



Top-line findings on study into effects of LTNs – Magdalen Road

MARCH 2024

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Background



Background – Magdalen Road

- ▶ Oxfordshire County Council together with Oxford City Council are implementing and proposing various traffic measures which will change the way in which residents and visitors travel around the city
- ▶ Various consultations have taken place with results not universally accepted
- ▶ There is a question mark as to whether these measures – until now Low Traffic Neighbourhoods or LTNs – will adversely affect the businesses in the zones where they influence traffic patterns
- ▶ This study focuses on the businesses in one street in an area which might be expected to be affected – Magdalen Road in East Oxford

Research





Research Objectives

- ▶ To investigate how businesses in this micro-area have been affected by the LTNs
- ▶ To assess their attitudes to the councils' future traffic plans, in particular bus gates
- ▶ To measure their attitudes on various dimensions relating to business success and traffic management

Research method

- A questionnaire was distributed to all businesses with premises on Magdalen Road. All of the businesses included had a 'shop-front' offering a direct connection with customers. Offices offering services were not included
- This included open-ended questions where respondents could compose and write in their own responses in their own words
- In the event, 15 completed questionnaires were received out of 20 questionnaires distributed

Sample

- ▶ 13 were business owners, 2 business managers
- ▶ A slight majority were open both daytime and evening; the rest just daytime
- ▶ The majority thought that their customers did **not** live within walking distance of their business
- ▶ The majority had between 1 and 5 full-time employees – the maximum being 9
- ▶ The vast majority – 12 – had had their business for at least 6 – 10 years, and a half of these for 20 plus years
- ▶ The remaining 3 had had their business for between 18 months and 2 years
- ▶ To preserve anonymity, this report will not identify specific types of business but will refer to broad categories where this helps understanding

Summary of findings



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Summary of findings

- ▶ Of course, a study of this scale is simply a ‘dipstick’ of opinion
- ▶ But, as will become apparent, the strength of views is such that it must be the case that there are very divided views about traffic management issues amongst those running businesses

Catchment Area

- ▶ Nearly all businesses reported that, historically, they had a wide catchment area – much wider than just local
- ▶ ‘All over Oxford’ was a common response
- ▶ One business claimed customers ‘From Swindon to London, and from Birmingham to Hampshire’
- ▶ The vast majority believed that their catchment area had become restricted as a result of LTNs and their related problems

Did the LTNs have a negative impact on their business?

- ▶ **The overwhelming answer was that they did**
- ▶ 10 of the 15 respondents strongly agreed with only 2 disagreeing and 1 remaining neutral
- ▶ Comments made were:
 - An immediate turnover decline experienced
 - Loss of customers
 - Everyone – staff and customers – travelling further and with more difficulty/unpredictability/ lateness
 - Traffic was previously never a problem: now lots of jams

Did the LTNs have a negative impact on their business?

- ▶ **The overwhelming answer was that they did**
- ▶ They believed:
 - It was a 'disaster'
 - Their businesses were 'collateral damage' in the council's war against the motorist
 - It was destroying East Oxford
 - In their case, it was part of the 'gentrification' of Magdalen Road, exemplified by incomers⁺ naming it 'Magdalen Village'

⁺ It was not 'incomers', but long-time resident former Green councillor Craig Simmons, who thought this up in a vain attempt to offset the damage caused by the LTN closures in East Oxford (including Magdalen Rd) that he himself designed [IOA web editor's note]

What exactly was the impact?

- ▶ 8 of the 15 made spontaneous comments:
 - All said diminished footfall
 - 7 said problems with deliveries
 - 7 said that customers were stuck in traffic or couldn't find parking. A lot of parking places had been withdrawn by the council
 - 6 said staff couldn't get to work or were put off from getting there by bike as it was 'too dangerous'.
 - 5 said that buses carrying staff or customers were stuck in traffic

Would the proposed bus gates be a good idea?

