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**SUBMISSION TO OXFORDSHIRE 2050 CONSULTATION**

**General comments:**

The Cowley Area Transport Group is a new, loose network of individuals interested in transport issues, covering the wards of Cowley and Lye Valley plus Temple Cowley, in Oxford. It has already been responsible for the *Cowley Area Transport Strategy* – 2nd edition 2018 . Whilst the group is interested in local transport improvements in its main area of coverage, it also has wider concerns about transport which it will raise in reports periodically. The first of these, on Electronic Road Pricing for Oxford, was sent to key County Councillors on 15th November 2018 and can also be made available to City Council officers or councillor who want to read it.

We are concerned about how transport may be made sustainable and note the rapid rise in local authorities committed to dealing with the Climate Emergency in their own localities. We want to see an inversion of spending priorities on transport in Oxfordshire so that walking, cycling, buses and rail are given priority. We want to see a formal road user hierarchy in use throughout the County to reinforce this approach. We do not support new trunk road building in a country where road repairs are needed everywhere and apparently cannot be funded.

 ‘Sustainable development’ would not result from the implementation of the current draft of the Oxfordshire Plan. Following both *Our Common Future –* World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, and the revised National Planning Policy Framework of 2018 that requires councils to pursue sustainable development, the draft plan is lacking in definition and details. Specifically, the general use of the term ‘economic growth’ throughout the Plan does not explain how the use of unsustainable resources to achieve growth has anything at all to do with sustainability. Traffic growth is not sustainable for Oxfordshire; increases in road capacity, especially the Cambridge-Oxford Expressway, are not sustainable in any sense. We remain concerned, that an Expressway route past SE Oxford may be attached to the By-pass and dramatically increase traffic in our area (see below). We note, and commend, the Oxford City Council unanimous vote against the Expressway on 28/1/2019.

What is considered effective must also be sustainable and likely to ensure quality of life for residents. This requires steps achieving traffic reduction – especially in rush hours – and significant improvements in air quality across the County. Neither our area nor others will experience this unless the Plan is amended to make it so. The current Plan would permit more traffic, noise and air pollution and can be considered to be in conflict with the Local Transport Plan, stated Government policies on air pollution, the implications of the Clean Air Charter that Oxford City Council supports etc etc.

The Plan is not consistent with the national policy of achieving sustainable development. If Bristol can become a carbon neutral City by 2030 like many other council areas with similar policies, then Oxfordshire too must set out in its Plan how our County can become carbon neutral by 2030 as well. The physical space given to motor vehicles and their air pollution contribution must decline to achieve such an objective, and to make quality of life for residents in the area we cover better – not worse as it would be if this Plan is implemented unamended.

**Opposition to the Expressway and associated corridor development**

**(based on previous work done for Oxford Friends of the Earth)**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**THE FAILED ASSUMPTIONS BEHIND THE EXPRESSWAY IDEA**

We find the basic assumptions behind the idea of an Expressway and associated development corridor (‘ribbon development’) to be failures in elementary thinking about roads, housing and related infrastructure. Worse, we feel there are conflicts with long-term environmental policies of many kinds operational at present in the UK. Specifically, we have identified 20 assumptions which we feel cannot be supported by reasoned arguments or evidence which would contradict our counter arguments:

1. **Climate Change is a minor consideration when creating new infrastructure:** Climate change is having increasing effects on the global environment due to a failure to cut greenhouse gas emissions at the global level. Temperatures continue to rise and carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is still increasing. Our Government’s own policies should prevent consideration of new roads because of their own Climate goals, and on grounds of air pollution.[[1]](#footnote-1) But these policies and goals are not currently adequate in terms of our global, historic responsibilities for Climate Change or the goal of the eradication of air pollution. We believe that communities, not just countries, should aim to be carbon neutral by 2030 as a contribution to ending the Climate crisis which is, we judge, a Climate Emergency. Amongst other policies, radical reductions in air pollution throughout Oxford should be implemented including a steadily-enlarging Zero Emissions Zone. This is an idea which should be rolled out in the rest of the country. Any measures likely to contribute to increases in surface traffic, greenhouse gas emissions and idling traffic in congested roads in Oxfordshire, and especially on routes into Oxford, should be rejected by any reasonable person or organisation concerned about Climate Change. This makes the basic idea of the Expressway irresponsible and rules it out of consideration. The use of physical resources and the associated transportation of such resources as part of constructing the Expressway would have serious Climate impacts which would occur over a long period, including road construction to service new communities. Additional Cement alone contributes about 5% extra to carbon emissions around the world each year, despite known alternatives.[[2]](#footnote-2) Trends in greenhouse gas emissions from the transport sector are also not encouraging: 26% of UK greenhouse gas emissions are from transport, compared to 25% from the energy sector. This is a 2 per cent increase to 2016.[[3]](#footnote-3) More specifically:

“Since 1990, greenhouse gas emissions have fallen 41 per cent in the UK, while carbon dioxide – the main greenhouse gas – is down 36 per cent. While emissions from energy supplies are down 57 per cent from that point, transport emissions are only down 2 per cent over the same period, making it the worst performing sector.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

