



SPRING 2023



Dear Members and Colleagues,

Well, it has been a strange couple of years – not meeting in person and all Zoom! However we are keeping it altogether. Amazingly you have been wonderful Members. This leads me on to say that we are having our AGM hopefully PERSON TO PERSON – venue to be decided.

We have been very active nevertheless as you will see. And our Membership remains steady. We have been actively involved with Cherwell District Council, BID, and Banbury Town Council. We are affiliated to the Civic Voice (Chair: Gryff Rhys Jones). This is the “parent” organisations for Civic Societies..

We are fantastically lucky to have a great amount of expertise in our Executive Members so we are able to keep a close eye plus involvement with Planning submissions etc

On the money!!! we are quite healthy. On the minus, we bank with HSBC who have decided to charge us £5.00 per month plus a charge for cheques. Therefore we would be grateful if you ever need to pay us, to pay us on-line. I will send the bank details!

AND.. Please look at our website, which has been redesigned and re-populated with documents, minutes etc.

www.banburycivicsociety.org

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PREAMBLE

Before we start can we consider 'why a Civic Society.!'?

For the writer a recent quote by Civic Voice sums it up in the following:

“Civic pride entails more than a few hanging baskets -- it entails community spirit, confidence in an area, standing up for your community in the face of adversity, and declaring, "**I care about this place.**"

Every location requires a group of people to look after it. Civic pride can spur economic activity and improve public spaces.

For the writer, and I hope for you, that is why a Civic Society is important!

a) Town Planning.

The Society's officers continue to monitor, and make appropriate comments (usually objections) on Planning Applications received via Cherwell District Council and more recently have offered advice on conservation and 'Listed Building' matters. In addition there is on-going liaison with residents of Hardwick and Nethercote in respect of development proposals which could adversely impact on their communities. A Planning Inquiry in respect of a major development east of the Daventry Road is pending which may involve your Society presenting evidence to the Inspector.

Your Committee Members invest a fair amount of time on your behalf but if you wish to make a contribution as well, we would be delighted to have your assistance and to hear from you.

b) Revitalisation of Banbury centre

The Society is represented at both the Town Council's Traffic Advisory Committee (BTAC) and the Town Centre Partnership (TCP). The TCP has not met since the end of the pandemic and there does not seem to be much appetite on the part of the other 'stakeholders' to resume. However, the Banbury Civic Society stands ready to resume making a contribution to the debate of 'where to now for Banbury ?'

At the same time we have established relations with the Business Improvement and Development team (BID) which is not part of the District Council and are pleased it now has a lively and committed Manager and Staff - as their recent organising of the Victorian Market showed.

We cannot 'buck the trend' in retail habits and have to be at one with both Councils in the light of financial stringencies, but we can, and do, continue to urge that our Town Centre remains the focus of our community and try to see that it can provide the services the inhabitants require. Belatedly the District Council has woken up to this challenge and we understand arrangements are afoot to seek residents' views on how and what should be done to revitalise the Town Centre. Members may have noted recent moves mentioned in the Banbury Guardian to improve the signage around the town, and your officers are contributing to these ideas, with a view to encouraging both residents and visitors to maximise use of the town and thereby increase 'footfall' and economic activity.

To help ensure the continuation of Castle Quay as a flourishing centre for community, trade and activity, we suggested that the County Council's Public Library be moved into a vacant unit and that another, or the same unit, be re-purposed as a much-needed 'performance space' for the town's amateur and visiting professional entertainers. It is good to see that the first of these ideas is moving towards realisation. We now need to press for the other, OR for investment to be provided for an expansion of The Mill.

c) Highways and Transport

The BTAC continues to meet quarterly to receive information and updates from the County Council (O.C.C.) as Highway Authority on the schemes under development or awaiting implementation by that organisation. Attendee organisations (it is NOT a public meeting) can also bring forward ideas and problems which generally require action on the part of the County either to deal with maintenance issues (repairing potholes and the like) or, less often, items of road safety or similar concerns, **so please draw our attention to any you might have because the next meeting is in May 2023.**

Presently there are a number of fairly major projects under development by O.C.C. including : -

i) Updating the Local Traffic Plan (now referred to as Traffic and connectivity Plan) - to do something notably absent to date - keep infrastructure in-step with developing needs and incorporate any changes arising from modifications to the District Council's Local Plan 2015 -31. As this activity has failed miserably over the last few years, it is important that the Society, with others, keeps pressing for action in this regard.

ii) Implementation of highway 'improvements associated with on-going or completed developments under the Local Plan - for example works in Bankside necessary to meet

the additional traffic needs of Longford Park area. These frequently generate vigorous debate, as it is not always clear whether what is being considered / provided is ambitious enough to meet the perceived needs of our community.

iii) The traffic capacity of Hennef Way and the Junction 11 gyratory consequent on the HS2 works together with the development of the site east of the gyratory (Banbury 15 (i.e. the large grey buildings on the Chacombe side of the M40 which are now effectively completed).