- ▶ **Of the 12 who replied, 10 disagreed with 2 agreeing**
- ▶ The reasons for disagreeing were:
 - They would be strongly divisive
 - They would produce an isolated area – when East Oxford was formerly Oxford-wide in terms of people visiting or working
 - Traffic – and business – would simply move to other areas – to their detriment
 - Businesses would be fighting for a share of a smaller number of customers
- ▶ A typical comment was ‘Magdalen Road has become an area for rich white people to sit outside drinking expensive coffee’



Would the proposed bus gates be a good idea?

- ▶ The 2 people who agreed did so on the grounds of safety and pollution reduction
- ▶ A typical comment was 'Any reduction in traffic in this area are a net positive in business terms'

Attitude dimensions



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Attitude dimensions

- ▶ People were asked to respond to a series of attitude statements
- ▶ On each dimension their responses could range from 'Strongly agree' to 'Strongly disagree' with intermediate categories of 'Agree', 'Neither Agree or Disagree' and 'Disagree'
- ▶ Because the sample is very small, the results have been amalgamated to combine those agreeing, whether strongly or not, and similarly for those disagreeing
- ▶ It should, however, be noted that, for nearly every dimension, the results were strongly polarised with the vast weight of response at the 'Strongly' end of the spectrum
- ▶ This no doubt reflects the divided response which has been seen elsewhere in this study

Highly supported statements

This set of statements met with 70%+ support from the group :-

- ▶ Public transportation should be subsidised for all
- ▶ Park & Ride buses should be free
- ▶ There should be more free short-stay car parking spaces in Magdalen Road and the immediate vicinity
- ▶ Removing the LTNs is a good idea
- ▶ Multiple parking spaces in the vicinity of Magdalen Road were removed in 2022. Do you think this has negatively impacted your business?

Least supported statements

This set of statements met with less than 50% support :-

- ▶ Repurposing some car parking for cycling parking is a good idea
- ▶ There should be greater action to enforce existing speeding regulations
- ▶ Cycling provision should be improved

Scores on attitude dimensions

There should be greater action to enforce existing speeding regulations

- 7Ag; 1 Disag; 7 Neither

Repurposing some car parking for cycling parking is a good idea

- ▶ 5 Ag; 7 Disag; 2 Neither

Pedestrian provision should be improved

- ▶ 8 Ag; 2 Disag; 5 Neither

Public transportation should be subsidised for all

- ▶ 12 Ag; 0 Disag; 3 Neither

Park & Ride buses should be free

- ▶ 12 Ag; 3 Disag; 0 Neither

There should be more free short-stay car parking spaces in Magdalen Road and the immediate vicinity

- ▶ 12 Ag; 2 Disag; 1 Neither

Scores on attitude dimensions

Removing the LTNs is a good idea

- ▶ 11 Ag; 2 Disag; 2 Neither

Rat running should be discouraged

- ▶ 8 Ag; 3 Disag; 4 Neither

Has your business been negatively impacted by the cost of living crisis?

- ▶ 8 Ag; 2 Disag; 5 Neither

Cycling provision should be improved

- ▶ 6 Ag; 2 Disag; 7 Neither

Multiple parking spaces in the vicinity of Magdalen Road were removed in 2022. Do you think this has negatively impacted your business?

- ▶ 11 Ag; 2 Disag; 2 Neither

Traffic-calming measures other than LTNs should be used to deter non-destination traffic. Examples include one-way streets

- ▶ 8 Ag; 3 Disag; 4 Neither

CV of Nigel Clarke – report author

- ▶ After graduating from St Edmund Hall, Oxford, he joined the market research department of Ogilvy & Mather, a global advertising agency. Here, he was trained in both quantitative and qualitative market research
- ▶ He then joined D'Arcy Masius Benton and Bowles, another global advertising agency, where he eventually became Head of Planning, London, and subsequently Head of Strategy, Europe
- ▶ In these roles, a key element of his work was the interpretation of research data – extracting its meaning for practical use
- ▶ Now retired, he moved with his wife to live in Oxford – a city he loves – in 2006

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**Report
commissioned
by Independent
Oxford Alliance**



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“The IOA was formed by Oxford people wanting to bring common sense back into local politics.

We want a return to effective democracy, where all people have a voice and their voice is heard.”

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