

Active and Healthy Travel - Parklets

Parklets are micro-parks created by switching car parking spaces into spaces for sitting, resting, the environment, cycle parking and for adding greenery and plant life to urban environments. Given the number of people in the urban environment that do not own or travel by car, there is a disproportionate amount of space given over to individual motorised transport. This often seems to come at the expense of a pleasant, green, peaceful environment. Parklets are a small step in making a more inviting, liveable space for people, rather than vehicles.

Parklets can be used for sitting, resting, bike parking, commercial opportunities, social activity, adding biodiversity to urban places, and improving kerb appeal. They can provide rest spaces for people who may need regular stops, at regular intervals. This is urgently needed for older, disabled people and pregnant women, to be able to access exercise and be outside, as well as visiting shops and amenities.

As national debates about the 'death of the high street' continue to gain pace, there is an urgent need to reframe what the 'high street' might be, when it is not a purely commercial enterprise. Once other factors come into play, such as social and culture as well as environmental and educational, then there is even more compelling arguments to reclaim car parking spaces.



What can Parklets bring to a space?

First and foremost, parklets are an economic development tool. They enable a far greater number of people to engage in urban space, to bring their social needs and offers, and to put people where there are commercial opportunities.

Secondly, reducing the number of parking spaces contributes to mitigation of Oxfordshire's declared climate emergency, reducing the ease of car use, and providing more attractive alternatives.

Thirdly, they can become part of a Smart city zones. Holding wifi connections, and for example, allowing app ordering from local cafes and food outlets, which then bring the products that you've paid for online, to you.

Businesses could adopt parklets near to them and be involved in the design and purposing of them.

Examples

Parklets are being adopted by cities all across the world. USA, Canada and Mexico all have examples, a wide variety of European cities have them, as do cities in Australia and New Zealand, Delhi has some, as do other cities in India.



Why parklets might NOT be a good idea in Oxfordshire?

- People who drive cars and wish to park along streets in busy urban areas would not feel happy about losing parking spaces to non-motorised vehicle activity
- They might be damaged or vandalised
- They would need a maintenance programme
- Planners might be against any kind of change that would affect car drivers
- They would cost money: design, materials and build
- They do not support the car industry, as they are replacing both car parking, and the need for cars
- They might be used by homeless people as overnight shelters

Parklets do not have to have a single purpose. Some are simply ways of widening pavement space for pedestrians, rather than streets being dominated by cars.

Question 6

Active and Healthy Travel: Parklets - What do you think?

How do you think parklets could be implemented?

What kind of places across the county do you think they could work well? As part of our commitment to tackling the climate emergency how do you think they could contribute to supporting an increase in active and healthy travel (i.e. cycling and walking)? What kind of things would you have in a parklet if you were given free rein to design your own?

To respond please use the online consultation form.