



# **A traffic scheme for Headington Quarry**

**Prepared by Friends of Quarry**

**December 2013**



## **1. Introduction**

Many Quarry residents when asked about their concerns about the area mention traffic and parking as the number one issue. The concerns are various and long standing – and getting worse due to increasing through traffic, increased numbers of cars, and knock on effects of car parking restrictions elsewhere. Proposed and anticipated developments at the Park Hospital/ Churchill sites and the expansion of Windmill School will severely contribute to an escalation of these problems unless actively addressed.

This paper presents a set of changes to address, or at least mitigate, the effect of these problems on the quality of life of residents. Rather than identifying solutions on a piece-meal basis, as is happening now, a picture of a full set of changes which can be debated, agreed and monitored is a better way forward. That is the objective of this paper.

Several of the proposals below can be implemented by local residents acting together provided there is the support of the Highways Authority. But some of the changes require moderate amounts of money – the proposed Community Infrastructure levy may be one source of such money. In any case, an absence of current funds is not an excuse for ignoring solutions.

This paper has been prepared by the Transport Group of Friends of Quarry. The main points in this paper were presented at the AGM of Friends of Quarry on 13 November 2013. There was overwhelming endorsement.

## **2. Problems**

We have categorised the problems in four groups:

### **Volume of commuter traffic (V)**

- Disturbance to residents from high volume of commuter traffic running through the area, and aggressive nature of a small number of drivers.

### **Safety (especially to children) (S)**

- Safety concerns due to poor visibility for drivers. Worries about children stepping in to the road. Drivers sometimes mount pavements, as roads are narrow and pavements are an insufficient width.

### **Safety of cyclists (C)**

- Primarily due to poor visibility of cyclists due to parked cars (C1)
- or right of way for road users cutting across cyclist routes (C2)

### **Parking (P)**

- cars parked on pavements, to the extent that they obstruct pedestrians especially those with buggies or wheelchairs (P1)

- verges churned up due to parked cars (P2)
- insufficient residents parking, primarily due to commuter parking (P3)
- Parking congestion (P4)

We believe parking problems are increasingly becoming more severe as more and more commuters park in the area to use bus services and go to the hospitals/university sites.

The map of Headington Quarry (Figure 1) show the main problem areas identified by the letters above.

