To: letters pages Oxford Times

From: Steve Dawe, Cowley Area Transport Group – [www.catg.org.uk](http://www.catg.org.uk)

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Dear Editor,

The Oxford Times (30th September) suggests the A420 might be dualled(1). Since improvements to the existing rail network are cheaper than building new roads, it is difficult to see why this would be needed, or why the environment should be damaged in the process. We are in a new era of far more people working at home which means fewer people commuting. But there are other arguments against new road building in Oxfordshire and elsewhere:

First, more road capacity tends to increase the distances people drive and the number of journeys they take(2). Since we are in a Climate Emergency and transport emissions in the UK have actually been growing in recent years, we should not be adding new road capacity anywhere.

Secondly, we need to reduce traffic for health reasons. The World Health Organisation puts deaths in the UK from all sources of air pollution at about 64,000 per year(3).

Thirdly, Oxford’s road junctions were already at capacity when the Gilligan report on investing in cycling in Oxford, Cambridge and Milton Keynes was published in 2018(4). The junctions certainly don’t cope with current levels of traffic in rush hours and at school run times. But the government forecasts 17-51% UK traffic increases for 2015-2050. Clearly, we cannot rebuild every junction in Oxford to accommodate such volumes(5).

We need a Low Traffic Oxford with the investments suggested in the Gilligan report; far better walking and cycling networks; reductions in car parking spaces to encourage public transport use; and application of the Workplace Parking Levy to all the workplace parking in the City rather than only half of it.

Yours sincerely,

Steve Dawe – COWLEY AREA TRANSPORT GROUP – [www.catg.org.uk](http://www.catg.org.uk)

Notes:

1. <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/19615310.ambition-turn-a420-dual-carriageway-oxford-swindon/>
2. Department of Transport: Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment – Trunk Roads and the Generation of Traffic: 1994: <https://www.thenbs.com/PublicationIndex/documents/details?Pub=DOT&DocID=258178>
3. <https://inews.co.uk/news/health/air-pollution-kills-64000-people-in-the-uk-every-year-268508>
4. <https://nic.org.uk/app/uploads//Running-out-of-Road-June-2018.pdf>
5. One of the reasons for this is exceptional expansion in delivery vehicles: see: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-57723836> & “The number of vans in Great Britain has also increased substantially over the last 25 years, increasing 93 per cent from 2.1 million licensed vans in 1994 to 4.1 million licensed vans in 2019.” - <https://www.racfoundation.org/motoring-faqs/mobility#a2>