



Transport Planning in Oxfordshire

An Alternative Approach

Our commitment to sensible and well-informed transport planning

Transport planning in Oxfordshire needs to deliver an effective way for people to move around, with

- public transport offering a realistic effective alternative to car use – this means:
 - bus routes that reflect where people want to travel, without the need for multiple buses on one journey; and sufficiently frequent services to meet local needs
 - train services that are cost effective and timely
 - effective connectivity at Park and Rides and rail stations
- well-designed roads and integral or (preferably) separate cycle tracks, for improved safety of cyclists, pedestrians and drivers
- effective routing systems for those driving in and around the city

The traffic management measures introduced since 2021 have clearly made things worse (see below), and yet the current County Council refuses to take notice of the evidence of problems and the expressed views of residents and businesses.

The Independent Oxford Alliance (IOA) would do the following:

First, the IOA is committed to the removal of extensive low traffic neighbourhoods that have exacerbated, rather than solved, congestion issues.

Second, the IOA believes that a number of tailored changes in specific areas can further improve connectivity around the city, bringing benefits to all travellers, whatever their mode of transport.

Furthermore, the IOA develops proposals in collaboration with local people who know and understand the area, and works with key stakeholders including bus companies, taxi and delivery drivers, businesses, schools, NHS services, care agencies, mobile tradespeople and services, commuters and emergency services.

We are also committed to:

- effective and transparent consultation on proposals
- monitoring and review of results of changes made
- responding to evidence and feedback, leading to modifications where these are indicated

We apply a 'bottom-up' and democratic approach, taking account of local knowledge, local needs and local experience.

Why we Need an alternative

Oxford has suffered long enough under the traffic measures first introduced by County Council Conservatives in 2021 and relentlessly pursued and expanded by the Lib-Dem-Labour-Green alliance after the 2021 elections, and subsequently by Lib-Dems and Greens after Labour left the alliance, having never tried to vote them down.

There is ample evidence that these measures have vastly increased congestion, journey times, delays and inconvenience (especially in East Oxford), Cowley and Littlemore, for which the Council's 'solution' is to add further restrictions - 'traffic filters' (aka bus gates), controlled parking zones and an expanded Zero Emission Zone that will effectively block most traffic from going directly from East Oxford to North Oxford and vice versa, since only a very small proportion of vehicles are currently electric.

Physical road blocks and the use of ANPR (automatic number plate recognition) cameras to create so-called 'Low Traffic Neighbourhoods' (LTNs) has been the most serious cause of problems to date, but it is not the only issue. The removal of parking areas to create 'quickway' cycle lanes on several East Oxford roads (e.g. Iffley Road, Warneford Lane, Morrell Avenue and Donnington Bridge Road) has increased parking pressure on adjacent roads, reduced public use of South Parks and increased traffic speeds (e.g. on Morrell Avenue where the formal reduction of the speed limit to 20mph is often ignored by traffic taking advantage of the now wider road to travel at unsafe speeds, particularly in evenings when the road is quiet).

While the County Council's stated aim of these measures is to "to reduce congestion and improve air quality" (see <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/transport-and-travel/connecting-oxfordshire/low-traffic-neighbourhoods/frequently-asked-questions>) the exact opposite is occurring on the majority of Oxford's main roads (many of which are largely residential) and on the ring road. This is due to the displacement of traffic from LTN roads on to surrounding roads, resulting in longer journeys, slow-moving traffic and long queues. So, rather than a drop in overall congestion and pollution, there is an increase in both.

There is certainly no evidence of the 'traffic evaporation' that the Council expected; but ample evidence of the current measures making it difficult to live or work in Oxford.

Hospitals and schools are finding it difficult to recruit and retain staff; children are late to school and struggle to get to after-school activities; carers can't get to as many people needing care; mobile traders/workers (electricians, plumbers, hair dressers, etc) are either moving away from Oxford because their businesses cannot afford to operate here, or refusing to service areas affected by LTNs.

