridge. In central Oxford, pedestrians mingle safely with cyclists in Turl Street, New Inn Hall Street, Cornmarket Street after 6.30 p.m., and other places. There have been almost no KSIs reported between cycles and pedestrians. We accept that some pedestrians are apprehensive of sharing spaces with cyclists, but very few pedestrians are ever endangered or struck by cyclists. It is clearly far less of a danger to the health of a pedestrian to be sharing space with bicycles than with a 20 tonne bus, however slowly it might be going.

To facilitate the sharing of city centre spaces between cyclists and pedestrians, we would like to make two suggestions:

- 1) We urge the County work with us and the Police to implement a Bike Polite scheme in the city.
- 2) Post a 5 mph speed limit (that applies to bicycles as well other vehicles) in semi-pedestrianised streets such as New Inn Hall Street, Cornmarket Street and Queen Street. Of course, few bikes have speedos and even if they did, the law about speeding such as it is framed doesn’t apply to bikes – nevertheless, we think it would send the clearest signal to cyclists that low speeds are expected and that faster speeds will not be tolerated.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

James Styring, Chair, Cyclox



BIKE POLITE

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TRAFFIC LIGHTS

You are traffic too, so stop at red



SHARED PATHS

Slow down, ring bell, say thanks when passing



FOOTWAYS

Pavements are for pedestrians



AFTER DARK

Use front and back lights so you can be seen



CANAL TOW PATHS

Slow down when passing pedestrians and at bridges