

# Barton Area Action Plan Preferred Options

## RESPONSE

Submitted by **Richard Bradley on behalf of Headington Action**

### Question 1: Boundary for the Area Action Plan

*We have to set a boundary for the purposes of the Barton Area Action Plan. It has been drawn to include the development site, Barton, Northway and part of Old Headington Conservation Area. Do you agree with the boundary shown on the map?*

No

The boundary should include all of Headington, Marston and Risinghurst from the view point of the impact of the development on this wider area. We are particularly concerned at the impact of the new development on already over-congested streets. The impact on schools, the library and other local amenities must also be fully evaluated.

### Question 2: Affordable housing target

*Oxford City Council aims to build 50% of new homes in the city as affordable housing. Infrastructure and other costs mean the affordable housing target for the Land at Barton may need to be reduced to 40%. Do you agree that at least 40% of the homes should be affordable homes for social rent (homes let at low rents to people in housing need)?*

Yes

### Question 3: Local centre

*The Barton Area Action Plan consultation in 2010 highlighted a number of options for the local centre. Which do you think should be included in the development? (tick all that apply)*

Primary school [ **Selected** ]

Community facilities [ **Selected** ]

Recreation facilities [ **Selected** ]

Health facilities [ **Selected** ]

Shops [ **Selected** ]

Homes [ **Selected** ]

Post Office [ **Selected** ]

*Other – What other uses you would like to see in the new local centre?*

Youth facilities. Perhaps a small library. Facilities for worship.

#### **Question 4: Size of shops**

*New shops will help ensure that the new neighbourhood is successful. A larger food store could be of the same sort of size as the existing supermarkets in Headington. Which would you prefer?*

Option 2 – new local shops plus a supermarket within the new local centre. But not so large that the supermarket becomes a magnet which generates significant in-bound traffic, or which has a negative effect on Headington centre.

#### **Question 5: Recreation ground**

*Formal public open space of at least the same area and standard to that which currently exists will form part of the new development. This could be achieved by retaining the existing sports pitches or by re-orientating or relocating them. Retaining the existing pitches is the least costly option, but the recreation ground could act as a physical barrier between Barton and the new community. Re-orientating the pitches from north-south to face east-east would be less preferable for sports users, but it would allow more scope to create new homes facing Barton Village Road and more options for access to and from the new development from Barton. Relocating the sports pitches to elsewhere within the new development offers the greatest scope to integrate new and existing development but would bring costs. Which would you prefer?*

Don't know. But the creation of a barrier (option 1) between the new development and Barton should be avoided.

#### **Question 6: Allotments**

*Just over half of the allotment land is cultivated; the rest is uncultivated. Retaining the whole of the allotment land would minimise disruption, but there would be greater opportunities to integrate new and existing housing if the uncultivated land was replaced elsewhere. Which would you prefer?*

Option 2 – retain the currently cultivated allotment land and replace the uncultivated allotments with land elsewhere

#### **Question 7: Open space**

*Barton Village Nature Park is a recreational green space but is mainly scrub land. Opening up or creating alternative areas could provide more valuable replacement habitats for plants and wildlife. A park along Bayswater Brook could do that as well as providing attractive public open space linked to the surrounding countryside and to the proposed Play Barton scheme. Do you agree that Barton Village Nature Park should be developed and replaced with a new park along Bayswater Brook?*

We do not have sufficient knowledge of this area, but we understand that to describe it simply as 'scrub land' is disingenuous. We can see that building on this land might better integrate the new and old communities, and support the change of the A40 along this

area into an 'urban boulevard'. But we are concerned that the value of this land is being minimised by the wording (and leading question) in this questionnaire. It is also disingenuous to refer to the Bayswater Brook Linear Park as an alternative, since the latter area being flood plain cannot be built on anyway. The views of those Barton residents who are strongly attached to the Nature Park should be given proper weighting when any decision is taken.

### **Question 8: Ring-road**

*Choices made about this stretch of the ring-road will be a key factor in determining how the new development relates to its surroundings. Which would you prefer?*

Option 3 – transform the ring-road into a street with speeds of 40 mph and new development facing the road

We strongly support option 3. We believe it is essential that the new development is as integrated as possible with surrounding areas. The A40 ring road presents an enormous obstacle to that aim. We believe that a range of physical, legal and psychological measures must be taken to help overcome this barrier. The range of measures as presented in the preferred options document is nowhere near enough. The imposition of a speed limit and installation of a single traffic-light controlled junction (with the possibility of a second light-controlled pedestrian and cycle crossing) will not be sufficient. The provision of further at grade crossings controlled by traffic lights should be investigated – for example at Stoke Place (rather than a bridge).

Changes to the road surface to reduce noise would be beneficial.

We also recommend that if a series of traffic controlled crossings are installed then consideration is given to sequencing these to support a consistent 40mph traffic speed. See also answers to Q11a.

### **Question 9: Main vehicle access to the development site**

*There is a range of potential options for vehicle access to the new development. Which would you prefer as the main access?*

Option 1 – at grade crossing controlled by lights.

