



Issue 4
3rd October
2023

Relief to Rowstock???

There is NO relief and NO Rowstock!

Background

Last year Oxfordshire County Council set out plans for the first phase of a new road scheme entitled 'Relief to Rowstock' (RRS). This was followed by a consultation period and now, according to the OCC website, it is going forward to final design.

RRA have examined in detail the latest plan for Phase 1 and the results of the consultation. We have several concerns which we are now bringing to your attention. Those who want to read the various technical documents can find them on the OCC website at

https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/roadworks/future-transport-projects/relief-rowstock?gclid=Cj0KCQjwjtoBhDKARIsABVRB0x7_CjE6ZZeMVokr9l8S1HdwZ3lUKPYyWb3J2p_4rFTuz9gwyPNdOOaApnGEALw_wcB

Phase 1 proposals and our review

The Phase 1 proposal relates only to the A4130 between Steventon lights and Milton Interchange a distance less than 600m (just over a third of a mile). The key features are,

- A bus lane in the in the direction of Milton interchange only.
- A single shared path for cyclists and pedestrians.
- Reconfigured traffic lights at the Steventon junction.
- New traffic lights with extra lanes at the junction with Trenchard Avenue.
- A 40mph speed limit on the A4130 between the Milton Interchange and just south of Steventon Lights.

OCC have stated the objectives of R2R are:

1. *"To support planned growth in housing and employment*
2. *To reduce congestion for private vehicles.*
3. *To improve safety for all road users.*
4. *To provide suitable infrastructure and encourage use of all active travel modes.*
5. *To facilitate and incentivise the use of public transport as an alternative to private car travel by improving bus journey time reliability.*
6. *To minimise the impact on the landscape and provide a betterment to the local environment. "*

RRA appointed the firm of traffic consultants, MOTION, who helped us greatly on our campaign against the failed 'Esso' proposal, to review the scheme. Their analysis shows:



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- The provision of a single direction bus lane, the wider shared path and the increased use of signals will create increased congestion and severe delays for ALL traffic leading up Steventon Hill from Steventon and from The Packhorse to Steventon lights (**OCC's objective 2 - FAILED**). OCC documents show that their own transport consultants did NOT recommend the scheme for the same reason.
- There has been no attempt to assess if the bus lane and cycle path will increase the number of people travelling by bus or bicycle nor consider where such journeys would be coming from or going to (**Objectives 4 and 5 - FAILED**).
- The scheme is not 'joined -up' to planned growth in housing its associated traffic such as Valley Park, Grove and Wantage. (**Objective 1- FAILED**).
- There are elements of the scheme that do not meet current safety standards such as the narrow lanes impacting the ability of HGVs to turn at Steventon lights and further reduction in visibility at the bend at Steventon lights heading southbound. (**Objective 3 – FAILED**)

In short, MOTION say,

'RRS is little more than a series of stand-alone, engineering interventions with no clear purpose, function or meaningful benefits which would be imposed on the existing transport environment with no attempt to integrate it into the existing movement framework.'

What about Phase 2 and 3?

Many residents will be aware of rumours over the years relating to changes to Rowstock roundabout, signalisation, increased usage of Featherbed Lane and various relief roads. The documents we obtained from OCC through the Freedom of Information Act relating to Phase 1 make it clear that there ARE plans covering Rowstock and the surrounding area but despite 2 further FOI requests these documents have not been forthcoming. We are now reporting OCC to the Information Commissioners office.

What about OCCs Consultation relating to Phase 1?

There were 88 respondents to the on-line survey. OCC made much of 56% respondents saying they liked the scheme in their report. What they chose to ignore was that only 17% said the scheme would '**encourage**' them to use the bus, cycle or walk. The survey also suggests the sample of respondents was slanted towards those who already cycle or walk.

The consultation process and its report serve to allow OCC to say that such a process has been conducted but their interpretation of the responses, the breadth and depth of the survey and the sampling of the respondents is weak.



Regarding the consultation, Motions summary is that:

- *'The council failed to inform the public that their own analysis conducted by their consultants, AECOM, concluded that the bus lanes would result in "significant queues and delays for the majority of the day". Indeed, far from stating this, the Council appears to have claimed the polar opposite!'*
- *'Respondents are overwhelmingly clear that the scheme will not enable behaviour change or shift residents to more sustainable modes'.*
- *'Despite there being very many sensible comments made to OCC by residents following the consultation, they have simply batted these away and effectively ignored them'.*

Current position

RRA believe RRS does not meet the objectives set out for it and it contains serious technical flaws. Simpler, cheaper solutions should be sought that improves the flow of traffic, including expected increases from new housing, through the area.

We have asked for meeting with OCC Highways and our OCC Councillors to discuss our findings. Over 8 weeks has gone by with no response and we now feel we are being ignored. We continue to work with local parish councils on the matter and are taking legal advice over OCC's silence and their apparent unwillingness to supply FOI documents we requested. We are via, this newsletter, and the RRA AGM, briefing residents and seeking their views.

At the moment we have a 'Relief to Rowstock' scheme that neither provides ANY relief to road users nor involves Rowstock.

The Rowstock Residents Association will hold our Annual General Meeting on
1st November 2023 at 7.30pm pm at Milton House Hotel