

VISIONS

No 131, July 2015

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The gardens at Haseley Court were much admired by members in June. There's more to enjoy in our autumn programme – see page 11



The slow march of transport planning

By Peter Thompson, Chairman

A look back over 45 years of transport planning in our city and county shows that we are still grappling with many of the same issues. Does it have to be like this?

Recently the County Council has been consulting the public on its new Local Transport Plan (LTP4) for the county and the city. Prompted by this, I have been looking back at some of the documents the Society has produced in the past on Oxford's transport problems. They make for sobering reading and a strong sense of déjà vu!

In April 1970, our infant Society published *Let's LIVE in Oxford*. The aim of the booklet was to publicise and motivate opposition to 'The Oxford

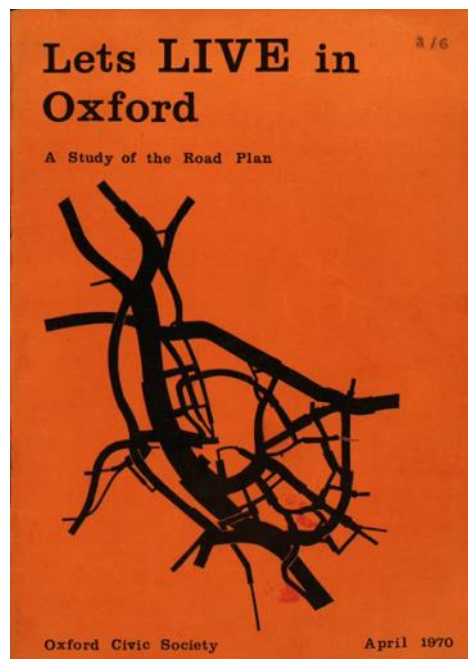
Road Plan', which would have seen not just the construction of a road across Christ Church Meadow but also the demolition of swathes of St Clements, Jericho, Grandpont and parts of Summertown and Wolvercote, to accommodate a motorway-style 'spine road' and its connections.

For 'The Oxford Road Plan 1970' read 'Oxford Transport Strategy 2015'. Many of the same questions are still being asked: 'Oxford's choice – homes or cars?'; 'The modal split – or schemes for public transport'; 'How to keep communities viable'.

In 1970 the Society asserted that: "An

urban environment is the habitat of society, and must have qualities which are agreeable, not ones which make it unbearable. Places with charm ... form oases of order, decency and continuity ... and they become foci which are recognisable in the bewilderment and anarchy of a civilisation besotted with the motor car".

Despite the infatuation with cars at the time, there was some discussion of public transport. One of the schemes which we urged should be properly considered was the development of the 'existing Oxford – Bletchley railway line and the existing Cowley Works branch line'; it has taken 45 years to make progress on these ideas.



The cover of our 1970 booklet hints at the scale of road-widening and building that we might have suffered but for campaigns such as ours. We are still battling for a more strategic approach to planning however.

Likewise with buses, the most basic scheme proposed adding 'peripheral routes' linking Summertown and Sandhills, and Botley to Headington, but another proposal added 'limited-stop express routes'. Have the County's current 'Bus Rapid Transit' ideas also been 45 years in gestation?

At a time when more enlightened authorities elsewhere were embarking on designs for tram systems, the 1970 Oxford Road Plan made no mention of them. Perhaps really surprising, however, is the total absence of any reference to the possibilities of encouraging cycling and walking. Maybe here we have made a little progress, though we still lag far behind other cities.

Of course, things did get better. Partly at least because of the Society's campaigns, the 'Road Plan' didn't get built. But Mark Barrington-Ward's fascinating booklet *Forty Years of Oxford Planning* which we published six years ago fills in the detail of how close Oxford came to city-wide vandalism.

A difference in attitude

We may have averted that disaster, but we seem to be 40 years behind other communities in progressing development of the kind of 'places of charm,

forming oases of decency, order and continuity' mentioned in our 1970 booklet.

Something that emerges both from these historic accounts of transport planning and from the current proposals, is the fundamental difference in philosophy which prevails in European mainland cities. In places like Freiburg, the public transport infrastructure is described as the 'skeleton' of the city. It is regarded as an integral part of the habitat and has evolved hand-in-hand with the urban development. It is not a series of disjointed piecemeal solutions applied as 'sticking plaster' to never-ending crises, but a strategic approach, completely integrated with development planning. Likewise in the Netherlands, the planning authorities have tamed the traffic by prioritising cycling and integrating it with every new housing development and transport interchange design.

A key consequence of this difference in attitude is the completely different approach to investment decision-making. A tram line can transform the character of a city in ways which accountants are unable to quantify and which buses cannot emulate. New urban areas are conceived around the public transport services, not left to the whims of private developers and the likelihood of a bus route being profitable.

There is a fundamental difference in philosophy which prevails in European mainland cities. Public transport infrastructure is fully integrated with development planning, not a series of disjointed piecemeal solutions applied as 'sticking plaster' to never-ending crises.

