



Dear Labour Party Activists,

We, the Independent Oxford Alliance (IOA), are writing to you with a message of concern and an invitation to join us in a movement that truly represents the people of Oxford. As a grassroots alliance formed by residents frustrated with the current state of local governance, we have witnessed Labour's growing disconnect from the communities it claims to serve. We know many of you are driven by a passion for social justice and community welfare, and it is with this shared commitment that we urge you to reconsider your support for Labour and join us in building a better future for Oxford—one that prioritises the voices of its residents.

Our recent statement¹ on April 9, 2025, in response to Liz Brighouse's letter, captures the core of our concerns: "The IOA was born in Labour areas BECAUSE you weren't listening." This is not a statement we make lightly. For years, residents have tried to engage with Labour councillors through every available channel—speaking at council meetings, completing consultations, and even protesting in the streets—to voice their opposition to divisive transport policies like Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) and traffic filters. Yet, Labour has consistently ignored these efforts, pushing forward with measures that have harmed our communities, disrupted local businesses, and disproportionately affected the most vulnerable among us. As we stated, "You just ignored us and now you're panicking. But you reap what you sow."

This isn't a new issue. On February 12, 2024, we wrote an open letter² to all Oxfordshire Labour County Councillors, urging them to withhold support for the 2024/2025 budget until the LibDem and Green-led administration scaled back costly and damaging "anti-car" measures, such as the expanded Zero Emission Zone (ZEZ) and the Workplace Parking Levy (WPL). We warned that these policies would impose significant financial burdens on residents, particularly those who rely on non-electric vehicles, as well as on schools, hospitals, and employers. We called on Labour Councillors to propose amendments to remove these schemes, emphasising that "If Labour do as we ask, then neither the WPL nor the ZEZ will have any realistic chance of going ahead—because there will be no money available to Oxfordshire County Council to develop or implement the schemes." Despite our clear and constructive outreach, we received no meaningful response, and Labour supported the budget, allowing these harmful policies to move forward. This was a pivotal moment that further eroded trust in Labour's commitment to the community.

And it didn't stop there. At an Oxford City Council meeting on 18 March 2024, a motion was proposed³ by 'Independent Group' councillors Ajaz Rehman (proposer) and Shaista Aziz (seconder), aimed at tackling the unfair impact of the County Council's divisive transport policies. However, Labour councillors Dr Sandy Douglas and Anna Railton tabled an amendment³ which so diluted the motion that it entirely failed to achieve its original purpose of addressing genuine concerns raised by Oxford residents⁴.

It has not gone unnoticed that one of the authors of the Labour amendment, Cllr Dr Sandy Douglas, subsequently lost his seat to an IOA candidate in the City Council elections in May 2024.

Both as part of the coalition running Oxfordshire County Council (until Sept 2023) and subsequently, Labour have proactively pushed and supported transport policies which they now claim are entirely the fault of Lib Dems and Greens.

As a reminder, Labour voted:

- FOR making East Oxford LTNs permanent⁵
- FOR an amendment that stopped Council voting to ask Cabinet to remove the Cowley and East Oxford LTNs⁶
- FOR the 6 bus gates (traffic filters)⁷
- FOR expansion of the ZEZ⁷
- FOR new controlled parking zones⁸

We recognise that many of you joined Labour because of its historical commitment to working-class rights and social equity. However, the Labour Party in Oxford today is not living up to that legacy. Our concerns, shared by many residents, highlight how Labour-supported transport policies have exacerbated divisions rather than fostering unity. For example, these policies have unfairly impacted poorer communities, older and less abled residents and ethnic minorities, creating barriers to access and mobility. Independently owned local businesses are also suffering, with many already closed or struggling to survive, and this has a knock-on effect on family livelihoods and community cohesion. Many mobile traders cannot now afford to work in the city due to the time it takes them to reach their clients, pushing up the cost of services such as electricians and plumbers – again hitting the poorest hardest.

