

Date: 27 October 2022

**County Hall
New Road
Oxford
OX1 1ND**

Mr D M Salter
HM Senior Coroner for Oxfordshire
Coroner's Office
Oxfordshire

Dear Mr Salter

RESPONSE TO REGULATION 28 REPORT TO PREVENT FUTURE DEATHS

This is Oxfordshire County Council's ("the council") response to HMSC Salter's Report to Prevent Future Deaths made under Regulation 28 of the Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013 dated 2nd September 2022 (Report).

The report arose from an inquest concluded on 2nd September 2022 into the death of Jennifer Wong.

I would like to take this opportunity to add my condolences to Ms Wong's family and acknowledge the tragic nature of this case. I would also like to thank the Coroner for his report. The Report to Prevent Future Deaths covered 2 material matters of concern. This response is structured accordingly.

Those matters were:

- 1) *The first and main concern is in relation to the nearside cycle lane and what appeared to be an element of confusion or perhaps a dilemma for cyclists at this location intending to cycle straight across the junction. The cycle lane puts cyclists on the nearside of a lane that is specifically for vehicles turning right into Headley Way. There is the box/advanced stop line in front of the line of traffic in the lane, but this requires the cyclist to decide to use it and, importantly, to have time to make it pass the nearside of the vehicles and into the box before the vehicles in the lane commence their right turn.*

If there was no cycle lane, it appears more likely that a cyclist heading straight across would position themselves in lane 2 for vehicles also heading straight on. I believe that further consideration should be given to this issue and if improved signage has a part to play to mitigate the risks.

I appreciate of course that it is not possible to remove risk completely and cyclists will make different choices about where to position themselves at a junction such as this one. I anticipate that the junction is not dissimilar to many others in Oxford. The issue of

cyclists in nearside blind spots, particularly involving large commercial vehicles with limited visibility, therefore presents a significant and ongoing risk.

- 2) *The second concern relates to the width of the cycle lane. It is believed to be 0.95 metres wide at this location, but the recommended width is 1.2m or perhaps 1.5m. I understand this is an issue which has already been raised following a site meeting. There may be valid reasons why the lane is the width it is, but I would be grateful if this could be considered.*

This response therefore firstly covers action that the council is taking to respond to your Matters of Concern.

It then reports on what the council are further actioning in conjunction with our Highways maintenance provider Milestone to respond to your concerns. Finally, it refers to several other relevant actions that the council is either taking or has already taken to help mitigate the risk of these circumstances happening again in the future. I anticipate that we will need to send you a further report in 6 months to update you on the progress of these developments.

I would now like to outline activity that the council has taken and is now taking regarding traffic signals, cyclist safety and cycle lanes.

Improvements to traffic signals, timings, signage for cyclists and cycle lane safety

The council has taken on board your concerns and several measures have already been put in place to improve the public highway for vulnerable road users at both the Headley way junction and at two other key sites within the city. The works that have been completed at Headley Way include: A 5 second advance green lights for cyclists heading east bound and a dropped kerb facility to bring cyclists off the London Road to turn left into Headley Way. We have also commissioned our highway maintenance contractors to undertake a series of road marking amendments to make it clearer for cyclists to utilise the junction. The redesign of the lane/cycle markings has been commissioned to specifically consider the concerns that you raised in your Matter of Concern point 1. The design and delivery of the works at the Headley junction are due to be completed by the end of November 2022.

Width of cycle lane

The original width of 0.95m was a legacy of a scheme that was installed some 10 plus years ago. The cycle widths are being amended to meet the current standards set out by the Department for Transport (1.2m minimum) and work is being undertaken by the council to establish where other sections of the city cycle network may be falling short of current standards. As mentioned previously, the amended designs and works will be completed by the end of November 2022.

Other Action

Finally, reference below are additional steps that the council is taking in response to concerns raised throughout the inquest and in your Report, that we are committed to addressing at this time.

These include:

- Dropped kerb – The council has now completed the dropped kerb facility at Headley way. We will also be removing the stone planter to increase the space for pedestrians and cyclist at this junction. This now means that cyclists are directed off the London Road before the Headley Way junction to afford them safe passage to the shared use cycle/footway on Headley way.
- Elsewhere within the city (and beyond) a cycle safety group has been set up to undertake detailed reviews of known hotspots for cycle incidents. Currently these are The Plain Roundabout, Iffley Road, The Driftway and The Parkway entrance to ensure that there is a safe system for all road users. This work is linked to the council's commitment to Vision Zero (zero fatalities or seriously injured on our highway network by 2050). The working group is made up of councillors, senior council officers and local cycling groups.
- Stage 4 Road Safety Audit (RSA) – The RSA4 was completed in October 2022. The report is attached. The council is now ensuring that the recommendations are implemented in a timely manner that is proportionate to the risk posed by the measures being recommended for delivery.
- Vulnerable Road Users (VRU) Audit – following a request from the family, this was commissioned through our Highway maintenance provider on Friday 7 October 2022. There was slight delay in requesting this as we had to wait for the Stage 4 RSA to be completed to ensure a different team were used to undertake the additional assessment. This is to ensure the impartiality of both reports. The findings normally take a minimum of 31 days to be compiled into a report. This is the standard length of time that we would expect for such a report to be developed. The council will write to the coroner with the recommendations of this report upon receipt. The council can confirm that any further actions that are recommended within either the Stage 4RSA or the VRU report will be actioned with immediate effect where it is a priority measure recommended. These measures will be agreed with the cycle safety group to ensure that local users of the network are consulted and that they are content with the council's proposals.
- Users of the council's highways and cycle paths can recommend suggestions for amendments to the cycle infrastructure through our defect reporting system Fix My Street. The council monitors the inbox for these suggestions/requests and measures are then implemented if they are deemed to be of benefit to the users of the highway and the cycle network. These suggestions can range from the removal of a single bollard to a whole junction review.
- The council has recently undertaken a detailed review of the Plain Roundabout and The Parkway junction with amendments planned to be implemented to both locations in November 2022.
- The council has reviewed its key junctions that were deemed to be a potential risk to vulnerable road users with input from the cycle safety groups. These reviews have involved site meetings and virtual meetings to fully understand what is required to make the junctions as safe as is reasonably practicable with the resources that are available. In some locations these have been split into short, medium and long-term measures to enable some quick mitigations whilst having a more strategic overview of future developments in the area that will dramatically change the layout of some of the areas.

The council is committed to the delivery of Vision Zero and several work streams have been set up to ensure that a holistic approach is taken when considering maintenance, renewal, and development of schemes within Oxfordshire. The council has a dedicated team who are project managing the implementation of this work. Oxfordshire County Council is determined to learn from this deeply tragic case and takes the coroner's concerns very seriously.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted signature]

[Redacted name]

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