This represents a failure up the present in really taking the idea of sustainable transport seriously. An overview of initiatives that might have been considered to be sustainable transport shows the poor progress in the ten years up to 2008, emphasising how the poor figures for transport given above were obtained.[[5]](#footnote-5) Worse still, aviation and shipping are not included in these figures – and both are increasing as sources of greenhouse gas emissions in Europe and globally.[[6]](#footnote-6)

In short, the Expressway is a potential Climate Change disaster to add to the problems of failures to address UK emissions from aviation, shipping and the overall food system[[7]](#footnote-7), and this includes the transportation and import of goods from elsewhere. Like other industrialised States, we need to tap untaxed and under-taxed sources of financial resources to contribute to a more ambitious effort about Climate Change, since poorer countries even when given Aid may struggle to achieve greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals. Our comments apply also to constructing new homes and associated infrastructure rather than the more ecologically efficient use of the existing built environment and brownfield sites. At the very least, a Strategic Environmental Assessment of this road and its corridor is needed, with assessments of how the initial projection of £3.6 bn in cost might be allocated to urban regeneration including use of brownfield sites.

1. **Land uses of various values are a minor consideration in infrastructure planning:** The conservation and ecological use of the natural environment is a paramount consideration in planning activities. The value of urban ecology which will be destroyed if the Expressway goes ahead is part of this because of potential impacts upon the Oxford area.[[8]](#footnote-8) We recognise the importance of increasing local food production to meet local demand to achieve food security[[9]](#footnote-9) and food sovereignty[[10]](#footnote-10) in the UK; we want increasing areas for allotments at the fringes of settlements everywhere in Oxfordshire; we would like to see concerted efforts to improve forestry throughout Oxfordshire; maintenance and expansion of the Green Belt; conservation and enhancement of biodiversity by preserving habitats; constantly improving quality of local parks and open spaces, and increases in the number of these at the fringes of the City to maintain a green gap between Oxford and surrounding communities. We note that the creation of a ‘bio-economy’ for overall sustainability requires the retention of greenfield sites in their various usages.[[11]](#footnote-11)
2. **There is a limitless supply of resources for infrastructure and building and the environmental consequences of obtaining and using such resources are of little significance:** Re-use and refurbishment of the existing built environment is the most environmentally efficient way to meet needs for housing or facilities, not new build. This implies, for example, that local Councils would use their powers to purchase homes for social housing or keyworker use which are on sale. We note that the Strategic Market Housing Assessment of 2014 conducted in Oxfordshire indicated an under-occupancy rate of 73%, suggesting an imperative for local councils to buy homes on sale to meet local demand and raise occupancy levels in the process.[[12]](#footnote-12) In terms of financial resources, we believe a Strategic Economic Evaluation of the total costs of the road and corridor development, including realistic estimates of cost overruns, should be done. At the same time, the social and economic benefits of spending the same money on – for example – funding local councils to buy housing on sale in their locality for social housing should be offered in comparison.
3. **Poor quality housing with limited space, and low energy and environmental standards which are not guaranteed, are acceptable in the 21st century:** British building standards for new build are poor in terms of quality, enforcement of energy performance and especially space per person. New build should meet Passivhaus standards[[13]](#footnote-13) whether it is for housing or other purposes. Improving renewable energy should be coupled with enhancing insulation including a programme for insulating solid wall homes. Refurbishment should be required to meet Passivhaus standards. This means that it should be carbon neutral. Space per person in new build and refurbishment should be governed by the restoration of the Parker-Morris standards that served the UK 1961-1980. Energy checks for new and refurbished buildings should take place about 18 months after building or refurbishment to ensure claimed energy performance standards have actually been met. Water for flushing toilets should come from water used for handwashing/showers/baths/washing up in all new homes. Ensuring steadily improving use of under-occupied housing should be a goal for the UK as a whole, for example by promoting the principle of taking in lodgers. Current new build standards are too low and not always kept to, making refurbishment a better general objective than ribbon development along the Expressway axis.
4. **Housing should be houses, not taller structures:** We support the principle of taller structures everywhere to meet housing need and increase densities, subject to critical assessment of the impact of each such proposal may make. We are aware of and value the concentration of historic buildings in some places, including Oxford, that must be protected, including maintaining view cones in some areas. Higher densities will allow the protection of greenfield sites for purposes other than development, and avoid ribbon development suggested for the Expressway altogether.
5. **The massive brownfield reserve offered by surface car parks should not be utilised for other purposes:** Sites such as car parks (and derelict office, industrial estate or science park areas) should be designated for housing, either starting at surface level or starting above surface level to allow car parking at the base of new structures. This could include town houses around the edges of such car parks to mask them, as well as apartments on the exterior of the new structures. There could be locations where exterior ground level new retail units might be added. Emphasis should be focussed upon very low cost housing: social housing and keyworker housing, the latter perhaps including part-rent, part buy. We see no reason why housing cooperatives, co-housing and even self build might not be part of using the ‘car park brownfield site reserve.’ Car parks, whether in public or private ownership, should be designated for compulsory purchase as potential housing sites in Local Plans, bearing in mind our comments above and elsewhere in this document. Following such initiatives throughout England would allow an end to greenfield site building and strong emphasis on the regeneration of existing communities, within their existing boundaries and avoiding all the extra infrastructure costs implied by an Expressway and associated development corridor.
