

Traffic in Oundle

Introduction

The population of Oundle has risen steadily since 2001. This trend will continue through to 2031, by which time, the usually resident population is expected to be around 45% higher than the level in 2001. It is important to prepare for the future by making suitable choices in 2014.

Oundle is a compact town with a major traffic route (A605) passing nearby. However, the increase in population will lead to a rise in the number of journeys being made by residents and visitors from the rural hinterland through Oundle itself. This will affect the levels of traffic congestion within the town.

This paper will examine some of the factors affecting traffic congestion and what steps can be taken to mitigate their effect.

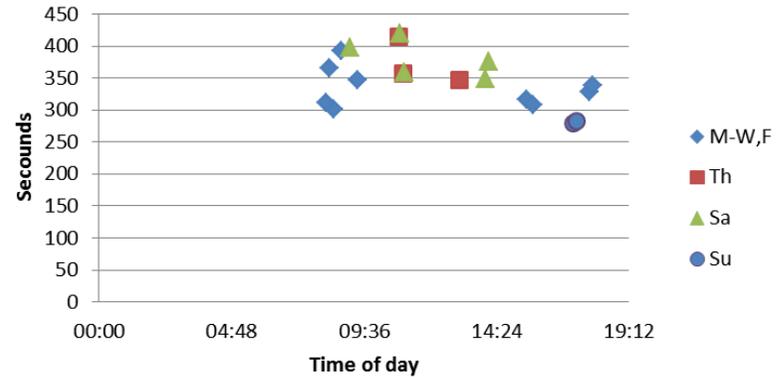
1. A number of housing and commercial developments have taken place in Oundle over the past 13 years. Further developments have already been approved for implementation in the near future. In a number of cases, a traffic analysis model has been used to forecast the impact of the increase in road traffic from the development. Examination of these analyses has shown that there is generally sufficient capacity in the road and junctions of the town to cope with the expected increase in traffic.
2. In 2011, the Transport Planning Practice completed a Transport Study on Oundle (TS1) commissioned by East Northamptonshire Council. This confirmed that there is sufficient capacity in the road system design to cope with the current traffic levels and that which is likely to result from the approved developments. However, TPP noted that there are a number of locations in the town where queues can form and traffic congestion is observed for short periods of time. This is caused by a number of factors that cannot easily be predicted in standard transport analysis packages.
3. In a public survey completed in 2010, traffic congestion and car parking were two of the most significant concerns identified by residents. At the launch of the Neighbourhood Plan in January 2014 the same two issues elicited more comments than any other.

It is unrealistic to expect that further development can be halted. Consequently, attention should focus on ensuring that future developed takes place in locations where the impact of increased in traffic is minimised and in addition, financially viable improvements to the current traffic system are implemented wherever possible.

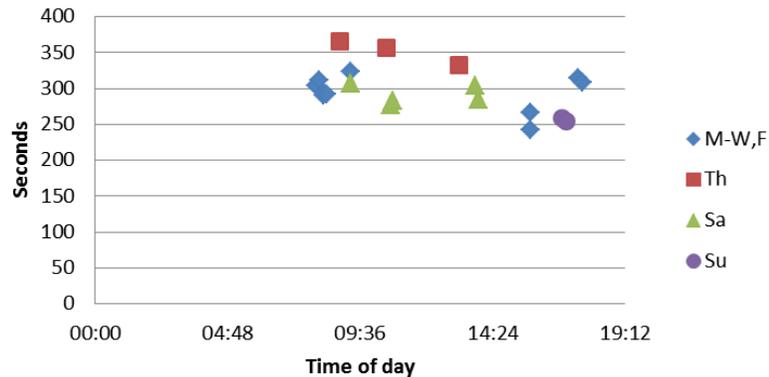
Current traffic in Oundle

Measurements were taken during 2013 to try and measure the variation of vehicle transit times across a number of routes out of the town. Further measurements were made during 2014 across a number routes inside the town.