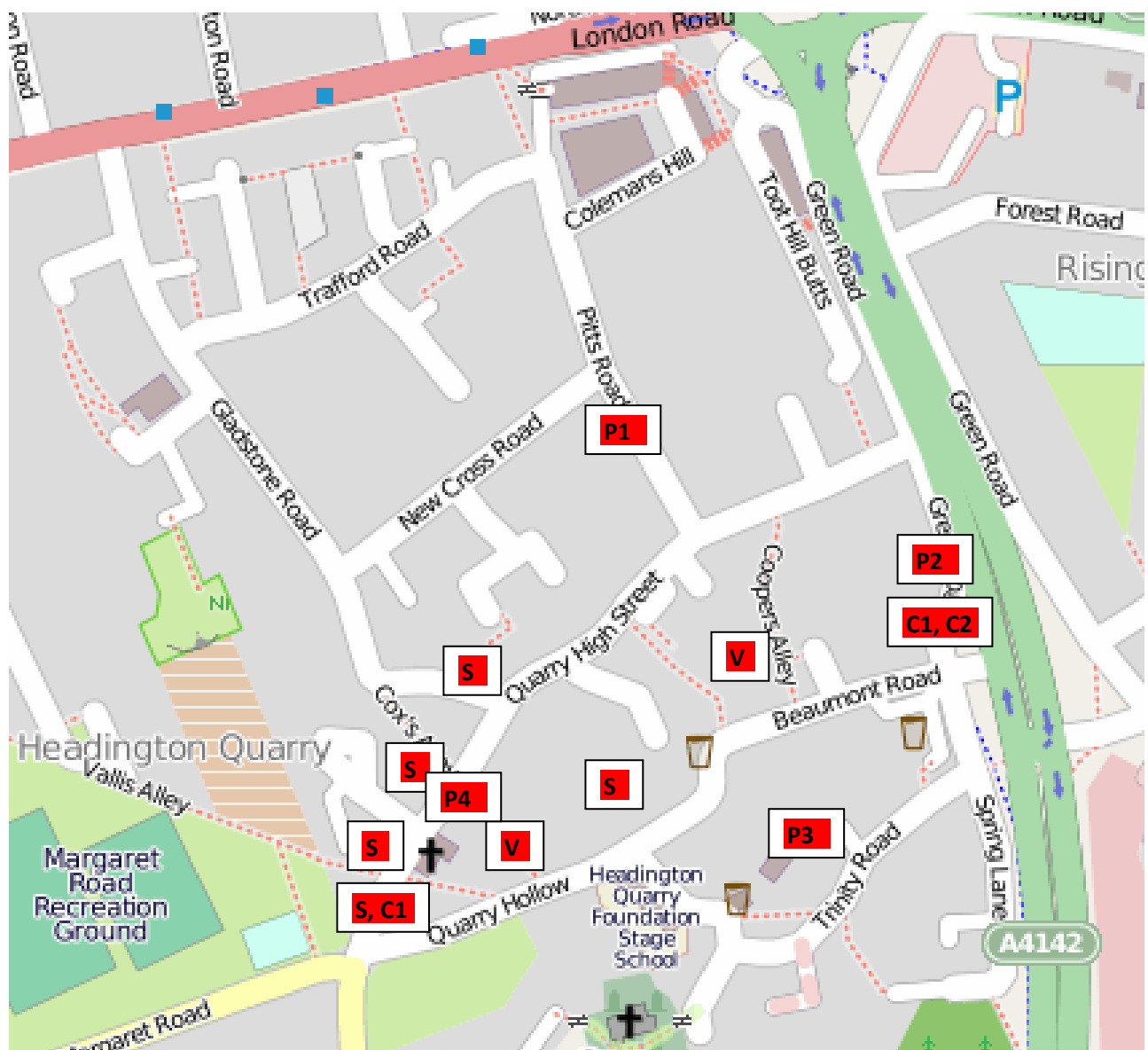


Figure 1: Locations of problems

Specific problems, listed by road, are as follows:

Beaumont Road	<p>Volume and speed of through traffic.</p> <p>Cycle lane crosses road, near entrance from eastern bypass.</p>
Green Road	<p>Churned up verge due to parking</p> <p>Green road is used by many commuters as a car park. This has a knock on effect on the space used by the garage and residents. If commuter parking can be reduced this would result in sufficient space being available for the garage and residents without parking on verges or near junctions. (We consider that the garage should be supported as it provides a useful function.)</p>
Quarry High Street	<p>Congestion due to traffic volumes (would become severe if volume increases significantly. This was evident while Quarry Hollow closed). Safety of children walking home/school route.</p> <p>Single track makes pavement mounting frequent. Mounting of pavements made easier by position of dropped curbs at Coppock Close and wide entrance to Beecher Acoustics.</p> <p>Two stretches of inadequate pavement width, larger vehicle wing mirrors overhang pavement and can hit pedestrians.</p> <p>Very full with parked cars, especially the stretch between Gladstone Road and Quarry Hollow</p>
Quarry Hollow	<p>Volume and speed of through traffic</p> <p>Child safety – access to Quarry Foundation School</p>
Quarry Hollow / Quarry Road junction	<p>Pedestrian safety – especially access to Quarry Foundation School</p> <p>Right of way for road users cuts across main cycling and pedestrian routes.</p>
Trinity Road	Severe congestion due to parking
Pitts Road	Pavement parking near garage

Other problems, not specific to one street are:

- Safety concerns at the exits to alleyways, and at road junctions, due to parked cars. We note there are white lines across the exits of all alleys, but parking restrictions at these locations seems to be flouted.
- General increase in the number of parked cars.

- Increasingly aggressive car drivers.
- HGVs being driven through the area.

### 3. Principles

The following principles have been taken into account in thinking about solutions:

- The car has a vital place in many people's lives. For some it is a necessity.
- Increasing the number of journeys by walking, cycling and public transport benefits everyone. This is best achieved by a combination of measures – especially by making walking, cycling and public transport the more attractive choice, but some disincentives to car travel may be necessary.
- Changes should not reduce the number of on-street car parking spaces available.
- We support the community being proactive in designing and implementing road schemes (commonly called DIY schemes). They are good for community involvement and they are low cost.
- Traffic through Quarry must not be looked at in isolation. The problems being experienced by Quarry residents are similar to those being experienced in other parts of the City, and beyond. We reject the approach of solving a problem here just to have it moved elsewhere, although an element of 'equity' is reasonable.