Our *Oxford Futures* report published last year addressed some of these issues and the URBED Garden City proposals developed some more of the ideas (see page 3). The common sense of our suggestions may have been slow in being acknowledged, but we were delighted to be asked recently by the Oxford Strategic Partnership to collaborate in promoting the principles at a high-level event at Wolfson College, which took place on 29 June.

The OSP, whose membership includes the County and City Councils, local medical institutions, Thames Valley Police, the major educational establishments, Oxford Preservation Trust, and business and voluntary organisations has stated aims:

- to provide a clear and ambitious vision for the future of Oxford, developing its environmental, economic and social life in a positive and sustainable way;
- to improve the quality of life of all sections of the community, to reduce inequalities, and support the needs and aspirations of citizens in their local areas;
- to foster and promote closer working between local agencies to deliver responsive and high quality services across the city.

The similarity of these aims with the objectives of our own Society suggest a natural synergy and, we hope, the interest of the OSP will provide real impetus to our call for a more strategic approach to planning. I do hope that this marks a real turning point in the planning of Oxford's future. I'd like to believe that our Chair 45 years hence will be describing Oxfordshire as a model of how to manage the challenges of the 21st century.

**Peter Thompson
Chairman**



Forty years of Oxford planning and Let's LIVE in Oxford can be downloaded from the publications page on our website:

www.oxcivicsoc.org.uk/index.php/publications



Oxford Futures – moving forward

In March 2014 we published *Oxford Futures*, our most ambitious attempt yet to influence the development of our city region. The author of the report, Nicholas Falk, reflects on the issues facing Oxford and reports on how the report is shaping opinion.

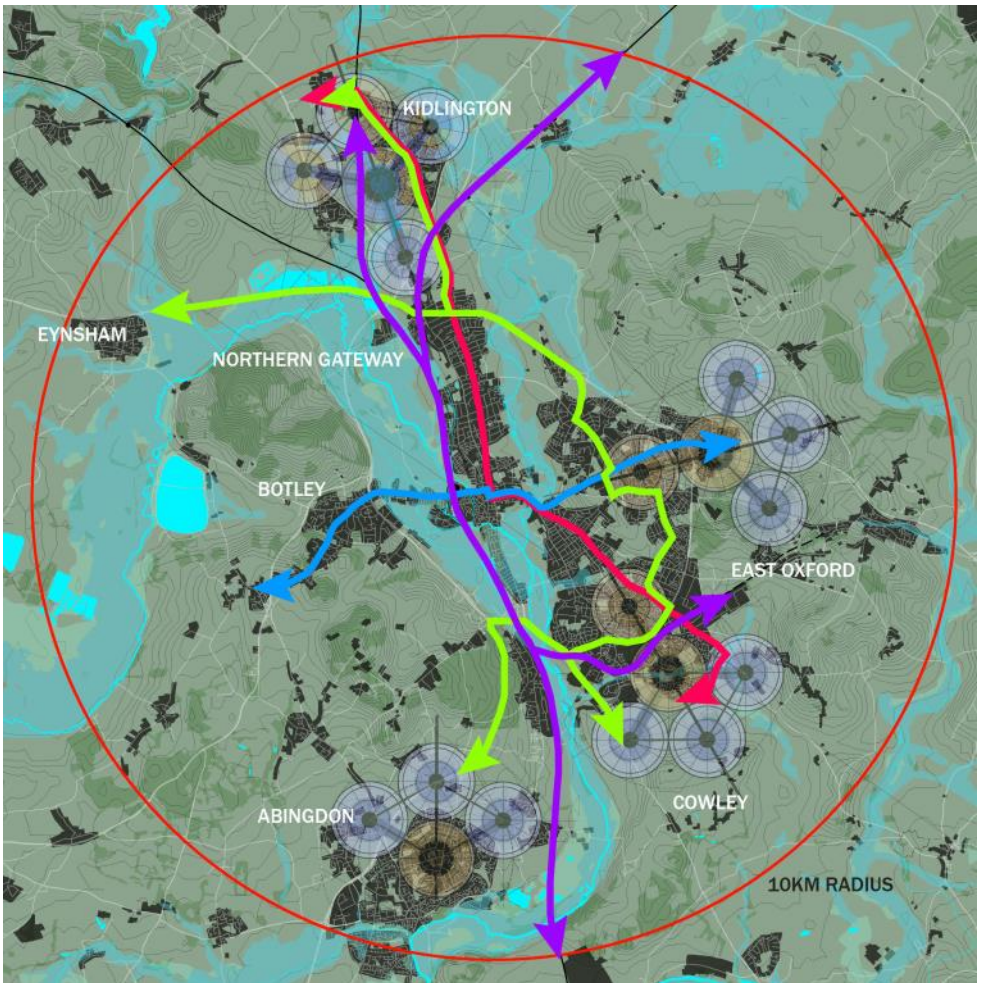
In 2013 the Society and I started a series of events called 'Oxford Futures' which involved the Academy of Urbanism and the Royal Society of Arts, the Smith Institute for Enterprise and the Environment and Oxford Brookes University. We brought in outside experts, such as Wulf Daseking, the planner who oversaw the transformation of Freiburg, the historic German university city. The *Oxford Futures* report was the outcome of these seminars.