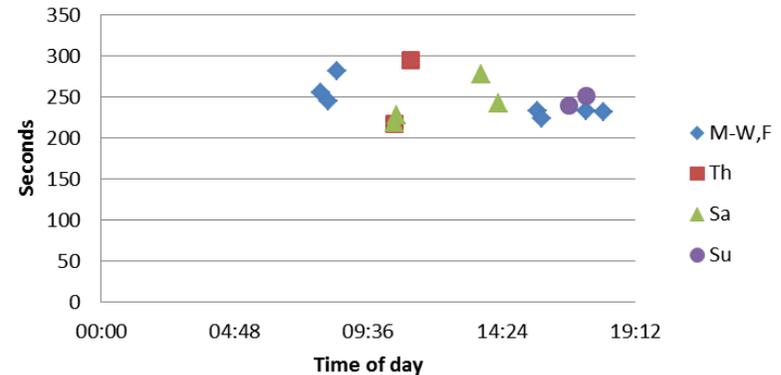
Glaphorn Road to Polebrook exit



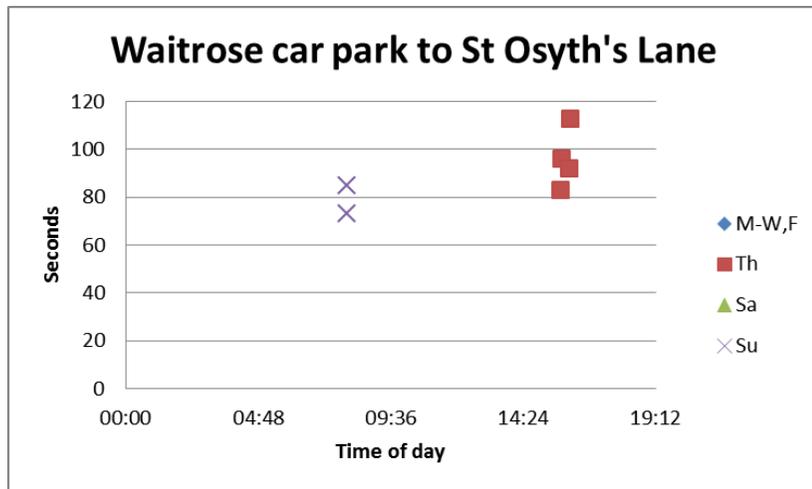
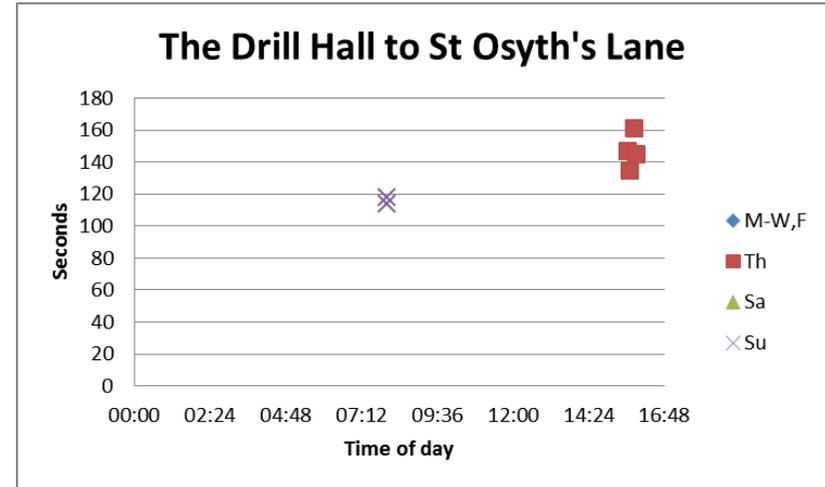
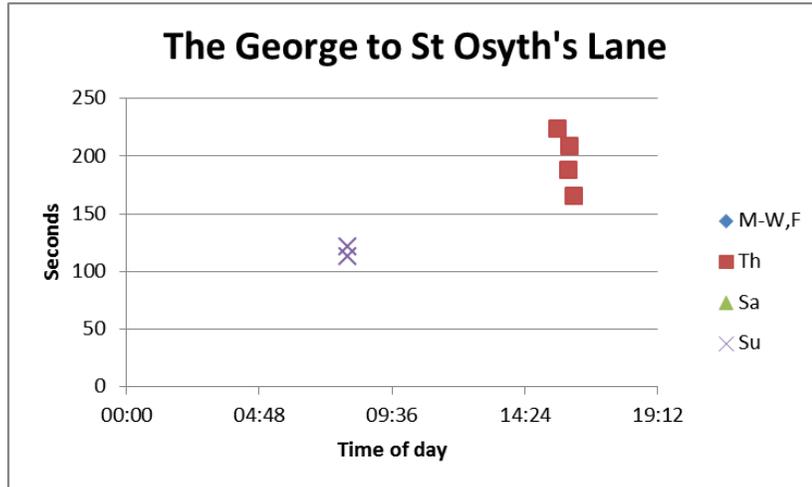
Benefield Road to Polebrook exit



