

WODC: Cycling and Parking in Witney

25 April 2018



Good afternoon,

My name is Kevin Hickman and I use a cycle as a mobility aid most days which means I have a keen eye for problems, and indeed opportunities, related to cycling in Witney, where I live.

I also use an electric bike, and a trike, to go further afield in the district. As a Sustrans volunteer I keep an eye on a section of the National Cycle Network between Witney and Burford, and as part of the Windrush Bike Project I deliver our cycling maps to the district's Visitor Information Centres.

When delivering to Burford I've had to scoot my bike into the shop because there's nowhere to park it. If I drove there I could park right outside - I might have to use my blue badge to get a space, but nevertheless, thought has been given to where I can leave my motor vehicle while I'm there.

There are more choices when it comes to parking a bike to a secure stand in Witney, some of them are even works of art. About ten years ago WODC commissioned an artist to sculpt some cycle stands and install them in the Woolgate car park. I'd go as far to say that it forms some of the best cycle parking in the county, if not the country. But are there enough of them?

The work that led to the publication of the West Oxfordshire Parking Strategy was a golden opportunity to answer that question. Not just for the Woolgate, but for the district as a whole.

A transport consultant assessed all the car parking spaces, monitored when they were used, and sought the opinions of the people using them. However, while noting that cycling is one of the few ways available to reduce demand on car parking, the cycle parking was not assessed. We don't know what effect people cycling currently has in limiting demand on car parking, neither do we have an estimate of its potential to reduce it further.

Thinking of my trips to Burford, the Parking Strategy has been a missed opportunity for touring and local leisure riders in the district, but I understand that a chance still exists within Witney to evaluate the impact of cycling and parking in a feasibility study yet to be conducted. I would like to suggest to the council that it considers doing just that - including cycling and how it integrates with driving and public transport into that study.

Further, Oxfordshire's Active & Healthy Travel Steering Group is also a source of practical advice. A transport specialist working at Milton Park, near Didcot, recently presented a project which I think is relevant to Witney. A business park adjacent to the A34, Milton Park had a critical problem with parking that created a serious issue for the companies based there. With some well structured research and some modest interventions that has been successfully tackled, and in a way that benefits the companies beyond solving the original problem. Interestingly, cycling is only a part of the solution.

In addition to those suggestions on parking, I would like to offer our help to the council on matters to do with mobility. Windrush Bike Project gives an awful lot of thought to people cycling and how we can help them enjoy it more. Whether that's riding through the beauty of the North Cotswolds and the Thames Valley, using one of the most popular maps your VICs stock, commuting to work, going to the shops, or keeping people moving at our workshop.

And equally, we would welcome any help WODC could give us to increase our impact.

Thankyou.