6. **Mobility is a good thing and assists with economic growth:** This is highly questionable. Claims for the benefits of mobility exist but are rarely quantified or set against the disadvantages for people in terms of commuting time, traffic congestion and air pollution.[[14]](#footnote-14) Mobility as a ‘good’ also appears to conflict with the physical needs of the population for more exercise for health preservation. Mobility for commuting by cars particularly means that employment is well away from home, and moving nearer the job may be impossible due to high housing costs. Clearly, if people live nearer to where they work, or have flexitime or are able to engage in internet-based working, they have more time for their family and life in general. Having about 46,000 people commuting on a working weekday into Oxford can be seen as a failure to provide housing in the City at high density over a long period, a failure to make dual use of car parks, a failure to take a strategic view of the County in terms of where employment is most needed by relevant authorities, and a failure to allocate disused employment land to housing. These are mobility problems and need addressing more intelligently than encouraging more commuting across country with the suggested Expressway. We are concerned that the construction of a corridor of housing across the country between Cambridge and Oxford would, in practice, mean some people commuting OUT of such a form of ribbon development into other areas for work and leisure eg. to Birmingham and London. Car based commuting, encouraged by decades of under-investment in rail, may also be added to by other car journeys as new developments may be accompanied by infrastructure funding that is by no means likely to be lavish. Community development including strong emphasis on building local economies and employment within existing small communities is a great potential gift to quality of life because it keeps commuting down, and should be supported. A full length treatment and discussion of the issues around the largely unquestioned idea of mobility has been written by Whitelegg.[[15]](#footnote-15)
7. **New trunk roads are an acceptable environmental option**: We favour a general restoration of Oxfordshire’s disused rail lines wherever practical, with full electrification of all of Oxfordshire’s rail lines. We would like to see the same for the whole country. There is no prospect whatsoever that our road system could be adjusted to accept a further 7 million cars, as forecast, by 2040, PLUS an accompanying increase in other types of vehicles.[[16]](#footnote-16) Since a ‘2050 Transport Strategy’ is apparently being considered for the ‘Arc’ across the country,[[17]](#footnote-17) there are major unanswered questions about road capacity given massive projected increases in traffic. Whilst technological optimism has run ahead of actual technology with regard to driverless cars, they may in the very long-term add to the numbers of people able to be on the road since inability to drive may cease to be an issue.[[18]](#footnote-18) However, it would require artificial intelligence of a high order for driverless vehicles to be fully autonomous and to be able to respond to all conceivable normal conditions that drivers can cope with on a daily basis – such as anticipating traffic conditions ahead, recognising pedestrians may be about to cross a road, recognising and giving space to cyclists etc. It is clear that Community Rail Partnerships, Light Rail and other comparatively low cost options to reduce car travel can be achieved – considering implemented examples from the UK.[[19]](#footnote-19) There is an appreciable heritage of disused rail lines in Oxfordshire, as in other places, much of which could be put back into service.[[20]](#footnote-20) We also fail to see how the Expressway would be consistent with the Precautionary Principle.[[21]](#footnote-21)
8. **Sustainable surface transport does not require a road user hierarchy:** We support the use of a road user hierarchy to guide transport decisions: first pedestrians, then cyclists, then buses, trains and then cars and other vehicles. We support investment in the first two areas as major contributions to planning in urban areas with pedestrian and pedestrian priority areas increasing and both walking and cycling networks. We support the principle of reducing the number of cars entering urban areas. We support the principle of reducing the number of car parking spaces in urban areas and towns to reduce traffic and to support other more sustainable transport modes. We support the principle of electronic road pricing to reinforce these previous points. The introduction of the latter, following the experience of Singapore since 1998, would mean higher costs for motorists entering urban areas.[[22]](#footnote-22) The possibility of making Oxford a UK trial site for electronic road pricing could be worth considering. This would mean using the suggested Expressway to enter the urban boundaries of Oxford or Cambridge would attract a very significant increase in the charge being made under a national system of electronic road pricing, compared to a ‘rural to rural’ journey. This would provide another reason why is better not to build such a road at all and to ensure the Cambridge to Oxford rail axis is given proper investment instead. We note the rise of electric vehicles will mean a steady reduction in revenues from fuel duty, meaning the Government must have an alternative income for maintaining existing road infrastructure, supporting cycling and walking networks, rural bus services, re-opening rail lines etc. Electronic road pricing could provide significantly for this.