#### Design ideas rejected

Two ideas frequently voiced to reduce the volume of traffic are a) to close roads or b) to introduce one-way traffic flows. We reject both of these approaches.

**Road closures:** Road closures can lead to problems just being moved elsewhere; they can inconvenience residents and those who live nearby; and they can lead to a sense of isolation. Generally, maximum permeability is better.

**One way streets:** These can lead to an increase in speeding as drivers are given a free run (thus generating more noise and more danger to pedestrians and cyclists).

### 4. Design proposals

1. Make the entrance from the by-pass less open, and more like an entrance to a residential area, through narrowing, through road markings and road texture, and through use of vegetation. Consider junction where Green Road crosses Beaumont Road to make it safer for cyclists (Green Road is a signed cyclist route). See figure 2.

Figure 2a

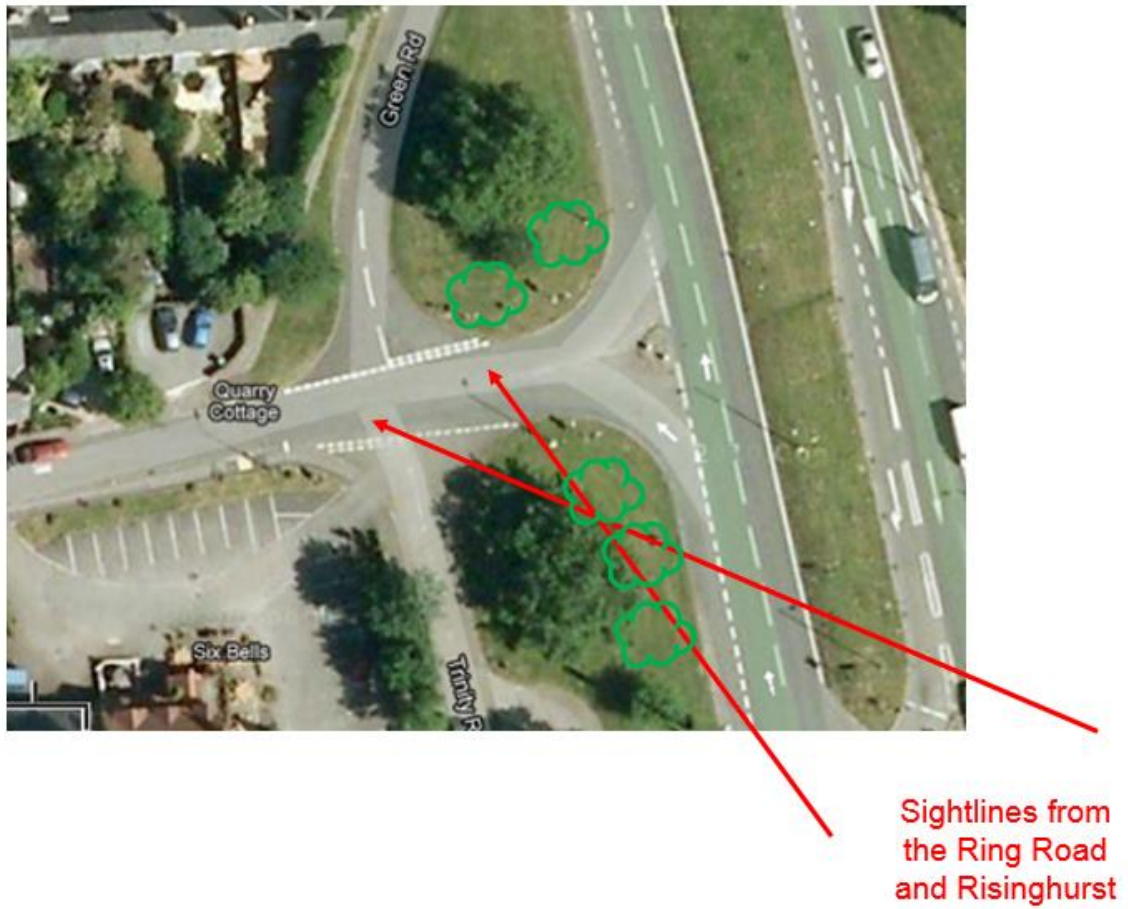
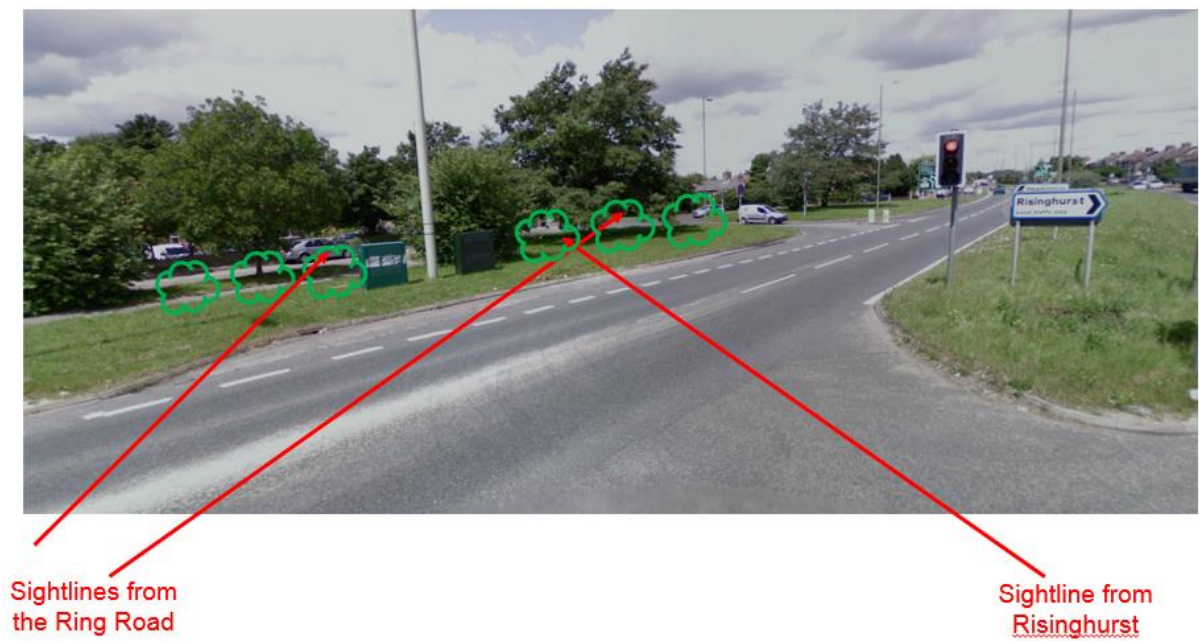