The impacts are far-reaching, as outlined in our ‘Oxford Travel and Transport Focus Group Report’ (Sept 2023)⁹ and ‘The Effects of LTNs on Magdalen Road Businesses’ (March 2024)¹⁰ – both independently conducted by Clarke Associates.

Our more recent discussions with residents and businesses confirm that things are not improving.

Labour’s lack of transparency and coherence in policy only deepens the distrust. Cllr Liz Brighouse’s recent letter to residents promising a “reset” on transport feels like a last-minute attempt to win back support ahead of the May 2025 elections, rather than a genuine commitment to change. After years of being ignored, residents are understandably sceptical. How can you continue to support a party that prioritises political expediency over the needs of the community?

The Independent Oxford Alliance offers a different path—one that puts the community at the heart of decision-making. As stated on our website¹¹, and as our name clearly indicates, we are “an Alliance of independent candidates who focus on the needs of their community, represent the people who elected them, and work together to make Oxfordshire a thriving and pleasant place in which to live, work and study.”

We are not beholden to any national party or ideology; our sole mission is to address the pressing local issues facing Oxfordshire. Our primary focus is on reversing the destructive transport policies

implemented by the current County administration, which we view as having a significant negative impact on the quality of life in our communities. We are committed to evidence-based, community-centred policies that prioritise the needs of all residents—regardless of socioeconomic status or background.

We understand that leaving a party to which you have dedicated time and energy is a difficult decision, but we ask you to reflect on why you became a Labour activist in the first place. Was it to blindly follow a party line, or was it to fight for the people and create meaningful change? By joining the Independent Oxford Alliance, you can channel your passion into a movement that truly listens to the community.

The May 2025 County Council elections represent a pivotal moment for Oxford. Labour's failure to listen has eroded the trust of many residents, and the time for change is now. We urge you to join the IOA and help us create a city where every voice is heard, where policies are fair and inclusive, and where the needs of the community come first. Together, we can make Oxford a thriving and pleasant place for all.

Sincerely,



Anne Gwinnett
Party Chair



Nasreen Majeed
Candidate for Marston & Northway

References:

1. **IOA post on X**, 9 April 2025: https://x.com/Ind_Ox_Alliance/status/1909869920055140701
“The IOA was born in Labour areas BECAUSE you weren’t listening.”
2. **IOA letter to Oxfordshire Labour County Councillors**, 12 Feb 2024:
https://x.com/Ind_Ox_Alliance/status/1757071936901804332
asking them not to support the 2024-25 budget, and specifically to seek the removal of budget for the expansion of the Zero Emission Zone and the introduction of a Workplace Parking Levy.
3. **The motion, amendments and vote**, City Council meeting, 18 March 2024
<https://mycouncil.oxford.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=38633>
4. **IOA’s response to Oxford City Council’s Decision on Divisive Transport Policies**, March 2024:
<https://independentoxfordalliance.org/2024/03/19/press-statement-independent-oxford-alliance-responds-to-oxford-city-councils-decision-on-divisive-transport-policies-press-statement/>
5. **Oxfordshire County Council Cabinet meeting**, 17 Oct 2023, Minute 123/23
<https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=115&MId=7101&Ver=4>

6. **Oxfordshire County Council (full council) meeting**, 7 Nov 2023, Minute 94/23
<https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=116&MId=7192&Ver=4>
7. **Oxfordshire County Council (full council) meeting**, 20 Feb 2024, Agreement of budget, Minute 8/24
<https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=116&MId=7194&Ver=4>
8. **As above:** Labour councillors voted in favour of a Labour budget amendment to introduce four new CPZs into Oxford.
9. **IOA's independently commissioned 'Oxford Travel and Transport Focus Group Report'**
https://independentoxfordalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/oxford_travel_focus_groups_report.pdf
10. **IOA's independently commissioned report: 'The Effects of LTNs on Magdalen Road Businesses'**
<https://independentoxfordalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Magdalen-Road-Business-Study.pdf>
11. **IOA website:** <https://independentoxfordalliance.org/>