9. **Ribbon development is acceptable and will not cause excessive transport or environmental impacts:** Ribbon development, essentially corridor development around a road or rail line, has been attacked and opposed in the UK planning system for decades.[[23]](#footnote-23) Suggestions that it would take place around the Channel Tunnel Rail Link through Kent were not actually delivered, because demand alleged for housing and other types of development did not exist.[[24]](#footnote-24) Urban sprawl, unacceptable creation of demand for new infrastructure, neglect of existing towns and cities needing refurbishment, meeting developer demand rather than actual housing demand for very low cost urban homes inside existing urban areas – are amongst the many criticisms made of this type of development – including criticisms directed at the creation of ‘Metroland’ around the Metropolitan line protruding from London. We also note that the 1935 Restriction of Ribbon Development Act could well be reintroduced and updated to prevent land-hungry, resource intensive ribbon development of this type indefinitely.[[25]](#footnote-25) We are concerned that the impacts of Brexit upon the UK economy are not being taken into account is the rather grandiose expectations about this corridor, particularly with regard to harder economic impacts forecast upon northern regions post-Brexit which make a huge investment in a corridor across southern England seem particularly inappropriate.[[26]](#footnote-26) Studies of how large-scale infrastructure and corridor development impacts upon people and the environment internationally are not encouraging either.[[27]](#footnote-27)
10. **Traffic is not induced or generated by the creation of new road infrastructure:** Since the 1920s, it has been known that new road capacity, not simply new roads, tends to increase the number of journeys car drivers make and the distances they will travel. Research on this has been collected for Government and freely ignored by successive Governments despite major questions about the long-term costs of maintaining road infrastructure.[[28]](#footnote-28) Government clearly cannot maintain the existing road network in the UK in adequate condition from the existing tax base and there are relevant major skills shortages listed by the Foreign Office in its shortage occupation pages that appear to be already being made worse by the ongoing Brexit process. Government maintenance of roads leaves only the Strategic Road Network being regularly maintained, meaning many minor roads are riddled with potholes and cracks that are either not repaired or patched very badly as the recent winter has demonstrated.[[29]](#footnote-29) The cost of repairing roads had risen to £11.8 bn by 2016,[[30]](#footnote-30) and is likely to worsen with the phasing out of the Revenue Support Grant to local government in 2019-20 as repairs slow down even more due to lack of funds. It is difficult at present to see how Government intends to undertake the backlog of road repairs whilst insisting on building yet more roads. We cannot see how additions to trunk road capacity serve the public interest when so many roads are in very poor repair, and have been seriously damaged by the recent bout of exceptionally cold weather.
11. **Species protection can be maintained despite the colossal scale and impacts of the Expressway:** We note that the RSPB does not agree.[[31]](#footnote-31) This is certainly not happening with HS2 either as plans exist to plough through ancient woodlands, for example. In total, HS2 threatens 98 areas of ancient woodland, illustrating the cavalier attitude of Government to supposedly scarce and valuable features of our environment.[[32]](#footnote-32) Absolute protection of a wider variety of landscape features and land uses, and biodiversity, is needed. Habitat fragmentation, loss of valuable sites for specific species, changes in noise levels for some areas due to proximity to roads – are all part of the damage done by thoughtless planning failures over decades.[[33]](#footnote-33)
12. **Air pollution is acceptable even when it is killing at least 64,000 people each year in the UK, and has resulted in the UK being taken to court repeatedly for failing to meet EU air quality standards:** New roads increase the proportion of the UK population being exposed to air pollution. 95% of the people in the world are breathing polluted air.[[34]](#footnote-34) Despite air pollution campaigning in the UK over decades, including against Lead in petrol in the early 1980s and more recently against particulates of various sizes which are toxic, the efforts of successive UK governments to protect air polluters by delaying action on various types of pollution sources are an object lesson in entrenched anti-people and anti-environment policies for the entire world. This has led to recent court cases by Client Earth against the UK Government for failing to keep to EU legislation on air quality.[[35]](#footnote-35) The Expressway would add to this problem. We note that air pollution is not simply a matter of transport emissions. Brake pads, tyre abrasion on road surfaces and other dirt and dust on roads add to particulate matter, in this case PM2.5s, in the environment. These are often toxic and are very pervasive. Every single London Borough has PM2.5s, which can be carcinogenic, above the level recommended by EU legislation.[[36]](#footnote-36) The Government should recognise air pollution as a health crisis and take action to rapidly and systematically reduce it – not spend money building new trunk roads.
13. **Housing prices can be reduced by building more houses.** The Government actually believes the Cambridge to Oxford corridor could be accompanied by 1 million new homes.But even freedom of movement of labour with the EU has not provided the construction workers we need to meet skills shortages in the construction industry. No serious attempt to really address this problem by using the existing built environment far more than at present or using more production line-created prefabricated parts for new homes has occurred to date. There is still far too much emphasis on new build and market housing with very high costs in relation to incomes.The corridor of housing across the country proposed to be attached to the Expressway would be incredibly environmentally damaging. We doubt the availability of a construction labour force from anywhere to do this work. The development deal signed by our Oxfordshire councils with the Government is primarily based on building 100,000 homes in Oxfordshire by 2031. How? Skills shortages in the construction industry are at a record high this year.