Members will recall that the former came to notice when Tarmac sought to increase the 'through-put' of the rail to road aggregate transfer facilities in connection with HS2 thereby increasing traffic eastwards to the detriment of traffic movement and exacerbating noise and emissions and thus the air quality experienced by the residents of Grimsbury. To mitigate this O.C.C. has proposed additional north-facing slip roads to the M40 from the Southam Road at the bridge over the motorway near the cemetery, but whilst this could achieve a reduction in traffic on Hennef Way, it is very likely to increase movements on Southam Road to the detriment of the 'Tesco' roundabout and the South Bar - North Bar route. Members may remember that an objective set out in the Local Plan and LTP3 was to reduce traffic on the South Bar - North Bar route and also encourage a greater use of Cherwell Street etc - and we all know how that has panned out ! The O.C.C.'s traffic re-assignment for the proposal is awaited.

iv) Members will be aware of the consultation by O.C.C. proposing access to the railway station for cars, taxis and buses via Tramway Road. This has been a long sought scheme which could benefit residents wishing to access the station from the west and south. The consultation was poorly responded to but deemed to be favourable and the scheme has, AT LAST, RECEIVED PLANNING PERMISSION BY THE RELEVANT O.C.C. COMMITTEE.

Watch our website for on-going information.

www.banburycivicsociety.org

v) **Cycling & Walking**

Recently O.C.C. has proposed a raft of 'improvements' **to encourage walking and cycling (referred to as LCWIP scheme)** and the first consultation has ended but the results have not been made public - we hope this will not be another example of residents having things done to them, but not for them.

Your Committee's view is that this, like the proverbial curate's egg, is 'good in parts'.

However some of the measures are downright unacceptable and illogical as road space is being suggested to be taken from highway carriageways to enhance provision for cycling.

What price the economic health of our town?

The public consultation on the proposals closed on 26 February 2023. It will be interesting to learn how many people were aware of the proposals, appreciate the likely impact the proposed measures would have on movement around the town and how many responded. The county officers claim that 40 'stakeholders' responded to the first consultation and that an analysis of the replies will be presented later this year, but from casual questioning of residents it seems that the 'consultation' was not very effective, and how that will affect decision making is anyone's guess.

However let us hope it will be better than the aftermath of the Low Traffic Neighbourhood consultation in Oxford itself.

All this data presented in the report, and the conclusions derived there from, are probably all good stuff but two factors appear to have been overlooked i.e. topography and demography.

Banbury is situated in a bowl so, whilst a walk into town might be an enjoyable event, returning home up the slope, perhaps with heavy shopping, is a serious disincentive.

Also there is an aging population and it follows that there is an increasing number of residents who are not able to walk, or cycle, the relatively modest distances inherent in moving around Banbury.

The County's plan envisage a new walking route - specifically Longford Park to the station and town centre via the canal towpath, and eight other 'improved routes focussed on Market Place. Included in the package are 'improvements' and alterations to pedestrian crossing and the like.

It also envisages more than twenty cycling routes on which much effort is made to prioritise cycling facilities by reducing road space for motorised vehicles, removing

resident's on-street parking facilities and banning key turns in the highway network in order to provide for 'safe' cycle facilities.

The consultation report, which runs to 119 pages, does not evaluate the impact on either 'through', local servicing (including bus movements) or 'in-town' motorised movements and seems to rely on improved public transport to provide for those residents who are not nimble and fleet of foot !

As already stated, the consultation is now 'closed', but a copy of the study is available to read on <[www.https //letstalkoxfordshire / closed consultations](https://letstalkoxfordshire.com/closed-consultations)> scrolling down to 'Banbury - consultation on LCWIP' and searching for the particular location or route of interest. More importantly, a progress report will be provide from time to time to keep members informed of the current situation.