Creed Road to Polebrook exit



Current traffic in Oundle (continued)



- Measurements taken on the exit routes showed that there was relatively little difference in the time to move across the town by car between the “empty road” minimum to the busy period maximum (the maximum was between 35% and 51% higher than the minimum).
- Slightly higher variation was noted on routes showed within the town; the difference in the time to move within the town by car between the “empty road” minimum to the busy period maximum varied between 45% and 98%.
- These measurements appear to align with the comments made by TPP and others (there is generally sufficient capacity but periodically congestion can occur).

Recommended actions to improve traffic flows in Oundle (1 of 2)

1. Future housing development in Oundle should only occur within a 1 mile radius of the town centre. This maximises the opportunity for residents to use sustainable, healthier forms of transport in place of cars for short journeys in the town and as a result reduces traffic congestion and the demand for parking space.
2. As detailed elsewhere, work should continue to be done on the enhancement of walking and cycling infrastructure within the town and encouragement of residents to use the facilities for short journeys.
3. The impact of proposed housing development sites should be evaluated for their impact on the traffic system so that informed decisions can be made on where additional housing should be located. If necessary, remedial action should be taken as a part of the relevant developments to mitigate the effects.
4. As detailed elsewhere, work should be carried out to improve the availability of short term and long term parking in the town.
5. As detailed elsewhere, the school bus routings should be changed to minimise their impact on traffic congestion.
6. Complete a review of those areas where traffic congestion occurs on a routine basis and identify what remedial action can be taken and indicate in what priority order improvements should be made (based on benefit vs cost). Areas to be covered: New Street, Market Place, West Street, St Osyth's Lane, East Road, South Road.

... continued overleaf

Recommended actions to improve traffic flows in Oundle (2of 2)

7. The proposal for a distributor road along Occupation Road should be dropped for the following reasons:
 - a. It is an expensive solution for an undefined problem. If significant funding was available it would be better spent in other areas where there is a clear problem to be solved.
 - b. If it were to go ahead, it would lead to incremental housing development between Cotterstock Road and Glaphorn Road. This would occur more than 1 mile from the centre of town and bring about a fundamental change in the character of Oundle.
 - c. It would significantly impact three thriving sports clubs in the town (tennis, rugby, bowls) and require a new site to be built for the rugby club.
8. Debate has taken place over a number of years concerning changes to the layout in the centre of the town. Three distinct options should be prepared so that a choice can be made between maintaining the status quo or establishing a different layout in the centre of the town that will serve the community better as the population grows.

Option A: Retain the current layout in the centre of town (apart from any changes implemented under point 6 above).

Option B: Introduce public realm enhancements in the centre of the town to enhance the public amenity and make it easier to accommodate the surges in pedestrian demand which currently occur and at times cause traffic congestion.

Option C: Full pedestrianisation of the town centre with alternatives identified for accommodating displaced traffic. This would be expensive but would enhance the town's appeal as a venue to shop, enjoy the amenities, meet people and build community cohesion. It would increase the appeal for visitors to the town and encourage them to walk from Waitrose (1/2 mile) or the Marina (3/4 mile) but would of course require suitable retail and entertainment offers to be available beyond the visual amenities of the town.