Pete Sudbury
Cabinet Member for Climate Change Delivery and Environment
Oxfordshire County Council
Rewriting the Rule Book
A Social Value approach to Highways

Dr Pete Sudbury

MA (Cantab), BM, BCh, MRCPsych, MBA.

Green Party Councillor for Wallingford, Wittenhams, Brightwell,

OCC Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment
Agenda

• Introduction
• Roads and social value
• Vision Zero and Road Space paradigms
• Highway design and furnishing
3 Views of a Highway

1. Car, (bus) lorry space
   • Journey time, signal phasing: “predict and provide”
2. Transport corridor (add walk, bike, bus priority)
3. Social asset
   • Residents, Local users, “guest” users, societal, biosphere

Maximise the sum of social value of each highways asset.

“Decide and Provide”
3 Road-space Paradigms

1. Exclusive (/hostile)
2. Defensive
3. Collaborative

“Ownership” signals.
Social Value: Actions

School Streets

Frideswide Square, Oxford

Broad Street, Oxford
Social & Environmental Value

• Tranquillity
• Air quality
• Safety
• Shade / Shelter
• Play / Recreation
• Exercise (run, jog, walk, active travel: school, work)
• Green spaces (biodiversity, air Q, mental health, reduction in violence)
• Climate mitigation / adaptation:
  • SUDS
  • Habitats
• **ACCESS**
Social Value: Road users should be safe from risk of death or serious injury.

"Zero harm is standard for health and safety at work. Vision zero says it must also be applied to highways."
20’s Plenty! Revised Criteria for 20mph
“wherever vehicles and vulnerable road users mix in a planned manner” (Stockholm agreement).

- New streets in built-up areas
- Any built up areas (residential or industrial)
- Any areas with heavy foot or cycle use.
- No prior speed data required
- Can be a sign only change
- No need to be self enforcing
20mph pilots: Initial feedback

• Most residents very positive
• Perception of reduced speed
• Measurement: 28mph as opposed to 33mph. (Similar to Bristol, Edinburgh: also KSI reduction)
Vision

A vision for Oxfordshire:
A place where streets, through integrated and quality design, lead to a greater economic and social well-being and improved health for its residents, creating an environment for healthy lifestyles, sustainable travel and a zero carbon economy.
Tree policy

- “Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined”. NPPF 2021

OCC Tree Policy 2022
- “Presumption in favour of trees”

From:
“Cost / Risk” to “Value / Asset”
“right tree right place” to “Critical climate infrastructure”
- Heat Island
- Flooding
- Wind speed
- Mental health
- Reduced violence
- Biodiversity, wildlife corridors
- Food (people / creatures)

Encourage Local Ownership of planting
Lighting

Positives
• Help (esp) pedestrians and cyclists (torches/lights)
• Feeling safe
• “Welcoming”
• Traffic signals / junctions (rural vs urban needs)

Downsides
• Wasted energy
• Light pollution
• Circadian rhythm disturbance
  • Humans
  • Wildlife esp insects
  • LEDs worse
Emergent Lighting Policy

• Lowest possible colour temperature
• Lighting only when / where necessary for public safety
• Redesign and de-illuminate signage
• Default new build: no lights / low level for pedestrians
  • Cars all carry their own lighting
• Straw man:
  • Rural Highways: lights off 8pm-6am
  • Villages: lights off 30’ after pub closing/last bus, on 30’
  • Towns / City more complex ?Different Friday / Saturday?
  ASK RESIDENTS
Habitat Restoration

• Verges, Vegetation, Footpaths

1. Keep paths clear
2. Early / Late cuts
3. Local ownership

URBAN MEADOW AND VERGE GUIDELINES
HOW YOU CAN HELP TACKLE THE BIODIVERSITY CRISIS

1. Mow less frequently (twice a year)
   - Mow once between Feb–March, then leave flowers for spring pollinators.
   - Mow once between Sep–Oct, so flowers have time to set seed & insects such as leafhoppers can complete their lifecycles.
   - Remove grass cuttings to reduce soil fertility, so that wildflowers grow rather than just grass.
   - Leave cuttings on-site in a habitat pile to help insect larvae & eggs survive.
   - Piles of cuttings (grass & branches) are great homes for wildlife such as lizards, grass snakes & hedgehogs.

2. Leave refuges of long grass and shrubs
   - Leave 10%-20% as an uncut refuge of tall grass & flowers. This helps insects & spiders complete their lifecycle, as larvae & eggs overwinter in dead vegetation like seedheads & hollow stems.
   - Leave 10% as shrub cover (mixed UK species e.g., hawthorn, bramble & blackthorn) to ensure food & nesting sites for wildlife.
   - Cut the tall grass & trim the shrubs every 3-5 years on rotation, to stop shrubs from taking over.
   - Having a mix of vegetation heights & leaving dead wood in place supports many species, & is good for biodiversity.
   - Mow towards the refuge to help wildlife such as insects, frogs & voles to escape.

3. Engage with local people
   - Explain what you are trying to do, e.g., with signs, & address any concerns.
   - A mown edge or path shows intent, & that the area is cared for.
Summary

• If it’s “Just a Road”, you’ve missed the point
• Social and environmental co-benefits need to be at least as salient
• Vision Zero and Active Transport dominance are transformational
THE END

Pete.Sudbury@oxfordshire.gov.uk
07721 510518