The report argued the case for a more strategic, coordinated approach to planning in the entire region. The 'Call for Action' set out eight proposals, including locating developments where cycling and rapid transit systems can reduce reliance on cars and a Commission to look at how to bring the different stakeholders together. The report attracted much interest in the local press and was even featured on the BBC regional news programme. But did it change anything?

Dreaming spires and screaming tyres

In addressing the Society's AGM in March, I reflected on how the city has changed since I was a student at University College in the 1960s. Then you could still park in the High Street, the car industry employed over 20,000 workers at Cowley and the city functioned as part of the industrial Midlands and a tourist destination.

Fortunately Oxford pioneered Park and Ride and modernised its buses as a response to its horrendous traffic problems. But as the city has grown in popularity as a place to live, and the universities have maintained their elevated status, the quality of the public realm has fallen behind competing cities. There is not even the money to fix the potholes and cycling is precarious. Low paid staff, such as in the hospitals and shops, have to spend hours commuting to work, while young teachers,



Four possible transit routes to link existing and potential new developments (shown in blue circles)

nurses and researchers are looking elsewhere for jobs, unable to afford the highest house prices in the UK.

A garden city for Oxford?

Much to our surprise my URBED colleague David Rudlin and I were short-listed for the 2014 Wolfson Economics Prize for our submission on how to develop garden cities that were 'visionary, viable and popular'. To win, we needed to show there was potential support for enlargement of a historic city through genuinely sustainable urban extensions or satellites (as opposed to conventional thinking of planting the new city away from others). Our business plan was based on taking over land at a little over agricultural values, so that the uplift could produce much more sustainable developments, as Ebenezer Howard

had sought to do at Letchworth and Welwyn Garden Cities a century ago.

A workshop organised through the Society suggested support could be forged if there were benefits for existing residents, such as tackling congestion or flooding, as well as protecting environmentally sensitive areas. In fact a number of possible sites had been identified by Oxford City Council, so our final submission showed how the ideas might be applied to Oxford.

We proposed a Foundation to take a 'small bite out of the Green Belt' (in fact only about 7% of it, while increasing protection and introducing new 'green' areas), and then plough the uplift in land values (what Ebenezer Howard called the 'unearned increment') back

(continues on page 4)



Some of the proposed new housing at Barton Park showing the landscaping. Different types of housing will be built to develop a balanced community. See the Barton Park website for more detail: www.bartonparkoxford.com/vision/design-code.aspx

(continued from page 3)

into local infrastructure just as has been done on mainland Europe. The Foundation would then act as steward for the public spaces, much as the Oxford Preservation Trust already does.

Tackling jams with trams

Since winning the Wolfson Prize, we have pressed on with further events. Workshops on **transport options** and then **trams** drew on comparisons with Oxford's twin city of Grenoble, France's leading 'science city'. These tapped ongoing research at University College London into new forms of tram.

My colleague Reg Harman and I believe that Oxford could be served by a modern tramway system of two or three lines on the main radial routes together with upgraded local rail services. This network, which we call the **Oxford Metro**, would be complemented by quality bus services offering rapid transit between outlying towns. The network would link places such as Kidlington, Eynsham, Radley and Cowley with the city centre and major developments such as the Northern Gateway.

Trams have much to offer and a show of hands at the Society's AGM suggested support in principle. Similar conclusions were reached at a packed meeting at Brookes on the **green belt** organised by the Royal Town Planning Institute and chaired by Professor Danny Dorling. We are now discussing the conclusions with the Local Enterprise Partnership's Transport group.

Housing solutions

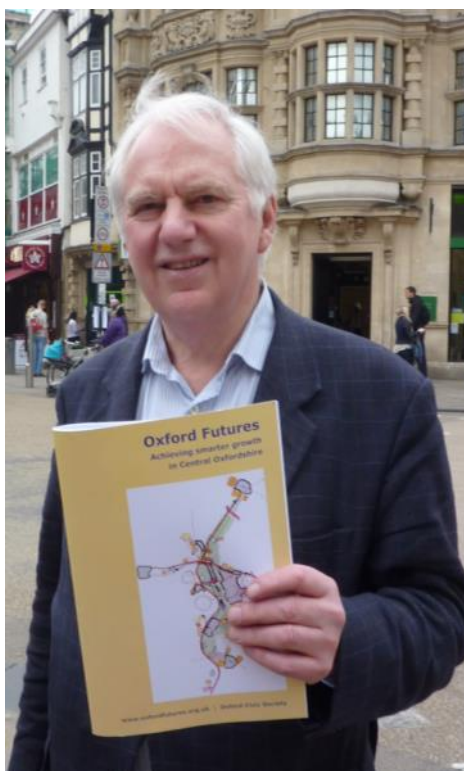
Another workshop on **affordable housing** came up with fresh ideas for ensuring local people benefit from any new

housing development. We discussed ideas such as linking rent levels to local incomes rather than local markets, controlling the costs of land, and building in flexibility over the lifetime of a new development.