[[37]](#footnote-37) From 2013 onwards, the retirement estimate for UK construction workers aged over 55 is 400,000 people during the following 5-10 years; for those aged 45-54, the estimate was that a further 518,000 people would retire. For self employed construction workers, it was also estimated that about 182,000 would retire during the same period.[[38]](#footnote-38) The 16-21 age group is under 6% of our construction workforce and the industry needs about 400,000 new entrants each year, at a time when EU-origin construction workers are tending to return home.[[39]](#footnote-39) This replenishment by young entrants into construction is not happening at the needed scale, perhaps because financial support for students for doing apprenticeships and further education courses is too low. The industry allegedly ‘grows’ - as the Government has noted how 100,000 construction jobs were added in England in 2015 alone[[40]](#footnote-40) – but this does not accurately portray the actual current situation or compensate for losses to retirement and others leaving the industry, or the country. The Government is cutting back financial support for part-time students as well. The above figures also do not take into account shortages of civil engineers or planning officers in local government, both essential for implementing new housing and the provision of associated infrastructure. Our councils, like our Government, need to consider how best use may be made of the existing built environment in areas of high pressure demand for homes. We simply do not have, and are not likely to obtain in the foreseeable future, the much larger number of skilled construction workers needed to build many new homes. If new housing around the proposed environmentally destructive Cambridge-Oxford Expressway starts to be built, this would add to the scarcity of skills elsewhere. Housing costs are a serious problem in Oxfordshire. We need very low cost social and keyworker housing obtained from the existing built environment to meet actual local housing demand. Housing miles away in a corridor is not a substitute for making better use of the urban environment in Oxford, on a variety of environmental grounds outlined here.
14. **Economic development should occur in those places considered economically successful and the neglect of poorer areas and the North should continue:** This automatically increases unacceptable concentrations of traffic. The historic neglect of northern regions in England for decades has not been addressed by any British Government to date. Public spending per capita in 2016-2017, amongst English regions was highest in London at £10,192 (11% higher than the UK average). This is higher than in Wales, but not Scotland.[[41]](#footnote-41) Relying on EU funds for poorer regions or countries in the UK is not going to be an option if the Brexit process is completed. Renewal of infrastructure, such as re-opening rail lines, investing in rebuilding facilities of combined value to locals and tourists, extending Green Belt areas[[42]](#footnote-42) and national parks, and enhancing biodiversity for eco tourism are all types of things which could be done if resources were not allocated to very large environmentally-destructive infrastructure projects like the Expressway or HS2. More generally: economic growth is not and is never likely to be evenly balanced in the UK until adequate attention is paid to enhancing the knowledge base in each region, by funding all forms of post-16 study adequately. In line with expectations about the future,[[43]](#footnote-43) the growth of vehicles currently contemplated will tend to occur in existing towns and cities primarily. It may be expected this growth will, unless challenged, be disproportionately in the most successful areas and in terms of commuting to and from these areas of concentrated employment. This will be visited upon the residents of these areas in air pollution, noise and traffic congestion if surface transport expansion is not curtailed or eradicated. Oxford and Cambridge are both at risk of this if bad planning causes continuing increasing traffic levels in both locations. The Expressway reinforces this type of scenario and will make it even worse – justifying strong emphasis on rail investment only for this axis. However, there is another economic argument about a project of this scale: the wider costs of transport in English urban areas has been assessed in this past. The wider costs assessed in one comprehensive report were excess delays; accidents; poor air quality; physical inactivity; greenhouse gas emissions; noise and amenity. These wider costs were valued at £48.7 billion in English urban areas alone in 2009.[[44]](#footnote-44) This strongly suggests that a Strategic Economic Evaluation of the whole Cambridge-Oxford corridor as proposed would show net negative economic impacts and not the economic growth some might suggest it would add to the UK economy.
15. **Surface car parks are a necessary part of the environment:** Surface car parks are an untapped resource, within existing urban settlements, for housing. They offer a clear alternative amongst other brownfield sites, to any development of greenfield sites, as noted above.
16. **Infrastructure equals growth:** Complex, diversified and sustainable development is not primarily about infrastructure. Radically raising education and training expenditure - and especially to support people whilst studying - contributes to addressing skills shortages and to increasing the knowledge base of a country. Stopford and Strange –*Rival States, Rival Firms -* point out the critical importance of expanding the knowledge base of societies as a route to improving economic development achievements.[[45]](#footnote-45)
17. **Commuting is a necessary feature of our society:** Regulating for flexitime, and compulsory Green Travel Plans, could be part of contributing to reducing commuting, improving quality of life for employees and reducing the physical impact of vehicles upon road infrastructure over time. In southern England, more social housing and keyworker homes purchased from homes for sale could help people to live nearer to where they actually work. The idea that we must accommodate more long-distance commuting – the Expressway & HS2 etc – is poor and inadequate thinking and a very expensive exercise when generalised rail investments would be more appropriate for mass long-distance surface travel between English towns and cities.
18. **Local transport plans can be ignored when national infrastructure is being imposed:** The Local Transport Plan for Oxfordshire emphasises goals such as:

**“**2. To reduce emissions, enhance air quality and support the transition to a low carbon economy.

3. To protect and enhance the environment and improve quality of life (including public health, safety and individual wellbeing)”

&

“Goal 2:

Reduce emissions, enhance air quality and support the transition to a low carbon economy

Minimise the need to travel;

Reduce the proportion of journeys made by private car by making the use of

public transport, walking and cycling more attractive;…”[[46]](#footnote-46)

There is no way that these goals or the rest of the Oxfordshire County Transport Plan can be reinterpreted to permit the Cambridge-Oxford Expressway. Support given by councils or any other body to the Expressway contravenes the Local Transport Plan and makes a nonsense of devolved decision making in the interests of the local communities which will suffer if this project goes ahead.

1. **Public Health impacts of the Expressway can be ignored:** Excessive car use has contributed to the creation of an unhealthy and obese population. Since we have an ageing population including those with sedentary habits reinforced by car use, continuing quality of life for this group is going to be undermined by the consequences of too much car dependence in the past. About 40-50,000 people in the UK die prematurely each year due to air pollution[[47]](#footnote-47) and Government action on this has yet to constitute an effective or rapid response. How many lives are shortened by sedentary habits resulting from excessive use of the car? Noise pollution is largely unrecognised in Government policy despite its known effects on child development,[[48]](#footnote-48) sleep[[49]](#footnote-49) and stress.[[50]](#footnote-50) The Expressway would make all of this worse including by increasing areas subject to air and noise pollution.

**Alternatives to road building and corridor development in the interests of the environment and public health**

**Working from or at home:**

Too many people are commuting to work places in the UK. More flexitime, and better rights to working at home, should be part of a shift to give people back the quality of life they have lost to hours of commuting. Legislation may be necessary to achieve this, and legislation to push employers towards effective Green Travel Plans as well.

**Walking:**

**“**If we all swapped one car journey a week for walking instead, car traffic levels would reduce by at least 10%” (Sustrans, 2009).[[51]](#footnote-51) Only about one third of adults are reaching the minimum levels of physical activity their bodies need. In 2008, 61% of adults in England and 30% of children were overweight or obese. Walking helps people resist heart disease, diabetes and stress and contributes substantially to tourism and recreation incomes of localities around the UK.[[52]](#footnote-52) Unfortunately, as part of misguided austerity and the maintenance of an inadequate and grossly inequitable tax base, the walking environment is deteriorating in many places – making roads and pavements reminiscent of conditions in developing countries.[[53]](#footnote-53) Coupled with noise and pollution on many routes from traffic, the health of the population is being systematically undermined by under-investment in walking. Included in this approach should be expansions in pedestrian and pedestrian priority areas in urban centres as an alternative to spending on additional road capacity.

**Cycling:**

About 69% of people in the UK do not normally cycle.[[54]](#footnote-54) For reasons of public health and increasing what has been called the ‘conviviality’ of the City, the UK needs to be more like Bremen, where 60% of journeys are walking, cycling or public transport.[[55]](#footnote-55) High levels of cycling in Cambridge, Oxford and York need to be replicated across the UK by the provision of cycling infrastructure which provides joined-up networks instead of a broken, tokenistic mosaic of poorly maintained cycle routes with fading markings. Since about 70% of journeys are under 5 miles, 41% under 2 miles and 22% under 1 mile, there is considerable scope for increasing walking and cycling for these journeys.[[56]](#footnote-56)

Bearing in mind the Sustainable Travel Towns initiative of the recent past during the 1997-2010 period of the last Labour Government,[[57]](#footnote-57) promotion of walking and cycling by local authorities should be funded generously in recognition of its contribution to cutting health spending, encouraging children towards lifetime healthy activities, and undermining excessive car use which contributes to poor health, traffic congestion and air pollution.[[58]](#footnote-58)

**Electronic Road Pricing:**

Singapore has had electronic road pricing since 1998 and can be used as a model for the introduction of a scheme to eventually cover the UK and replace revenue from fuel duties particularly as electric vehicles displace them. Such a system can be used to influence where and when people drive and to reduce the likelihood of increases in road traffic as more investment is given to other transport modes. Oxford could act as a UK trial site for this technology. This type of scheme makes it easier to have greater differentiation of charges than congestion charging; makes enforcement easier; simplifies updating charges periodically; is more likely than congestion charging to offer the level of income required over time to replace lost fuel duties as more vehicles are electric powered.

**Bus:**

Increasing bus incidence and coverage will reduce demand for increasing road capacity, especially if electronic road pricing encourages greater use of buses. There are also issues of rationality: first: “Passenger cars produce nearly 60 per cent of all CO2 emissions from road transport in the UK, compared with just 5 per cent from buses.”[[59]](#footnote-59) So it is essential to ensure bus use substitutes for avoidable car journeys, such as the ‘school run’, and that rural bus subsidies are restored, to help radically cut greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. Between 1980 and 2014, travelling by bus went up 58% in price, but car use costs dropped 14%.[[60]](#footnote-60) Buses do not require increased road capacity: only less cars on the road for them to operate at peak efficiency, and more bus lanes on existing roads.

**Rail:**

Rail travel increased in cost by 63% 1980 to 2014, whilst the cost of car use dropped 14%.[[61]](#footnote-61) Rail demand is increasing: “…the number of passenger journeys on franchised rail services in Great Britain reached 1.654 billion in 2014-15. This is the highest recorded figure since the series began in 2002-3 and an increase of 4.2% (67.3 million) on the previous year. This is also an increase of 69.5% since 2002-3, when only 975.5 million journeys were made.”[[62]](#footnote-62) In general, the widespread increases in passenger numbers[[63]](#footnote-63) have not been met with adequate investment particularly because of the allocation of public funds to new road building. This should also be attributed to the general failure of railway privatization especially in terms of its huge passenger fares,[[64]](#footnote-64) and the broader failure of Government to respond to totality of challenges of Climate Change. Every penny spent increasing road capacity is at the expense of encouraging greater use of other means of transport. We need a rail renaissance to resist very large traffic increases already occurring in more prosperous parts of the country. Opening disused rail lines is essential; making sure the Cambridge-Oxford rail connections are good is highly desirable.