Then there are the safety issues. For example, wider and more cycle lanes, as recently created, are causing new safety risks on many roads, especially where the room left for two-way passing traffic is too narrow for larger vehicles to pass safely without encroaching on to the cycle lanes themselves (for example on Windmill Rd, Marsh Lane and parts of Iffley Road). The risk is even more acute where 'wands' placed along the edge of the cycle lanes (e.g. on Marston Road) prevent either cyclist or motorist crossing the divide to avoid some unexpected obstruction ahead.

There is lots of evidence of the harm being done by the Council's approach, and clear evidence that the majority of people do not want these measures.

The IOA believes there is a better way.

A Solution for an Accessible, Vibrant and Thriving City

The IOA works on the principle that roads are a shared resource; that they are not 'owned' by those who live along them; and that their purpose is connection both within and between communities.

We also consider the distinction that the current county council makes between 'residential' and 'major/arterial' roads largely arbitrary, as many supposedly minor roads are vital routes for locals to access hospitals, shopping areas etc., and all the arterial roads within the city are to a greater or lesser extent also residential.

The IOA is committed to proper **public consultations**, unlike the frequently ignored tick-box exercises practised by the current County Council. We also believe in **developing proposed 'solutions' through a consultative process**, in collaboration with local people who understand their environment and community needs.

To this end, the IOA has worked with local residents, gathering their ideas on what would work better in their specific neighbourhoods, to develop **a set of proposals for different areas***.

These proposals are precisely that – **proposals, not a blue-print** – and the IOA is committed to **further consultation before taking these suggestions forward for implementation**.

That said, there is an urgency to achieving improvements, and here we can **immediately draw on the existing evidence of damage caused by recently introduced measures, and argue for the reversal of the most egregious measures introduced in recent years**.

There is clear evidence of:

- businesses closing due to fall in trade directly related to implementation of the Council's transport policies, as cited by the businesses themselves
- professional tradespeople and mobile workers ceasing to work in parts of the City, due to increased travel times and parking restrictions, as cited by the tradespeople and mobile workers themselves
- severe impact on care services, and on the lives of those who need them
- immense negative impacts upon the daily lives of residents
- local leisure and community facilities closing
- local schools and hospitals struggling to recruit and retain staff
- local bus services significantly worsened since introduction of the LTNs
- increased costs of travel due to longer journey times and distances (taxi fares sometimes 3 or 4 times what they used to be)

- impeded access for emergency vehicles (police, fire, ambulance), putting the public at risk
- access to hospitals and other medical care being more difficult, with many late arrivals and missed appointments

Based on this evidence, the simple immediate solutions to move us towards restoring street sanity and the normal function of the road system are to:

- **remove post-2020 LTN barriers and LTN cameras**
- **selectively at least, restore parking where it has been removed** - especially where access to local businesses or public spaces, including parks, has been affected by its removal and where it has created overcrowding in adjacent streets.
- **Restore speed limits on main roads to 30mph (from 20mph), except in busy shopping or community areas**
This will improve traffic flow for private, business and public transport.
- **Cancel implementation of the six traffic filters planned across Oxford**
Businesses and many residents are seriously worried about the expected impact of the traffic filters, and there is good reason to anticipate that they will make things worse.

Another obvious immediate action that would make life simpler for everyone would be:

- **Restoration of window stickers for residents' cars and scratch-cards for visitors in CPZ areas**
The IOA challenges the imposition, without consultation with residents, of the new online-only system. It is clearly unpopular, discriminatory and inefficient, as evidenced by response to the Change.org petition.