We note Option 1 as drawn does not include bus connection between the A40 and Northway. We think this is an omission, as future development of orbital bus services and expansion of the park & ride takes place.

### **Question 10: Secondary vehicle access from Barton**

*Which would you prefer as the secondary vehicle access? (tick all that apply)*

Don't know

Genuine integration of communities is paramount, and should be the driving factor.

### **Question 11: Bus access to the development site**

*There are three potential options for providing the new development with public transport services. It is not yet known whether all would be commercially viable in the short term. Which would you prefer? (tick all that apply)*

Option 3 – a revised or new service connecting Northway, the development site and Barton with other parts of the city

A key objective of this development should be discouragement of car use, by making alternatives a more attractive proposition. It will be necessary therefore to provide well designed high quality bus services, and to do so from the outset, so that car-use habits are not formed before attractive bus services are introduced.

### **Question 11 a: Cycle and pedestrian links across the ring-road**

*The new development will include a network of safe and easy-to-use pedestrian and cycle routes. There are choices to be made about how and where these routes cross the ring-road to connect to surrounding areas. Which would you prefer? (tick all that apply)*

Option 1 – access as part of a signal controlled junction

Option 2 – crossing to Foxwell Drive

Option 3 – crossing at Stoke Place

Option 4 – crossing towards open fields at Barton Lane

All the above, in order to provide good connectivity across the new A40. The provision of signal controlled crossings will greatly assist the reduction of traffic speeds on the A40. See also answer to Q8.

### **Question 12: Potential development opportunities within the Barton Area Action Plan boundary**

*Please tell us about any potential development opportunities that could help regeneration in Barton and Northway.*

The design of the new development should consider holistically the existing adjacent areas, to enable the creation of a proper community, rather than just another housing estate. This might identify opportunities for development of various kinds, including, for example, recreational areas, beyond the boundaries of the currently-identified site. In

addition the improvement of the footpath network in the Elsfield Area should be investigated.

### **Question 13: Design principles**

*We have identified a set of six design principles to be reflected in the design of the new development. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with these principles. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?*

The scale, form, character and design of development should reflect the natural features of the site and its surroundings

[ **Strongly Agree** ]

The development should incorporate a network of direct, safe and attractive connections that encourage walking and cycling

[ **Strongly Agree** ]

There should be buildings with entrances and windows that face streets and open spaces

[ **Strongly Agree** ]

The development should make prudent use of natural resources

[ **Strongly Agree** ]

The development should incorporate features to reduce any increases in surface water drainage.

[ **Strongly Agree** ] This is particularly important in view of the current surface water drainage problems in the Northway and Marston Areas.

The visual impact of the electricity substation should be minimised

[ **Strongly Agree** ]

The design should comply with the recommendations of 'Manual for Streets', versions 1 and 2, as published by the CIHT.

### **Question 14: Ruskin College proposals**

*Ruskin College has made a proposal for development at Ruskin Fields. The proposal is for between 175 and 200 homes. There is no information on the number of affordable homes that would be provided, but the development would need to comply with the Council's affordable housing policy. These are not the City Council's proposals, but we would like to receive your comments. Do you agree with Ruskin College's proposals to build 175 to 200 new homes on the three fields immediately to the south of the ring-road?*

No

We unanimously think a large scale development such as this would be extremely harmful to the Old Headington Conservation Area and would represent a loss of an amenity which at present benefits the wider community of Headington. (We note, however, our review meeting took place without our rep from Ruskin College who would undoubtedly have had a different view.)

### **Question 15: Ruskin College proposals**

*Would you agree with a smaller-scale housing development at Ruskin Fields?*

Don't know

We have mixed views on this: a) some of our committee are against any development of this site, on the grounds of loss of green space; b) others think there may be scope for limited development, for example a small number of houses or, preferably, appropriate recreational facilities, which would benefit integration of communities and treatment of the ring road provided they are sympathetic to Old Headington; c) perhaps any development should be deferred for say 10 years until the new Barton has matured as more rapid development of Ruskin Fields may inhibit the best long term solution; and d) one member of the committee suggested cemetery space!

### **Question 16: Sustainability Appraisal**

*We are also consulting on the Sustainability Appraisal of the Barton Area Action Plan Preferred Options. If you have any comments on the Sustainability Appraisal please type them here.*

No comment

### **Question 17**

*Do you have any other comments?*

We reiterate the critical importance of integration, to the existing Barton, to the countryside, and to communities and employment sites across the ring road. We can see that there are several challenges to achieving this, notably the ring road but also the location of the nature park, the playing fields and the allotments. Achieving integration will therefore be a difficult and potentially costly task, but failure would in all likelihood result in significant drain on the public purse in the future. The other 'must' is excellent design, and we trust that the principles espoused in Manual for Streets will be followed here.

While we support the proposals in principle we are concerned that full account is taken at this early stage of the potential impacts on the present infrastructure in the Headington Area so that where necessary this infrastructure can be extended and improved to meet this increased demand.