To put the costs of different travel modes into perspective:

“travel cost changes since 1997: car down by 16%; domestic flights down 16%; train up by 23%; coaches and buses up 33%.”[[65]](#footnote-65)

**Housing:**

As indicated above already, the existing built environment and brownfield sites need to be fully utilised. The massive brownfield reserve should have high density housing on it, including creative use of surface car parks especially above surface level.

**Local economies:**

Local economic development requires refurbished urban centres, higher-density housing wherever possible, including taller structures, and a strong emphasis on improving air quality, the public realm and on maintaining green spaces within and outside urban areas. Large-scale national or regional infrastructure is not the first need of under-funded local communities. We believe each local council area should have its own economic policies which it is able to fund from its own resources or with assistance from central government. Currently, this is obstructed by unelected Local Enterprise Partnerships which have funding that should be in the hands of local councils. We believe Land Value Taxation can substitute for Council Tax and local business taxation, and ‘even the playing field’ between small and medium sized enterprises and chains in retail, supermarkets, hotels etc. The Greater London Assembly has looked at Land Value Taxation for London.[[66]](#footnote-66) We believe cooperatives may be particularly helpful for new start-ups given the low amounts of capital needed per person. Localisation, not mega-infrastructure, is an essential and economical part of building sustainable local economies in our communities, allowing more people to live and work with as little commuting as possible.

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1. The lack of joined up thinking on this topic can be emphasised with reference to: National Infrastructure Commission – *Cambridge-Milton Keynes- Oxford corridor: interim report.* Hereinafter: NIC corridor report. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/B9780080442761501574> & <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/06/150612091148.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/air-pollution-uk-transport-most-polluting-sector-greenhouse-gas-emissions-drop-carbon-dioxide-a8196866.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/air-pollution-uk-transport-most-polluting-sector-greenhouse-gas-emissions-drop-carbon-dioxide-a8196866.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Iain Docherty and Jon Shaw – eds – *Traffic Jam: ten years of ‘sustainable’ transport in the UK,* 2008. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See for example: <https://www.eea.europa.eu/articles/aviation-and-shipping-emissions-in-focus> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. GRAIN – *The Great Climate Robbery: how the food system drives climate change,* 2016, shows that roughly half of global greenhouse gas emissions are the result of the complete global food system currently operating around the planet. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Urban ecology is an under-regarded area which should influence and constrain planning decisions. For detailed introduction to this topic and its implications for planning see for example: Ian Douglas and Philip James – eds – *Urban Ecology: an introduction,* 2015, & Jan Niemela et al – *Urban Ecology: patterns, processes and applications,* 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. World Food Programme, definition: <https://www.wfp.org/node/359289> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Global Justice Now (UK), definition: <http://www.globaljustice.org.uk/what-food-sovereignty> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. See the Finnish example: <https://euobserver.com/business/141113> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. <https://www2.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/default/files/folders/documents/communityandliving/ourworkwithcommunities/oxfordshirepartnership/spatialplanninginfrastructure/SHMA%20Key%20Findings%20Summary.pdf> This report is not intellectually credible, as work done by CPRE has demonstrated: <http://www.cpreoxon.org.uk/news/item/2369-local-authorities-must-reject-shma> [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. See: <http://www.passivhaus.org.uk/standard.jsp?id=122> [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. And certainly are not covered in NIC corridor report, eg p.9. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. John Whitelegg – *Mobility: a new urban design and transport planning philosophy for a sustainable future,* 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Sutton, John C – *Gridlock,* 2015, pp37-39. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. CPRE – Ox-Cam Forum for Strategic Environment: Expressway Corridor Consultation – response from CPRE [a stakeholder consultation which has already taken place] p.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Christian Wolmar – *Driverless Cars: on a road to nowhere,* 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Paul Salveson – *Railpolitik: bringing railways back to the community,* 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Terry Moors – *Lost Railways of Oxfordshire,* 2009. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. See for recent comment on this issue: <https://agroecology-appg.org/ourwork/article-by-rupert-read-on-the-precautionary-principle/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Extensive online documentation about the 20 year electronic road pricing in Singapore is available. A good starting point is: <https://www.lta.gov.sg/content/ltaweb/en/roads-and-motoring/managing-traffic-and-congestion/electronic-road-pricing-erp.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. See: <https://www.planningni.gov.uk/index/policy/policy_publications/rural_strategy/psrni_regional_policies/psrni_design/psrni_des07.htm> and in other countries eg: <http://www.urbangateway.org/news/prohibit-ribbon-development> & <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ribbon-development-in-rural-housing-criticised-1.200147> [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. S.Dawe - *Business And Environmental Pressure Group Influences Upon The Trans-European Transport Networks –* unpublished thesis, 2001. Includes case study on the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, originally intended as a form of corridor development. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. See: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1935/47/pdfs/ukpga_19350047_en.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. See throughout: NIC Corridor report; see also the alarming suggested regional breakdown of Brexit impacts, particularly for the North: <https://news.sky.com/story/hit-to-northern-ireland-and-north-east-england-gdp-revealed-in-new-brexit-impact-papers-leak-11240254> & <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/brexit-latest-leaked-impact-assessment-economy-gdp-north-east-west-midlands-a8199746.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. See notably: How Infrastructure is Shaping the World: A Critical Introduction to Infrastructure Mega-Corridors by Nicholas Hildyard and Xavier Sol. Detail: Today, infrastructure is not just roads, railways and airports, but also encompasses gigantic "mega-corridors" that attempt to re-engineer whole landscapes and legal environments to speed up the circulation of capital. How can these developments best be fought?