In addition, IOA believes that a number of other actions will produce significant benefits, and is committed to exploring the following:

- **Facilitation of accessible, reliable and affordable public transport, offering a realistic alternative to car journeys in and around Oxford.**
IOA would work with the bus companies, local residents & workers, businesses and employees, to explore a number of ideas, including:
 - **Creation of an additional Park & Ride (P&R) in East Oxford (to serve Cowley etc)**
East Oxford lacks a Park & Ride, so commuters coming from Cuddesdon-Horspath and Watlington-Stadhampton-Garsington are likely to drive into Oxford rather than go to Thornhill or Redbridge. So a P&R for the south-east should be created, possibly in connection with the proposed Cowley branch line station or near Unipart.
 - **School bus services from P&Rs, enabling parents to drop off and collect children there**
 - **Bus services that go from P&Rs to the various hospitals and other major places of employment, at key times of the day, when these services are needed.**

IOA would want to explore the possibility that large employers (such as Universities, BMW, OUP) could provide or subsidise direct dedicated buses from P&Rs. In general P&R's need to be more attractive - e.g. reduced charges, more bus destinations. Routes need to be planned efficiently, and IOA will seek expert input.

- **Review and improvement of city centre parking arrangements.**

IOA will consider and consult on the following proposals:

- Re-introduce free evening parking (after 6pm?)
- Reduce city centre parking charges, to make them more reasonable (for the benefit of both individuals and businesses).

- **Halting the proposed significant expansion of the Zero Emission Zone (ZEZ)**

Oxford's pollution levels are currently already below the government's target levels.

IOA would want to challenge the City Council's current plan to go well below national targets.

- **Review of Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs) to ensure they are wanted and required especially where they have been proposed/introduced without obvious local need or residents' demand. Where they are required, their operation should be suited to the needs of local residents.**

- **The review of cycling infrastructure.**

Recently modified cycling infrastructure (extra-wide lanes, barrier 'wands' etc) will be reviewed for the safety of cyclists, pedestrians and other road users.

Options for segregated cycle and traffic routes will be explored and consulted upon.

- **Mitigating traffic congestion associated with the 'school run'**

The school run is a source of significant traffic congestion. A number of measures will be explored and trialled, including:

- dedicated free minibuses – including services from P&R sites (see above)
- staggering school hours across schools in the same area, to smooth out travel peaks
- reviewing the use and modus operandi of school streets, taking account of school, parent and local resident needs
- use of flashing light system (where lights flash and signs say '20mph when lights flash' during arrival and departure times)
- use of traffic calming measures in the area
- re-introduction of 'lollipop' people, to help children cross local roads safely

- **Review and potential modification of 'Copenhagen crossings'.**

These are raised paving sections across the road at street entrances. Many are inherently dangerous in that they encourage pedestrians to cross without due care, and stop lines behind them are useless because a driver's sight-lines are then often inadequate.

However, if they were all set back at least one car's length, so cars could wait beyond the crossing, and incoming cars had a safe refuge before the paving, it would be a great

safety improvement. (Magdalen Rd/Cowley Rd junction has this preferred arrangement).

- **Ensuring new housing developments (other than student housing) include appropriate and adequate parking spaces to meet residents' needs.**
IOA believes that housing developments should incorporate sufficient parking spaces to avoid adding pressure to existing parking provision. Developments must have adequate parking to cater for residents owning a car and also for residents' visitor parking. No development, should be permitted that effectively prevents residents from owning a car.
- **Improving safety for all road users**
The rules of the road are largely focused on ensuring the safety of all road users. This is only effective if all road users obey those rules. To that end IOA would encourage TVP to enforce compliance with the Highway Code for all road users, including cyclists, motorists, e-scooter and e-bike users.
- **Development of alternative traffic routing arrangements**
The objective here is to improve traffic flows and maintain easy access across the city.

The IOA is collaborating with local residents, and key stakeholders and interest groups, to develop alternative solutions specifically addressing the challenges in local areas.

The IOA is committed to:

- consulting on these proposals before implementation
- monitoring new arrangements for effectiveness, using appropriate measurement tools
- reviewing outcomes and, as necessary, modifying arrangements to achieve further improvements or removing things that are not effective.

All of these developments will be taken forward within a clear framework of consultation and evidence-based review.

Funding and Evaluation of Proposals

The proposals in this document will of course, to greater or lesser degrees, require funding. However, given the amounts currently being, and intended to be, spent by the County Council on their existing projects and plans which IOA would revoke, transferring this to more rational and effective proposals would offset much of the spend.