There was also support for dealing with empty properties and providing more choice for 'empty-nesters' and older people who may find it difficult to downsize. Among the participants were housing associations that are keen to put some of the proposals into effect.

What has changed?

Over a year since the publication of *Oxford Futures*, the Oxford Strategic Partnership and the County's Local Enterprise Partnership have taken up



the challenge and the principles we established are achieving recognition. While some District Councils refuse even to discuss Oxford's Green Belt, there are signs that some local authorities are starting to understand the benefits of concentrating new development in a few well-located sites rather than spreading it thinly around the county's villages.

At Barton Park, some of the principles of 'smart development' are being put into practice, such as good links by cycle and on foot and low-energy housing to minimise fuel bills and CO₂ emissions.

Progress may be slow but it is being made. The Oxford Futures initiative shows the value of having a lively civic society, able to keep issues in the public eye and to work in partnership with academics and practitioners in the planning and transport fields. If together we can succeed in establishing the ideas of 'smart development' in the city region, Oxford could rise to new pre-eminence as both the crossroads of England and as a university city spearheading the new industries of the 21st century.

Dr Nicholas Falk, shown left, founded URBED as a research and consultancy group 40 years ago. He is currently advising the Grosvenor Group on the Barton Park development.

See www.oxfordfutures.org for the Oxford Futures report and accounts of the other seminars referred to here. Print copies of Oxford Futures can be ordered from Liz Grosvenor, 15 Lime Walk, Oxford OX3 7AB price £6.50 for members (£10 non-members) including p & p. Cheques should be made payable to Oxford Civic Society.

For more on the author's proposals on trams see www.tramnews.net



A solution to the housing crisis?

On 10 July George Osborne announced sweeping reforms to the planning laws to accelerate house building. Clive Booth discusses some missed opportunities.

Should houses be built on the Southfields Golf Course? South Oxfordshire District Council thinks so, as does CPRE. They also believe that many other sites in Oxford should be developed for housing before Oxford City Council even thinks of trespassing on South Oxfordshire's sacred turf.

The battle between the five district councils in Oxfordshire over how many houses should be built across the county will no doubt rage for some time to come, refereed by the planning inspectorate.

So it was cheering to read that the Planning Inspector who approved Cherwell District Council's local plan has instructed the Council to hold discussions with Oxford City Council on building some of the city's housing on their patch. Is this a glimmer of hope that we're moving towards the joined-up planning we so urgently need?

It could have been so different

My first reflection on the bureaucratic struggle among our district councils was to consider how different it would have been if the report of the 1969 Redcliffe Maud commission had been implemented. They proposed a system of single-tier unitary local authorities across England (except for the four major metropolitan areas).

Oxfordshire would have been a single unitary authority, arguably able to take a cross-county view of the best locations for housing. We shall of course never know whether the decisions of a single tier Oxfordshire on the distribution of housing would have been better. No doubt they would still have pitted one community against another.

Shopping for housing

A different line of thought about solutions to the housing problem arose in a chance conversation at one of our events with a senior partner of a large private planning consultancy. We were



Living over the shops is sometimes an option in the suburbs but rarely planned for in city centres. Are we missing an opportunity?
Photo courtesy of Oxford Mail

discussing the impact of two huge changes in the retail landscape that are currently in prospect and which could transform the debate on housing: firstly, the impact of the explosive and universal growth in internet shopping; and secondly, and closer to home, the effect of the huge new Westgate Centre development.

It is hard to believe that in the long run internet shopping will not greatly reduce the requirement for shop floor space in our towns and cities. This must lead to a decline in the need for both shop fronts where people traditionally browsed and related storage space. And a development like the Westgate Centre is potentially a powerful magnet, drawing business away from less attractive shopping areas across Oxford.

The argument that Westgate will attract greatly increased numbers of shoppers to the benefit of all Oxford's shops does not convince those of us who have studied the severe constraints on public and private transport routes in the city centre to which the transport planners seem to have no answer!

This brought to mind another conversation with a Society member who had

lived and worked in Spain. He observed that in Spanish cities retail and residential accommodation are closely integrated. Many people live in flats located over shops. As a result, there are the environmental benefits of greatly reduced shopping journeys for many people and the social benefits that town centres remain alive and bustling in the evening.

