**SAVING OXFORD FROM TRAFFIC: key steps needed**

**2nd edition, 18th June 2023**

**BRIEFING ON EACH OF THE STEPS, to be made over the next 20 years.**

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**(An elaboration of some of these steps and others can also be seen in:** *Adapting Oxford to the Climate Emergency: transport and the use of green spaces,* 2nd edition, December 2021. At: REPORTS, [www.catg.org.uk](http://www.catg.org.uk))

**Walking:** *Walking networks to be improved within the City, and connected to improving networks outside.*

Walking accounted for about 23.6% of journeys to work in Oxford, by 2011.[[1]](#footnote-1) A more recent figure suggests this is now about 21.6%.[[2]](#footnote-2) Active Oxfordshire supported the distribution of 8000 maps in Cowley to demonstrate the walkability of the area to residents, assisted by Liveable Cowley and Oxfordshire Liveable Streets.[[3]](#footnote-3) But this type of initiative is needed City-wide. The County Council has been working on a Strategic Active Travel Network for Oxfordshire, which is a critical support to efforts at traffic reduction, and not just in Oxford.[[4]](#footnote-4) This is intended to ‘dove-tail’ with the Central Oxfordshire Travel Plan.[[5]](#footnote-5) But none of this is adequate without making walking in Oxford a network with the minimum of obstacles or hindrances to the movement of people on foot. Multiple pedestrian crossings are needed to improve walking networks and give pedestrians priority over traffic movements. Can we persuade people to make more use of sustainable travel modes? Much research suggests we can (see references below). There are lessons to be learned from the Sustainable Travel Towns initiative.[[6]](#footnote-6)

**Pedestrianisation:** *traffic congestion, air pollution, noise and greenhouse gas emissions to be cut throughout central Oxford by a large expansion of the pedestrianised area, with coloured cycle tracks.*

The County Council believes its traffic filters will make the ‘…historic and attractive city centre environment’ more attractive to pedestrians.[[7]](#footnote-7) But the main unaddressed problem is that the pedestrianised area is tiny compared to cities like Canterbury, Norwich and York. This is commercially inept, chaotic in its effects upon surface transport and a politically unacceptable planning failure. Should we assume the City and County councils are unwilling to challenge bus companies, taxi firms, the University and perhaps other interests concerning the radical increase in pedestrianisation Oxford needs?

The c100 empty shops in central Oxford (May 2023) may in part be due to cuts in household spending during the continuing cost of living crisis, and the continuing impact of the Westgate on other parts of the City – including businesses that have moved from other parts of central Oxford into the Westgate shopping centre. But shopping trips appear to have been declining nationally since 2002 and online shopping is not going to disappear either.[[8]](#footnote-8) There is also the uncertainty concerning tourism which lost £1.5bn in value in the height of the pandemic period.[[9]](#footnote-9) Visit Britain is forecasting tourism for the UK still below 2019 figures for 2023, which will have continuing impacts on Oxford:

“**2023 inbound forecast for UK:**

We are forecasting 35.1 million visits in 2023 (86% of the 2019 level and 18% higher than in 2022) and £29.5 billion spend (104% of the 2019 level and 14% higher than in 2022). If the latter figure is achieved it would be a record for the value of inbound spend in the UK in nominal terms, although adjusting for inflation it would be 87% of the 2019 level in real terms, in line with the trend in visitor volumes.”[[10]](#footnote-10)

This strongly emphasises the need to do more to make Oxford welcoming, especially by increasing pedestrianised areas. Living Streets has provided a report strongly emphasising the importance of a business case for recognising the contributions of pedestrians to streets, places and businesses.[[11]](#footnote-11) Their report demonstrates an investment of £10m in Stoke on Trent’s Piccadilly area to make it more pedestrian-friendly increased footfall by 30%.[[12]](#footnote-12) Measures included:

Wider footpaths

Replacing existing footpath surfaces

Adding trees and seating

Innovation in the form of new businesses including cafes and restaurants

This has all led to further public realm investment. Since the Oxford equivalent of this sort of innovation is mainly limited to Broad Street, the constraint of failing to pedestrianize is once again demonstrated.

Pre-pandemic, from 2007 to about 2018, shopping trips to UK high streets declined by 22.2%.[[13]](#footnote-13) The subsequent impact of the pandemic and lockdown was substantial, including temporary increases in online sales.[[14]](#footnote-14) Whilst recovery in some sectors is evident, it is clear Brexit, Covid and bad transport planning have undermined some sectors as has the failure to protect households effectively against the cost of living crisis.

Evidence from elsewhere suggests pedestrianisation measures push up footfall by about 32% and retail sales by 17%.[[15]](#footnote-15) But it appears the responsible councils and the business community in Oxford did not get the memo, leaving a central area which is in May 2023 showing severe effects of this omission. Like Stoke on Trent, Coventry undertook investment, leading in this case to a 25% increase in footfall.[[16]](#footnote-16) But even higher figures are possible after such investment. In the case of Wanstead High Street, pedestrians increased by 98%. So why not Oxford?