Highway Infrastructure improvements

vii) Highway Improvements

There are, of course, other, unquantified schemes for which Sec 106 money has been obtained from the various developments, either still in progress or yet to be started, and we urge the County to clarify which schemes are favoured and the timetable for bringing these to fruition.

We await this information with interest !

viii) Review of the Local Development Plan

A review is under way of potential development sites to be included in the update of the Local Plan (see recent articles in the Banbury Guardian) so we expect an interesting debate when these are offered for public consultation.

At every opportunity we seek to promote the South-to-East Link road as a means of diverting 'through traffic' away from the Town Centre, but thus far the 'Powers that be' do not see it as an affordable project - notwithstanding the cost of the proposed slip roads to the M40 north of the town

Again we await possible decisions with interest !

We end with a repeat of the question posed above.

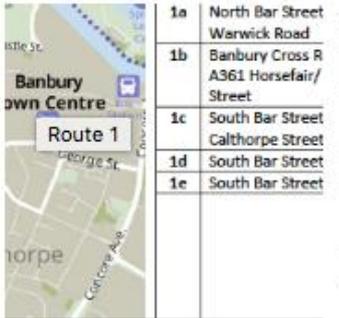
'Why a Civic Society'?

.....because it is your town, your environment and your children's livelihood and future!

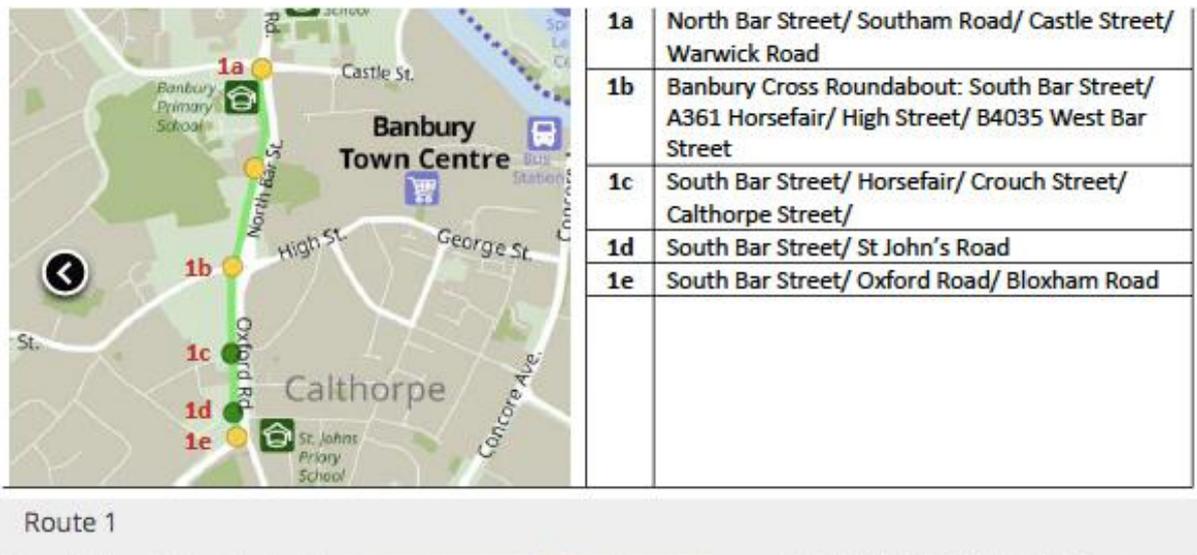
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The society's Web site

The Society's window on the world can be found at www.Banburycivicsociety.org. We try to keep up with developments in and around Banbury as they happen. There is a whole page devoted to the latest proposed Cycling and Walking schemes (LCWIP). There you will find little 'thumbnails' one for each of the proposed routes and their associated works



When you click on one it will expand into a picture you can easily read which saves you wading through pages of stuff on the Council site ->



On the News page there is a detailed criticism of these LCWIP proposals by an interested and very well informed correspondent.

We will post the plans for the development of Calthorpe Street ('the Old Sainsbury's') as soon as more details are available, maybe by the time you read this newsletter.

There are also brief details on the proposals to develop to the East of the M40 and links to the Keep Nethercote Rural campaign. That's in addition to our regular features of campaigns and links to our passed newsletters.