"Why", I asked the senior planning consultant, "do we not have this close association of retail and residential usages in British cities like Oxford? Would not the reduction in demand for retail space that I have forecast create a new source of 'brown field' sites for residential use?" "Well", he replied, "in this country we have commercial property developers and we have residential property developers. They just don't think about the possibilities of integrating the two." Time to knock heads together perhaps Mr Osborne?



Transport – squaring up to the future

Andrew Pritchard updates us on the wide-ranging interests of the Transport Group.

It must seem that 2015 is the year of the sloth as far as transport matters are concerned. Although switching off and removing the traffic lights in **Frideswide Square** initially appeared to ease the traffic flow, as work got under way to reconfigure the square, delays began to build up along the Botley Road and Beaumont Street.

The ability of blockages in one place to spread congestion throughout Oxford was further demonstrated when part of the Cumnor Hill Bypass subsided and had to be rebuilt in the spring, and after a major fire at the Randolph Hotel.

The situation along the Botley Road has got so bad that the buses are losing custom – it is quicker to cycle. The number 4A service has had its frequency reduced from three to two per hour during the day, removing any suggestion that it might be a 'turn-up-and-go' service. We are about to see what further congestion can be caused when works are done on the Wolvercote and Cutteslowe roundabouts.

Of relief roads and piazzas

Oxford University is proposing to carry out major developments at the **Osney Mead Estate**, which led us to suggest

the possibility of a **relief road** to help carry traffic from the west to the centre of Oxford. Such a road, carried over the river and the railway from Osney Mead to the Oxpens, would help to improve access to the new Westgate development and might also serve the Seacourt Park and Ride site and the various retail outlets off Botley Road.

With proposals for conversion of part of **Broad Street** to a 'piazza' we felt that turning off the traffic lights at Parks Road and Longwall Street was overdue.

Local transport strategy

We understand that there are unlikely to be significant changes to the Local Transport Plan before public consultation. However, there is likely to be no guidance about the upgrading of the A34, the proposed new ring of Park and Ride sites, the Science Transit, the possible introduction of trams and a workplace parking levy. We feel that insufficient attention has been paid to the potential of the central Oxford region to contribute to the national economy, which will be hindered by the extent of commuting: 50% commute out and 90% of this is by car.

We are also concerned that the phasing of development of the Northern Gateway site may lead to it becoming

car-dependent, as no plans exist for public transport to serve the site.

On the railways

News on the railway front is mixed. We were delighted to welcome Graham Cross of Chiltern Railways to the President's reception, where we learned that Chiltern are confident that Evergreen 3 trains will start to run from **Oxford Parkway** to London Marylebone in October, only a month later than planned. We are still concerned about the poor access to the Water Eaton site from North Oxford by foot and cycle, and from the Northern Gateway site.

Network Rail has at last admitted that **electrification of the Great Western main line** is far behind schedule. The start of all-electric services to Oxford has been put back from December 2016 to May 2017 but there have also been ominous suggestions that electrification from Didcot to Oxford and Reading to Newbury may be further delayed to allow Network Rail to concentrate on the main line to Bristol. This might also allow planning for four-tracking from Oxford to Didcot, a view supported by the Chair of the Oxford LEP, and which would seem an obvious basis for the proposed **Science Transit**.

Meanwhile Oxford University sought the Society's support for a **high-quality bus-based service between key sites**, particularly Harwell, with WiFi installed to help passengers work while they travel. We cautiously supported this, but only as an interim measure. We favour better links with rail services in the longer term.

The railway station

Discussion with the Director of Network Rail's Great Western Route, Patrick Hallgate, suggested that the details of Oxford's new station are far from agreed and that the City's aspiration for a world-class building was not matched by the necessary funding. In April Mr Hallgate is to move abroad to work, which is not encouraging for continuity.

Work continues on Frideswide Square

Photo courtesy of Oxford Mail



Seeking solutions to Oxford's flood risk

Oxford Flood Alliance, formed after the disastrous summer floods of 2007, is a community group that campaigns and works to reduce flooding in the city. The group's Chair, Dr Peter Rawcliffe, explains their thinking.

Oxford sits, unhappily in this context, at the confluence of seven rivers, with a combined catchment of over 2,500 km². It's no surprise then that flooding poses a problem for the city already and one which climate change will probably make worse. Every flood brings personal distress, damage to property, loss of business, disruption of road and rail transport, public services, hospitals, universities and schools. The economic and reputational damage to the city is considerable.

Extreme weather

It is increasingly clear that our climate is changing and the scientific consensus is that extreme weather will become commoner. 'Flood return periods' based on the historical record have been a convenient way to express the magnitude of a flood: a '1 in 100' flood is one so big that it would only be expected to occur on average once in 100 years. The 2007 flood is estimated at around 1 in 50 (years), the 2012 and 2013/14 floods of the order of 1 in 30 – but Oxford has flooded six times since 2000.

