

**Communities
County Hall
New Road
Oxford
OX1 1ND**

**Bill Cotton
Corporate Director for
Environment and Place**

Dear Mr Stafford,

Re: Petition on Low Traffic Neighbourhoods in Cowley/ Littlemore

Thank you for your submission of the petition regarding the Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) in the Cowley and Littlemore areas.

The LTNs in Oxford have been developed in the context of wider policy, and at a local level tackling issues associated with the impacts of traffic on residents and improving the environment for those people walking and cycling. The current schemes were implemented on an experimental basis, which has allowed time for the public to submit objections or letters of support. These will be considered carefully, alongside monitoring evidence, when a decision on whether to continue with the scheme is made by the Council next February.

Further context on development of the LTNs and the process for decisions to be made on whether they will be continued beyond the current trial period is given below.

Yours sincerely

Bill Cotton
Corporate Director for Environment and Place

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cc:

Context to development of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods

Policy background

The LTN proposals are part of wider Oxfordshire plans to promote cycling, walking and public transport and reduce short car trips within Oxford. These plans are set out in various policy documents, including the Local Transport Plan and the Oxford Local Cycling and Walking Plan (LCWIP).

The proposals are in support of shared goals of the Oxfordshire Fair Deal Alliance. These include Council policies and duties to improve residents' quality of life, tackle the climate emergency, reduce air pollution, minimise urban congestion in support of housing and economic growth and encourage active travel as ways of improving public health. We are also responding to many years of complaints by residents about traffic nuisance and danger.

What problems LTNs are designed to solve

Generally, the principle behind LTNs is that residential streets should only have traffic related to the residential homes – residents, visitors, deliveries – and not through traffic. Through traffic should be restricted to designated main roads.

The problem has become much worse in the last decade because of Sat-nav systems automatically finding the quickest route for drivers, regardless whether it is designated as a residential or main road. In London, residential streets saw a 72% increase in traffic between 2009 and 2019, entirely on B roads despite car ownership in London remaining stable.

To give an example from one of the Oxford LTNs, there were 2600 rat-running vehicles over the day along Temple Cowley residential streets, with 450 over the peak hour (a vehicle every 8 seconds). This imposes a heavy burden on residents living in houses facing the streets and deters people from cycling and walking.

Cycle routes

The Cowley LTNs were funded by the DfT under the Active Travel Fund to improve the Quietway cycle routes set out in the Oxfordshire cycling and walking network in the Oxford Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. Quietway cycle routes are aimed at encouraging the most vulnerable cyclists – children, disabled and older people, as well as those new or hesitant about cycling – good quality routes as a part of an overall cycle network.

In particular, the Cowley LTN creates a safe cycle route into Oxford city centre, not only from Florence Park and Church Cowley, but also reaching out to Littlemore and Greater Leys, with areas of high deprivation and poor health.

Many residents do not have access to a car. In Oxford as a whole, there were only 340 cars to every 1000 people. In Church Cowley 42%, Cowley 34% and Littlemore 27% of households do not own a car. An underlying aim of the LTN is to provide residents with

safe and convenient cycle routes along residential roads and to keep more strategic car travel on the main roads which are designed to take this traffic.

LTN effectiveness

There is now significant research into the impacts of the London LTNs. The findings are that the health and travel benefits were far in excess of any other measures that they had previously assessed in promoting public health and reducing car pollution. The research listed below found a positive impact on all factors – better public health, lower road traffic within the LTN area and no increase on peripheral roads, reduced road casualties, lower car ownership, lower street crime (except cycle theft), and better emergency response times.

Further research on LTNs

An overview [Evidence from London LTNs](#)

Population health <http://slna.org.uk/assets/files/LTNs-Populationhealthstudy.pdf>

Road traffic impacts <https://doi.org/10.32866/001c.17128>

Road safety benefits <https://doi.org/10.32866/001c.18330>

Vehicle ownership <https://doi.org/10.32866/001c.18200>

Street Crime <https://doi.org/10.32866/001c.19414>

Fire engine emergency response times <https://ideas.repec.org/p/osf/socarx/jathq.html>

Traffic displacement and effects on bus times

There is still an on-going debate on the impacts of LTNs on the peripheral main roads. Evidence from London LTNs suggest that as the scheme beds in, extra traffic which is displaced along peripheral main roads will not be significant. In some surveys, traffic on the main roads has reduced whilst in others there has been a small increase. During the early months of the Cowley LTN, there was significant traffic congestion, though it is difficult to identify whether the LTNs exacerbated this impact or whether it was due to the easing of lockdown, roadworks on Cowley Road or reluctance to use public transport.

Monitoring

The innovation team are currently undertaking extensive monitoring of the LTNs and peripheral main roads and junctions. Monitoring includes traffic flows, air quality, noise, cycle and pedestrian flows. This data is being collected automatically by monitoring equipment rather than people. We are also conducting attitudinal and mode trip data by surveys. This data will be used to help inform the decision to review to continue, amend or discontinue the experiment when it goes to Cabinet Member Decision on 24th February 2022.

Trial period

The LTNs have been introduced by an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO). With an ETRO, the Council introduces the scheme and then there is a six-month period during which the public (including businesses and interested groups) can submit objections or letters of support. At the end of the six-month period, the Council assesses the response and decides whether to make permanent, cancel or extend the ETRO for up to a further 12 months to allow further consultation and monitoring. A decision on the Cowley LTN will be made at the Cabinet Member Decision on 24th February.