

A Road Safety Audit for Woodstock Primary School Parents Group (Old Woodstock)

A44 Manor Road/The Causeway/Oxford Street Woodstock – OX20

Purpose: This audit is prepared following concerns expressed by residents of Old Woodstock whose children have hitherto been provided with school transport between Old Woodstock and the Woodstock Primary School. Oxfordshire County Council have unilaterally decided to withdraw this service and, as part of the case for this decision have claimed the A44 to be a safe route for pedestrians. I was asked to conduct an independent review of the safety aspects of this stretch of the A44 Primary Route.

Underlying Statistics:

- The latest (2016) traffic count on the A44 recorded 14,644 vehicles¹. Of these, 515 were HGVs (4%)
- However, peak hour flow is typically 1200 vehicles per hour².
- Mean average speeds measured on the Causeway in 2005 were 33 mph northbound and 31 mph southbound³. However, a more reliable measure of speed is the 85%ile speed, which is the speed at which 85% of vehicles are travelling at or less. This is 37 mph northbound and 35 mph southbound. In other words, 85% of northbound traffic are travelling at 37 mph or less, and 15 % are exceeding that speed.
- Injury accidents on A44 are not significantly above average. The national percentage of cyclist injured in road traffic accidents is 6% which compares to 8% in Woodstock (though the difference is probably not statistically significant). Nationally, in 13% of all accidents, pedestrians will suffer injuries compared to something between 10% and 20% in Woodstock (precise figures unavailable).

However, road safety cannot be measured in terms of recorded injury accidents alone. Pedestrian perceptions of safety are influenced by a number of factors unrelated to statistics. Factors such as the following may apply:-

- The width of footways
- The separation (or not) of footways from carriageways
- The closeness of buildings to the back of footways
- Carriageway widths and proximity of vehicles to kerb lines
- The presence of street lighting
- Gradients
- Perceived speeds
- Volume of HGVs

Oxfordshire County Council has long recognised these more subjective evaluations of road safety through its village speed limits policies and its community led safety schemes.

¹ Dept for Transport Oxfordshire Count Point 65362 <http://www.dft.gov.uk/traffic-counts/cp.php?la=Oxfordshire#56362> dated 2016.

² Peak hour flow = Annualised Average Daily Total (11,000 vpd) divided by 24 times 2.63

³ Speed Statistics Summary from automatic recording device placed by OCC at A44, The Causeway, Woodstock between 28th January 2005 and 4th February 2005

A44 Manor Road Hill Rise to Vermont Drive

Footways here are of reasonable width (0.9m to 1.3m), next to the kerb and bordered at the back by buildings of boundary features. The carriageway is 7.0m wide⁴. Traffic speeds are adequately controlled by a speed camera which is deemed essential given the relatively high speed rural approach to the town from the north.

This section is considered reasonable for pedestrians and accompanied children.

A44 Manor Road, Vermont Drive to Farm End

Footways here are of reasonable width (0.9 to 1.8m) and mostly separated from the carriageway by a grass verge (where not separated the footways are much wider). The carriageway width is 7.1m wide. Traffic speeds southbound begin to increase due to the distance from the speed camera and the gentle downhill gradient.

This section is considered reasonable for pedestrians and accompanied children.

A44 Manor Road, Farm End to “The Bank”

Footways here are seriously sub-standard. The east side footway is 1.2m wide at its narrowest, but that on the west side is 0.7m at a minimum (a child’s push-chair is typically 0.66m wide). The back of the footway is “crowded” at the back by the presence of a tall building. There is no separation of footway from carriageway. To make matters worse, the carriageway width narrows suddenly from 7.1m to just 5.5m thus forcing traffic towards the kerb when confronted with on-coming vehicles (which is frequent on a road with 11,000 vpd AADT). There is some slowing down of traffic speeds because of the carriageway narrowing (particularly for HGVs) but at times when there is less traffic, speeds of southbound vehicles, particularly private cars and light vans, remain at or above the 30 mph limit on the same gradual downhill gradient.

This section is not considered reasonable for pedestrians of any age least of all children whether accompanied or not.

A44 Manor Road, “The Bank” to “The Black Prince”

Footways here vary from 1.5m to 1.8m wide. There is no separation of carriageway from footway. The carriageway is 6.7m wide and southbound speeds are a little higher as this is the steepest downhill section of the hill.

This section is considered barely adequate for pedestrians and accompanied children.

A44 The Causeway from “The Black Prince” to Lower Brook Hill

Once again there is a dangerously narrow section of footway on the west side where the width is just 0.8m. The back of the footway is “crowded” at the back by the presence of a tall building and there is no separation of carriageway and footway. The carriageway width also reduces slightly from 6.7m to 6.1m. Added to this is the fact that the road is on a blind bend at this point, such that vehicles and pedestrians have no forewarning of each other’s presence. Vehicles frequently have to brake hard on this bend when confronted by wide

⁴ All carriageway widths quoted are approximate.

vehicles coming from the opposite direction around the blind bend or when traffic turns right into the pub car park. This adds to the feeling of insecurity for pedestrians on the west side footway. The footway on the east side is approx. 1m wide and “protected” by a safety rail between the carriageway and the footway. Again, the back of the footway is bounded by the façade of the pub. To make matters worse, the footway here is “sunken” below the level of the carriageway by about 0.3m adding to the sense of vulnerability felt by pedestrians.

South of The Black Prince the footways widen out to between 1.8m and 2.1m and although there is no separation from the carriageway, it is, in the main, a reasonable route for pedestrians. Carriageway width is 7m. Average speeds are typically 35-37 mph (being at the bottom of the valley with downhill approaches from both sides). Half way along the Causeway is a Zebra crossing. Anecdotal evidence suggests that drivers take scant notice of pedestrians and many local residents use the crossing only with extreme care.

Because of the particularly dangerous section outside “The Black Prince”, this section is not considered reasonable for pedestrians of any age least of all children whether accompanied or not.

A44 Oxford Street from Lower Brook Hill to Upper Brook Hill

The footways here vary from 1.2 to 1.4m wide, though there is a very narrow section on the west side at the foot of Hoggrove Steps where it is locally just 0.7m wide. On both sides the path is bounded by buildings or other boundary features. There is no separation of carriageway from footway. The carriageway is standard width at 6.8m and speeds are reasonable towards the top of the hill but on the high side at the northern end of the section as it approaches The Causeway.

This section is considered barely adequate for pedestrians and accompanied children.

A44 Oxford Street from Upper Brook Hill to Cross Roads High Street/Hensington Road

This section is part of the town centre. As such, although there may be problems of frequently turning traffic, parked cars and general distractions, traffic speeds are inevitably considerably lower and footways considerably wider. Generally, there is a line of parked cars between the live carriageway and the footway adding to feelings of security.

This section is considered reasonable for pedestrians and accompanied children.

General comments on all sections.

This report does not address the section of the route to school from the town centre along Hensington and Shipton Roads to the school. In general terms, this section of the school journey is thought to be safe for pedestrians and accompanied children, particularly as it enjoys traffic calming throughout and a 20 mph speed limit in the vicinity of the school. The primary school operates a walking bus from the library in Hensington Road to the school.

Street lighting is generally good. Footway and carriageway surface maintenance is generally reasonable (although some sections of carriageway in Old Woodstock are poor leading to significant HGV noise levels that is disconcerting to pedestrians (as well as resident householders).

Conclusions

Only limited sections of the only viable route from Old Woodstock to the primary school are considered safe for accompanied children of primary school age. No section of the route is suitable for unaccompanied children of primary school age.

Colin Carritt - November 2010 – updated February 2019