This way of expressing the magnitude of floods may have to be abandoned: using DEFRA climate change guidelines, the rather ominous prediction for Oxford is that a **1 in 1,000 year (sic) flood in 2014 will become a 1 in 30 year event by the 2080s.**

In the face of such challenge should we muddle on as we are, firefighting every new flood, or adopt strategies to reduce the problem? If the latter, then there seems to us to be no alternative to the multi-partner Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme (OFAS) which would involve providing a new channel to take excess water away from built-up areas.

Taming the waters upstream?

OFAS is a locally implemented scheme. People have suggested that measures taken upstream might be an alternative.



Botley Road in January 2014. Floods closed the Botley Road and Abingdon Road for days leaving the city with severely restricted access Photo courtesy of Jane Buekett

Can we hold back the waters before they reach Oxford? Recently we organised a symposium in conjunction with the Environmental Change Institute. The expert view was that upstream measures to retard flood flows could **not** provide an effective alternative to a local scheme.

Even in the extreme hypothetical case of afforesting the entire Cotswold catchment area, peak flows would be reduced by only 10-15%. Bulk storage of water upstream would require (as a stand-alone scheme to reduce flood risk usefully) the storage of about 50 million m³ of water – an area the size of Oxford one metre deep. Cost and environmental impact means this would not be a viable stand-alone option. Both upstream storage and/or slowing flow could however be used in the future to complement a flood relief channel to counter increasing risk from climate change.

Channeling the problem

By the time this article appears there will have been a series of public consultation meetings on OFAS. These will have set out the main elements of the scheme: a two-stage channel running to the west of the city from the Botley Road to Sandford-on-Thames.

The channel will **not** be concrete but will be dug into the soil. Unlike a ditch it will have a wide gradual slope, from the permanent stream at the bottom up

to the present meadow level, to take flood waters. Such a channel will look natural, the gentle slopes can be grazed and it should enhance, not diminish, habitat and biodiversity.

Short sections may be heavily engineered, for example through a landfill site at Redbridge (should that be on the route decided on) to avoid contamination issues.

The flood plain will continue to flood but not so deeply. This may allow better use of some existing developed areas, such as Osney Mead, but is unlikely to open up new areas for development. One hopes, incidentally, that planners will take account of probable climate change in making decisions that might affect future flood risk.

Pushing the risk downstream?

Some critics have argued that the flood relief channel will simply dump Oxford's problem on Abingdon. **In our view a scheme that makes things worse for our neighbours is not acceptable – and it would not get planning permission in any case.** As the Environment Agency has said (January 2015): "In order for the scheme to obtain planning permission from the local planning authority it will need to demonstrate, through a detailed flood risk assessment, that it does not increase risk to other communities".

(continues page 8)



Looking to the future at the Museum of Oxford

Big plans are in the making at the Museum of Oxford, as Tony Joyce reports.

2015 marks the 40th anniversary of the establishment of the Museum of Oxford in the Town Hall. At that time, the move of the city's Central Library into new premises attached to the Westgate Centre provided the space in which a museum could be housed, and it became the only museum in Oxford to display the history of the development of the city, and indeed of the university.



Leader of the City Council, Bob Price, speaking at the launch of the Friends group

Photo courtesy of MOOF

Originally at the forefront of museum presentation, it was by 2008 showing serious signs of age and it was only by a vigorous protest, spearheaded by the Society, that its closure was avoided in the city's spending cuts at that time.

What followed is I hope familiar to members. The Museum's function was redefined with increased emphasis on its significance to the Oxford community, while a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund enabled it to implement the first taster phase of a revitalised museum. The eventual aim is to present the full range of the collection in a way that illustrates more than 1,000 years of the city's growth and the development and character of its communities. The original space has been retained, temporarily modified for occasional displays and other events.

Since 2008 the continuance of the Museum's work has been nurtured by a dedicated team of volunteers, including many members of the Society, and we all owe them much gratitude.

The Museum now needs to take a major step to complete its transformation with its new more community-oriented function and presentation. A new Heritage Lottery Fund grant application is due to be submitted soon.

Join the Friends group

To support this initiative, the Museum of Oxford Friends has just been launched. The aims are to:

- promote understanding and appreciation of the Museum
- encourage the involvement of Friends, volunteers and other individuals to use their skills and expertise to enhance and promote the Museum within the local community and beyond
- assist in raising funds for special projects, such as purchasing artefacts for display
- support the Museum of Oxford Services in their 'outreach' activities in the local communities
- develop partnerships with local communities and organisations to engage their support in helping with the development of the Museum.

Friends will enjoy a range of benefits for a modest subscription. Further information is available from museumofoxfordfriends@gmail.com or by phone 07955 188279.

(Continued from page 7)

While we await detailed hydrological modelling, it is worth saying that the amount of water passing Oxford will not change. The proposed solution would provide additional capacity to pass flood water through the western floodplain, keeping water moving rather than accumulating.

