



17 October 2011

# On Foot in Oxford

**A joint programme of the Oxford Civic Society  
and Oxford Pedestrians Association, in  
partnership with Oxford City Council**

Principal author : Paul Cullen, a highly respected  
colleague and passionate advocate of a city that is:

- ✓ Easier to enjoy and appreciate
- ✓ More sustainable
- ✓ Ready for the challenges of the future
- ✓ An exemplar to others



## 1 Background

*Oxford Streets for People* promotes our streets as valuable social spaces for everyone's shared use and enjoyment. Oxford Civic Society co-ordinates the campaign in partnership with Oxford City Council.

Our experience to date has demonstrated the value people attach to their streets and public spaces. People do appreciate being able to meet out-of-doors. Street parties (and other initiatives) help them do that and Oxford's record breaking street party seasons of 2010 and 2011 demonstrated an appetite for making streets accessible to all, and for a variety of reasons. Added to that, the Civic Society's annual 'OxClean' Spring Clean, which the city supports, brought out almost two thousand citizens in March 2011 – demonstrating their concern to make the city's public areas truly 'Streets for People'.

Oxford already has a reputation for being first in the field with such initiatives. Those mentioned are together helping deliver more welcoming, more accessible streets and public spaces. The Streets for People team in association with Oxford Pedestrians Association (OxPA) now plans to extend its programme of activities, working with the local authorities, to make the city and its neighbourhoods even more welcoming for those on foot. Called '*On Foot in Oxford*', the programme will extend the spirit that inspires those initiatives to the city as a whole. '*On Foot in Oxford*' is not simply about improving the appearance of the city; it is about improving its 'feel'.

Oxford Civic Society and OxPA are delighted to work together on this programme.

*[Note: The expression 'on foot' is meant to include wheelchair users too, except where this is clearly inappropriate.]*

## 2 What we propose

*On Foot in Oxford* will help to create a city whose streets and public spaces can be better enjoyed and celebrated.

We propose that we (the Oxford Civic Society and OxPA), seeking partnership with relevant authorities, will:

- 1) Create a brand, *On Foot in Oxford* to promote the message that Oxford is a welcoming place for those on foot.
- 2) Give prominence to the recognition that our streets and public spaces are resources critical to the well being of individuals and the wider community.
- 3) Help people appreciate and use Oxford's outdoor environment and to explore the city and its neighbourhoods.
- 4) Implement an evolving programme, to improve the usability, enjoyability, and walkability of the city out-of-doors.
- 5) Seek support for *On Foot in Oxford* from the City and County Councils, and from other bodies including our police, businesses, and educational establishments.
- 6) Discuss with the two Councils the opportunity for *On Foot in Oxford* to provide a unifying theme for projects at present being developed and delivered, and whose aim is to improve streets and public spaces, and the ways they are used.

**This will not be a 'talking shop'.**

### **The outcomes:**

- an outdoor environment providing greater amenity than hitherto, which can be better appreciated by the public
- local communities feeling encouraged to use their streets and local spaces for events and in other ways of their choosing

### 3. Explicit Objectives

Three overall objectives will help to deliver these outcomes:

- to improve the 'feel' of streets and public spaces across Oxford
- to provide readily accessible information about the many aspects of using and enjoying streets and public spaces
- to encourage communities to be more engaged in ways to improve their local streets and public spaces

<b>What are we going to do?</b>	<b><i>What do we expect from Oxford City Council in support?</i></b>
Provide information & mechanisms that will enable local communities to come together to discuss issues of local concern and their resolution (eg community street audits)	<i>A readiness to respond</i>
Provide and collate Oxford walks, which can be downloaded from websites or obtained from other repositories	<i>Support the introduction of a Walks Information resource</i>
Contribute to the development of street maps	<i>In conjunction with the Wayfinding project, provide and maintain an Oxford street map for people on foot, showing information appropriate to the needs of people going about on foot (toilets, bus stops, phone boxes, mail boxes, street crossings, street seats and benches, public buildings, cycle hire etc.)</i>
Contribute to the development of 'interpretative' information (eg within the Wayfinder project) about the city's places of interest.	<i>Seek and consider contributions from OCS and other parties.</i>
Undertake street audits	<i>Take note of findings!</i>
Look into the feasibility and value of a 'my Oxford' wiki-type website, to collate information relevant to people on foot: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to do a street audit</li> <li>• Links to departments of both councils, eg to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* report a pavement defect</li> <li>* make a request for a street bench</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Links to bus and rail service information</li> </ul>	<i>Work with us on design, implementation and follow-through.</i>  <i>Respond to requests made or reports of issues pertinent to On Foot in Oxford</i>

Demonstrate popular local support for the concept – from OCS and OxPA membership, local community groups and other organisations	<i>Formal endorsement</i>
Promote consensus between the partners on shared objectives and outcomes of <i>On Foot in Oxford</i>	<i>Facilitate and lobby, to achieve the agreed programme</i>
Lobby for support from stakeholder organisations	<i>Encourage stakeholder endorsement, and input to projects</i>
Launch, promote and develop <i>On Foot in Oxford</i>	<i>Widely publicise through all appropriate outlets</i>
Develop a mechanism to monitor and further develop <i>On Foot in Oxford</i>	<i>Partake in agreed mechanism</i>

#### 4. *On Foot in Oxford* will deliver additional benefits

- 1) **Democracy:** A city whose streets and public spaces can be enjoyed by all is a democratic city, one where people can meet as equals. Decent streets help build communities.
- 2) **Sustainability:** Such cities fulfil all the requirements for sustainability - economic, social, environmental. *On Foot in Oxford* will help to build communities that will be resilient to the effects of increasing fuel prices and carbon budgets, as well as being healthier and more cohesive.
- 3) **Health:** Walking promotes good health: it is good for the heart, the lungs, the muscles and the bones and for a sense of well-being.
- 4) **Social engagement:** Where streets and public spaces are available for the use and enjoyment of all they readily help fulfil human needs for social engagement, for exercise and for recreation as well as for travel.
- 5) **Independent lifestyles:** People can enjoy healthy, sociable, affordable, independent lifestyles, available to all through being able to introduce exercise into their routines. Nobody is denied access to services, work, education, entertainment, doctors' surgeries and public transport when they can get about on foot.
- 6) **Community engagement delivers community benefit:** Neighbourliness and social inclusivity help create more 'cohesive' communities.
- 7) **Improved environment:** Cleaner air, less noise and possibly less road danger emerge from more local journeys being made on foot.
- 8) **Local economies benefit:** Increased footfall helps local businesses and trade; flourishing local businesses and shops mean more needs able to be met locally. This helps to produce greater resilience to fuel price rises.
- 9) **The global community benefits:** Streets that are more welcoming can encourage low carbon travel choices.
- 10) **An exemplar to others:** Oxford and Oxfordshire can be 'beacons', providing inspiration and examples to other communities seeking to become more sustainable while reducing the costs of their transport infrastructure.

**Value for money: an outdoor environment that is more inviting to walkers delivers significant benefits at low cost**