Figure 2b





2. The County Council plans to identify Quarry High Street as a main cycle route from the P&R into Old Road (whilst still retaining its use as a motorised vehicle route). Signage, road markings and safety pinch-points need to be reviewed to support this cycle route.
3. Change parking layout in Beaumont Road, through a DIY scheme, using planters etc. See figure 3. The purpose of this is to reduce the long line of sight down Beaumont Road and thus discourage speeding.

*Figure 3*



4. Review, with the Highways Authority, the timing of the traffic lights at Headington Roundabout to see if any adjustments would make the Quarry cut though less attractive (by making it more attractive to use the roundabout).
5. Use Home Zone ideas to change the road texture and road markings outside the Foundation school (from the entrance to the park to near the Chequers) to give a message of shared space. Mark out suggested pedestrian crossing places. See Figure 4.

Slightly increase the width of the pavement in the narrow bend opposite the garden to the Chequers and increase the curb height to discourage curb mounting. There is insufficient width here for two vehicles to pass so a reduction in road width will not result in more drivers reversing than occurs at present, but would help pedestrians. Right of way should not be indicated, because this would encourage speeding on one direction.

Figure 4



6. Make it easier for pedestrians and cyclists to cross Quarry Road towards Quarry Hollow by removing all rights of way and by painting two small roundabouts on the road. See Figure 5. *Alternative designs such as installing a pedestrian crossing across Quarry Road by the Village Hall, or by removing all rights of way using a junction similar to Lime Walk/All Saints Road, seem less effective and more costly, in our view.*

Figure 5





7. The changes to Beaumont Road/ Quarry Hollow may result in more traffic traversing Quarry High Street. To counter this we should consider changing the parking layout on Quarry High Street along similar lines to that proposed for Beaumont Road. Due to the nature of the road it is difficult to determine the details of a parking layout scheme (and positions of build outs) but lessons learnt from changes to Beaumont Rod should inform this.