Arguably water might arrive earlier downstream but not more overall. Of course peaks matter: if there were to be a concrete channel here passing on large volumes very fast that would cause problems downstream, but that is not the plan. The OFAS solution is a much more natural scheme, allowing flooding in the floodplain when necessary but protecting built-up areas, roads and railway lines.

The cost of the OFAS scheme is, of course, immense (in the order of £125 million) but flooding already costs Oxford dear. **We can't afford to do nothing.** Oxford will need protection if it is to continue to thrive. We support OFAS in principle because we see no other way to keep Oxford free of floods now and, as far as possible, into the future.

For more information see oxford-floodalliance.org.uk/ or contact info@oxfordfloodalliance.org.uk, phone 01865 735288

Cartoon courtesy of the author



OxClean – the work goes on

Now in its ninth year, our OxClean Spring Clean in March brought out the best in local residents, as the OxClean team reports.

Over **70 community groups** organised two-hour litter picks across the city, representing residents' associations, clubs, student groups, cyclists, environmental groups, scouts and many more. A number of individuals joined in to clear up their patch or a grot spot.

Almost every state primary and secondary **school** also got involved, helping to clear up near the school and taking part in litter-themed work in the classroom. The event was launched at **Windmill Primary School** where the school's work impressed us all greatly.

In addition to clearing the streets, volunteers tackled a number of other **public places** – car parks, stretches of the ring road, recreation grounds, allotments, nature reserves, even roundabouts.

Over **seven tonnes of litter**, including **three tonnes of recyclables** was collected by community groups plus a further large quantity of scrap and fly tip.

Over the years we have placed 300 litter pickers with community groups for their use. This year an additional **500 litter pickers** were in use over the weekend – often going out more than once over the course of the day! **Thank you to everyone who supported us.**

Save the date:
Spring Clean 2016 will be on
4, 5 and 6 March

Does it do any good?

Anecdotally we know we're **making a big difference to the city**. Volunteers have cleaned up areas that have been neglected for decades – and they have not reverted to their original state.

We believe we're making a difference to **attitudes**, starting with children and young people who are key to the future. We still have a long way to go to get across the anti-litter message to them, but take the view we have to start somewhere.



*Pupils from Headington School cleaned up Sandfield and Staunton Roads
Photo courtesy of Tony Turton*

We can't measure the **enjoyment** that people get from Spring Cleans – we can only report that we get many comments on these lines, often from people who thought litter picking might be a chore and were surprised to find it was fun!

The event certainly did some good for one boy whose mother emailed us to report he had achieved his **Duke of Edinburgh award**, partly on the basis of his Spring Clean activities!

And the rest of the year...

OxClean is a **year-round activity**. We are constantly lobbying local authorities to make improvements. For example we have persuaded local councils to install more bins in lay-bys, to experiment with 'smart bins', to improve the handling of trade waste and encourage street traders to do more, including the use of recyclable packaging.

We have no doubt that the Councils' game has improved as a result of our work and are delighted that Oxford City Council is very much behind the 'Cleaner, Greener Oxford' campaign.

Could you get involved?

The success of our work depends on having a team of people prepared to tackle one small bit of the OxClean jigsaw. We need more people to:

- register local groups when they apply to take part in the Spring Clean – January and February only
- inspect school grounds and recommend awards – annual visits to a few school premises
- join the campaigners to talk to local councils
- work directly in schools to get children on side
- work with the local press and media to get the message out – especially in the run-up to Spring Cleans.

You'll find we're a friendly lot to work with! Do contact us if you'd like to discuss the options – phone 075 05 756 692 or email info@oxcivicsoc.org.uk



Booking form: Autumn ticketed events

Closing date for applications: **Friday 14 August**. Please enclose:

- 1 cheque/s payable to Oxford Civic Society, one for each event
- 2 one stamped, addressed envelope for all tickets

Member's name

BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE

2nd member's name (if applicable).....

Address

.....

Postcode

Telephone

Email

Event	No. of tickets	Amount enclosed
For events on more than one date, please delete any dates you <u>can't</u> do and indicate your preferred date/s		
Abingdon: a walk through history Tuesday 1 September, 10.30am Wednesday 16 September, 10.30am@£5	
Oxford's Central Mosque: a tour Sunday 6 September, 2.15pm@£5	
St Hugh's College and China Centre tour Tuesday 22 September, 1.45pm@£8	
Grandpont: a walk Sunday 4 October, 2pm Thursday 8 October, 2pm@£5	

Note: Tickets are allocated soon after the closing date but if you miss it, it's always worth asking if there are places left. Cheques are banked three weeks after ticket issue; after that no refunds can be given.