<http://www.thecornerhouse.org.uk/resource/how-infrastructure-shaping-world> & (2) Extreme Infrastructure: Infrastructure Corridors in Context by Nicholas Hildyard. This presentation sketches the drivers behind planned mega-corridors expected to affect the lives of hundreds of millions of people on nearly every continent.

<http://www.thecornerhouse.org.uk/resource/extreme-infrastructure-0> [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. See particularly: Standing Committee on Trunk Road Assessment – *Trunk Roads and the Generation of Traffic –* Dept of Transport, 1994. See also: CPRE, Ox-Cam Forum, p.7 on induced traffic. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. See: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/potholes-repair-bill-14-billion-tipping-point-2017-a7513586.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/potholes-repair-bill-14-billion-tipping-point-2017-a7513586.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. See: <http://cherwell.org/2018/04/16/oxford-cambridge-expressway-a-threat-to-rare-species-rspb-says/> [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/get-involved/campaign-with-us/our-campaigns/hs2-rail-link/> [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. See: Hugh Warwick – *Linescapes: remapping and reconnecting Britain’s fragmented Wildlife,* 2017; Tony Juniper – *What Nature Does for Britain,* 2015; Norman Maclean – ed – *Silent Summer: the state of wildlife in Britain and Ireland,* 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/apr/17/more-than-95-of-worlds-population-breathe-dangerous-air-major-study-finds?CMP=share_btn_fb> [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
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36. Information supplied by Caroline Russell, member, Greater London Authority. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/uk-construction-worker-shortage-recruitment-brexit-eu-nationals-citizens-europe-trade-association-a8172466.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. <https://www.citb.co.uk/news-events/uk-construction-skills-time-bomb/> [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. <https://www.constructionproducts.org.uk/news-media-events/blog/2017/september/the-underlying-challenges-of-the-construction-industry/> [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ministers-call-on-construction-industry-to-invest-and-build-home-grown-talent> [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. <http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN04033> [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. See: John Grindrod – *Outskirts: living life on the edge of the Green Belt,* 2017, for the historical and policy contexts of the Green Belts and the damage that has been done to them. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Sutton, pp37-39. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Cabinet Office Strategy Unit, Department for Transport, DEFRA and Department of Health – *The wider costs of transport in English urban areas in 2009.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. John Stopford and Susan Strange – *Rival States, Rival Firms: competition for world market shares,* 1991. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. See p.16: <http://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/documents/s33704/Background%20CA_JUN2816R07%20Connecting%20Oxfordshire%20vol%201%20-%20Policy%20and%20Overall%20Strategy.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/sep/13/government-passing-the-buck-air-pollution-campaigners> [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. See: <http://www.who.int/ceh/capacity/noise.pdf> & <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-07/documents/ochp_noise_fs_rev1.pdf> & <http://eprints.ioe.ac.uk/926/1/Shield2008The_Effects133.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. See: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1984006314000601> & <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2013/10/131029220800.htm> & <http://www.noiseandhealth.org/article.asp?issn=1463-1741;year=2012;volume=14;issue=61;spage=297;epage=302;aulast=Hume> [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. See: <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2008/sep/23/healthandwellbeing.pollution> & <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2001/05/010523072445.htm> & <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1561091/Noise-having-huge-impact-on-health.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/advice/facts-and-stats-about-walking/environmental-benefits-of-walking.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Benefits of walking factsheet: accessible via: <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/advice/facts-and-stats-about-walking/environmental-benefits-of-walking.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. The primary author of this briefing spent 15 months living in India during 1981-83 and has taught International Development for three different universities. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
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55. Kingsley Dennis and John Urry – *After the Car,* 2009, p.117, and see: Steve Melia – *Urban Transport without the hot air,* 2015, chapter 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Iain Docherty and Jon Shaw – eds - *Traffic Jam: ten years of ‘sustainable’ transport in the UK,* 2008, p. 120. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. See full evaluative reports of this Government initiative: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-effects-of-smarter-choice-programmes-in-the-sustainable-travel-towns-full-report> [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Colin Pooley et al – *Promoting Walking and Cycling: new perspectives on sustainable travel,* 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Campaign for Better Transport: <http://bettertransport.org.uk/save-our-buses> [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/driving-a-car-is-getting-cheaper-and-cheaper-while-trains-and-buses-just-keep-getting-more-expensive-10363354.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/driving-a-car-is-getting-cheaper-and-cheaper-while-trains-and-buses-just-keep-getting-more-expensive-10363354.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. <http://orr.gov.uk/news-and-media/email-alerts/2015/rail-passenger-journeys-reached-a-record-high-of-1.65-billion-between-2014-2015> [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
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64. See: Christian Wolmar – *Broken Rails: how privatization wrecked Britain’s railways,* 2001. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. <https://twitter.com/CarolineLucas/status/937964712142229504> [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. <https://www.london.gov.uk/about-us/london-assembly/london-assembly-publications/tax-trial-land-value-tax-london> [↑](#footnote-ref-66)