To discourage cars mounting pavements the wide entrance at Beecher Acoustics needs to be addressed and the position of the dropped curbs either side of the entrance to Coppock Close need to be moved slightly away from Quarry High Street (by just a metre or so).



8. The shortage of parking places and resulting parking on verges and pavements can only be tackled by reducing the number of parked cars. The introduction of double yellow lines is not seen as a solution because this would make life harder for residents, visitors, and business users to find a parking place. A residents' parking schemes (RPZ) could address the problem, although it would be very unpopular with a great number of people. It is considered, however, that the introduction of a RPZ is probably inevitable, as they are gradually being introduced across the city. It would, therefore, be sensible to prepare for its introduction provided certain conditions can be met:

- a. significant numbers of parking places are not lost;
- b. there is ample free short term parking for visitors;
- c. a scheme can be designed which does not require a profusion of white and yellow lines, and pavement located poles.

The conditions above could be met through a scheme which has markings at entry points which say that parking in the area is only permitted for up to 3 hours, say, or if a valid permit is displayed. It is recognised that such a scheme would be innovative, but surely would have value at least as a trial and it builds on the 'no yellow line' RPZs found in Glasgow.

## 5. Funding and priorities

Some of the above would be expensive to introduce (perhaps impractically expensive unless low cost approaches can be found), other less so. We are aware of the following sources of finance:

- Councillor funds (though only in hundreds of pounds, or a few thousand);
- Residents (again only in hundreds of pounds, or a few thousand);
- From developments (eg the Churchill /Old Road Campus site) in the form of Section 106 money or Community Infrastructure Levy.
- From ad hoc central government grants (eg cyclability grants).

We suggest the following prioritisation, balancing cost and importance:

- i. Vegetation at entrance to Beaumont Road
- ii. Small signage changes and markings to support cyclist routes
- iii. Parking layout in Beaumont Road (through a DIY scheme)
- iv. Increase width of pavement and height of curb outside no. 7 Quarry Hollow
- v. Change prioritisation at Quarry Road, Quarry High Street junction through low cost road markings.
- vi. Change road markings outside Quarry Foundation school (texture only if sufficient funds)

- vii. Parking layout in Quarry High Street (through a DIY scheme)
- viii. Change dropped curb positioning/ wide entrances in Quarry High Street
- ix. Introduce modified residents parking scheme.

## 6. Wider solutions?

The above proposals are only local solutions. They will at best only help to manage the current unsatisfactory situation. They do not address the root cause of too many people commuting into Oxford by car. More radical and larger scale solutions are required to address this. The following would, in our opinion, go a long significant way towards managing the growth of commuter traffic (with an acknowledgement to Peter Headicar, one-time traffic professional at Brookes University, for the first three points):

- Build additional P&R sites, at 'remote' locations such as Bicester and Witney.
- Existing P&R sites developed as interchange hubs (for travel in and out of city).
- There is a greater 'demand' for road space than space available. An economic solution would be to match supply and demand through a pricing approach. Road charging in Oxford was rejected by Central Government, despite the City Council's interest in the idea, a few years ago. We think the idea should be resurrected, provided money raised is demonstrably reinvested in public transport and walking/cycling schemes.
- CIL money should be used to subsidise public transport, in addition to walking and cycling schemes.
- Greater support should be provided – if this is realistic – to developing employment opportunities nearer to where people live.
- We support (and this is contentious) a significant increase in the amount of affordable and key worker housing in the city.
- We recognise that the two local authorities are investing in better provision for cycling, but much more recognition of their needs of cyclists must be included in road projects and in maintenance programmes. An example of the former is the lack of consideration for cyclists in the planned changes to Headington roundabout. An example of the latter is the number of sunken drains caused by repeated re-surfacing.
- More intelligent and coordinated traffic light systems should be introduced to respond to changing traffic volumes to reduce congestion and manage traffic (even turning lights off at quiet times).
- We are encouraged by the current discussions about introducing an Oyster card type system in Oxfordshire. We would like to see cashless systems introduced to speed up boarding times and reduce the cost of multi-leg journeys.