

**Statement from Jim Donahue, Chairman of Whitchurch-on-Thames Parish Council:
OCC Cabinet Members Traffic and Parking Decision - 25th January 2024**

The proposed improvements to High Street traffic and parking were approved at the 25th January OCC Highways Cabinet Member Decision meeting. Whilst the OCC Consultation showed clear general support for the changes, I have also read all of the concerns raised by residents, especially from those without off-street parking on the High Street. In response to this feedback, I would like to reassure those residents who may have concerns:

- OCC agreed to make some important changes to the scheme based on feedback from the consultation that will address many of these concerns, making the approved scheme a much better fit for the village.
- Whilst I fully understand the views that many have raised, we really won't know the full implications of the vast majority of these concerns until we give the scheme a chance.
- OCC and the Parish Council are committed to closely monitoring the impact of these changes over a 12 month period and will be revisiting it with any needed changes.

I would also like to reiterate the targeted benefits for traffic and parking in the village from approved scheme:

- **Improve safety for both pedestrians and drivers, especially in the upper and lower narrows.** Feedback from the post-COVID traffic survey in September 2021 showed:
 - More than 80% of respondents agreed that both traffic and parking were major issues in the village.
 - The biggest concerns of residents were safety at the upper and lower narrows and safety of school children and people with mobility issues.
 - The approved scheme moves some of the parking spaces away from the upper and lower narrows and by the Greyhound crossing to achieve these safety improvements.
- **Create a safe virtual crossing by the Greyhound and Eastfield Lane for residents crossing between the west and east sides of the High Street, especially for parents with children on the school run.** The designated crossing place in the approved scheme will have the statutory 20m visibility in either direction, far different from today's 'mad dash' through parked cars and traffic.
- **Reduce congestion and associated pollution to benefit the broader village.** The toll bridge company has confirmed that traffic is back to about 95% of pre-COVID traffic with approximately 25,000 automobile crossings in a typical week. South Oxfordshire's Local Plan shows that traffic will only increase in the coming years as population grows with more and more housing developments planned for the area.
- **Reduce speeding.** Whilst some believe the new scheme will encourage cars to go faster in certain places, OCC's experience with these types of changes is that it should be a speed-neutral change as there will still be a similar amount of strategically located parking bays along the High Street, naturally calming traffic. You will be aware that the Parish Council is addressing speeding in parallel to the approved parking changes with the new 20mph speed limit and the ongoing Speed Watch activities. We have now approved budget for a traffic calming device such as a happy/sad face flashing sign and are investigating the best option for this.
- **Provide dedicated residents parking spaces.** Whilst some would prefer to keep parking unchanged, some changes are needed to address the safety and congestion concerns. Residents parking is something that residents have been requesting for over 10 years and will at least guarantee that residents of the village will have somewhere to park on the High Street. Even though the overall number of spaces is reduced, there will also be a reduction in parking by commuters from outside the village, as residents will have parking priority.