Send this completed form to:

Alan Hobbs
66 Southfield Road
Oxford OX4 1PA



Programme calendar **'cut out and keep'**

September – November 2015

**ticketed events*

Tuesday 1 September * 10.30am
Weds 16 September * 10.30am
Abingdon: a walk through history
with Michael Matthews

Sunday 6 September * 2.15pm
Oxford's Central Mosque, a tour and talk

Tuesday 22 September * 1.45pm
St Hugh's College and the China Centre, a tour with Mary Clapinson

Sunday 4 October 2pm
Thursday 8 October 2pm
Grandpont, a walk with Liz Woolley

Thursday 22 October 7.30 for 8pm
'Aesthetic crime': architectural controversies of 20th century Oxford, a talk by William Whyte at Magdalen College Auditorium

Tuesday 17 November 7.30 for 8pm
The Ashmolean past, present and future, a talk by Alexander Sturgis at Magdalen College Auditorium

***Contact for booking/tickets only:**

Alan Hobbs, 66 Southfield Road
Oxford OX4 1PA
Tel: 01865 248 105

If, at the last moment, you can't attend, please phone Alan Hobbs – someone will be pleased to take your place





Programme September – November 2015

Open talks – all welcome

No pre-booking, free to members. Help us to recruit new members by bringing a guest to one lecture free £4 for other non-members

'Aesthetic crime': architectural controversies in 20th century Oxford

Thursday 22 October

Magdalen College Auditorium, Longwall Street †

Coffee/tea 7.30pm, talk 8pm

Oxford is home to some of Britain's most loved buildings but the 20th century also saw the city gain many that were much less popular. Some of these have remained disliked, others seem to have grown on inhabitants and tourists alike. This talk by **Professor William Whyte** will explore the mixed legacy of Oxford's 20th century architecture, discussing bitter controversies about things built, unbuilt, and – in some cases – now unrecognisable.

The Ashmolean past, present and future

Tuesday 17 November

Magdalen College Auditorium, Longwall Street †

Coffee/tea 7.30pm, talk 8pm

Dr Alexander Sturgis became Director of the Ashmolean Museum in October 2014 having had a distinguished career as Director of the Holburne Museum, Bath, since 2005. There he oversaw a renovation that included a £13 million extension. In this talk he will discuss the recent transformation of the Ashmolean and its impact on the Museum's popularity and collections and the challenges for the future.

† **Wheelchair - accessible venue**

Members-only walks and visits

Tickets needed for these events: bookings by 14 August

Abingdon: a walk through 1,300 years of history

Tuesday 1 September, 10.30am

Wednesday 16 September 10.30am

Abingdon, one of the most charming towns in the Thames Valley, is also one of the most historic. Though little survives of the great Abbey Church of St Mary, it has a wealth of medieval and later buildings. This walk, led by local historian **Michael Matthews**, will include visits to St Helen's and St Nicholas's churches, the Long Alley Almshouses and Hall (1446) to hear about Christ's Hospital (1553), some notable houses in St Helen's Street, the Unicorn Theatre in the former Checker Hall and much else. The tour will finish with refreshments in the Long Gallery.

Oxford's Central Mosque

Sunday 6 September, 2.15pm



The Mosque, the largest in Oxford, is being opened specially for our visit. We will be shown how various areas of the Mosque are used, following which the Imam will give a short address on the Muslim faith. The visit will end with light refreshments. Please note there is little parking in the area, all visitors need to remove their shoes on entering and ladies must wear a light hair covering.

St Hugh's College and the new China Centre

Tuesday 22 September, 1.45pm for tea/coffee

Officially opened in 2014, the magnificent China Centre in the grounds of St Hugh's College is a joint venture between the College and the University. It will be one of the highlights of this tour of the college, introduced by Emeritus Fellow **Mary Clapinson** assisted by **Amanda Ingram**, the College Archivist. Our tour of the college will include the hall, library, chapel and the beautiful gardens.



Grandpont: of fords, follies and football

Sunday 4 October, 2pm

Thursday 8 October, 2pm

The Victorian suburb of Grandpont gives few clues to the riches of its history. Located next to the medieval causeway across the marshes to the south of the city, it became the home of Oxford's first railway station, waterworks and football ground. Local historian **Liz Woolley** will lead this walk, taking in the eccentric buildings on Folly Bridge and ending at the Community Centre in Lake Street.

OCS people

An award for Liz Grosvenor



We were delighted when our Membership Secretary, Liz Grosvenor, was awarded a Certificate of Honour by the Lord Mayor in recognition of her work for the city. Liz, who was nominated by the Society and Headington Action, not only manages our membership she also plays a key role in the OxClean team.

Liz is pictured here with Patrick Coulter, the Chair of Headington Action. Congratulations from us all Liz!

New members meet the President

On a fine June evening over 60 people enjoyed the convivial surroundings of the historic Judge's Lodging in St Giles, courtesy of St John's College. This annual summer event, hosted by our President, Sir Hugo Brunner, gives new members an opportunity to meet the President, Committee and working group members.

We also invited councillors, council officers, corporate members and others with whom we work. Sir Hugo and our Chairman, Peter Thompson, spoke about our role.



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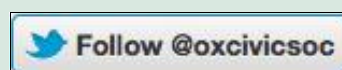
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