We believe that: the coach station should be moved to the Becket Street car park – which should become a bus & coach station close to the rail station, this would allow pedestrianisation of George Street when the coach station there is closed, as part of steps to pedestrianize the George Street-Hythe Bridge Street access to the rail station. Continuing access for Gloucester Green market traders would be needed at each end of their working shifts. Queen Street, New Inn Hall Street, Little Clarendon Street and Magdalen Street should all be pedestrianised, with only cargo bike access for deliveries and rising bollards operable by the Emergency services when necessary; St.Giles should have radically reduced car parking to disabled bays only, with enlarged pavements on both sides. Cycle tracks should be colour-marked and widened Buses should have a turnaround space with bus stops at the northern end of St.Giles, which is where the pedestrianised area should start. (see our report on Bus Futures in Oxford City Centre for more details: <https://www.catg.org.uk/reports/> ) The new St.Giles should become a Plaza, denoting a variety of uses of the space. This should be subject to consultation, but the following seem reasonable:

More trees for more shade

A parklet incorporating a playground running from north to south in this space

Designated areas for existing businesses to spread on to the space, e.g. cafes/pubs

Fountains to add to cooling in this area

A large amount of additional cycle parking

A maximised pedestrianised area

Coloured cycle tracks north to south and in east-west routes

Taxi bay and coach drop off area at the Randolph on Beaumont Street, displacing other car parking as deemed necessary. Coach parking should be allocated space in a number of car parks, and if necessary, on Park and Ride sites with a transfer to the existing P&R buses subject to capacity assessments

Disabled bays near the Randolph similar to the point above, and north of the bus turning zone – in the neighbouring areas of the Banbury and Woodstock Road. (see our report on Bus Futures in Oxford City Centre for more details: <https://www.catg.org.uk/reports/> ) Extension of shop mobility scheme to allow the mobility impaired access to electric wheelchairs when needed, subject to pre-booking.

Park End Street and New Road should be pedestrianised, and on from there to the south side of the Westgate. All of these areas should have coloured cycle tracks. Further expansion of the pedestrianised area should be considered for future years. It should be borne in mind that this fits in with adaptation to Climate Change for Oxford by combatting the ‘urban heat island effect’ where additional trees for shade, fountains, awnings and lower-level plantings can all help to reduce temperatures as well as making the walking and cycling environment better for all types of users. We note with concern the failure of the City Council to develop a comprehensive Adaptation to Climate Change policy as many other local authorities already have done. See our report about the transport and green spaces aspects of under Reports at [www.catg.org.uk](http://www.catg.org.uk)

As part of this approach to increasing pedestrianisation, the City and County should cooperate in the creation of a kerbside strategy as already enacted by Lambeth Council.[[17]](#footnote-17) It will be necessary in some locations to use ANPR to penalise those who – for example - insist on trying to drive towards the Cornmarket, or even into it.

Concerning air pollution, it should be noted that:

“..until the pandemic struck, transport emissions in Europe were steadily increasing. Indeed, current policies are predicted to deliver transport emissions in 2040 that are almost unchanged from 50 years earlier.”[[18]](#footnote-18) And the UK transport sector is the largest, worst, source of greenhouse gas emissions of the various industrial sectors.

Tailpipe emissions will continue whilst ICE vehicles are on the road, suggesting a need for speeding up the process of removing the worst pollution emitting vehicles more rapidly in the interests of public health. The Oxford City Plan for 2036 failed to mention particulate matter below 2.5µm in size.[[19]](#footnote-19) Such matter is highly toxic, having carcinogenic effects. It arises from road abrasion by tyres, residue from tyres and brake pads, and the disturbance of such particulates on roads and other surfaces by the movement of vehicles and people. Whilst many steps may be and are very, very slowly being taken to reduce vehicle emissions, these ‘fine particulates’ are a generally neglected area of concern to public health. We submit that:

* such particulates would be a problem even if all vehicles were electric;
* that no obvious technical solution currently exists;
* and that only pedestrianisation and pedestrian priority areas can currently begin to address this problem in the absence of technological answers.

We note that every London Borough has PM2.5s above levels considered to be injurious to human health.[[20]](#footnote-20) PM2.5s are responsible for 1 in 20 premature deaths in England. It is expected that the Non-Exhaust Emissions proportion of PM2.5s will actually increase over the next ten years.[[21]](#footnote-21) In short, in the absence of generalised technological solutions to PM2.5 emissions, we can only rely upon much larger pedestrianised areas and much lower levels of traffic to protect the public. Since both of these are necessary measures to address the Climate Emergency, the relevant authorities should have no trouble supporting them.[[22]](#footnote-22) However, public spaces for walking and new cycle routes can be combined with the planned extension of some cafes, restaurants and pubs on to streets currently occupied by traffic, as suggested above. This will help with City Centre regeneration such as increasing the likelihood of occupation of empty units, provided City and County ensure that traffic is not allowed to block such innovation by keeping the City Centre heavily-trafficked. Judicious re-arrangement of bus routes, delivery, utility and emergency vehicle access will all be needed: steel bollards, rising bollards and lockable gates can be used to ensure drivers cannot enter pedestrianised areas.

We strongly support making streets outside schools into ‘School Streets’ as part of discouraging traffic movements. This is important for air pollution reduction and decreasing accident risk.[[23]](#footnote-23)

**Cycling:** The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) has a core objective of increasing cycling by 50%. This is comprehensively linked to the need for: an enlarged cycle network; infrastructure improvements; more LTNs and CPZs.[[24]](#footnote-24) It also incorporates Quickways and Quietways.[[25]](#footnote-25) Cycling networks should certainly extend throughout Oxford. A standard colour for all cycling tracks is needed and better quality and longer-lasting surfaces and markings need to take inspiration and good practice from examples such as those in the Netherlands. Cycling accounted for about 23.8% of journeys to work in Oxford by 2011.[[26]](#footnote-26) In a 24-hour period, bicycles are 46% of traffic crossing Magdalen Bridge, a key gateway from east Oxford to the City Centre.[[27]](#footnote-27) Cycle tracks should be physically separated from traffic, which will mean taking away more road space and parking spaces in practice, as in the case of the implemented Quickways, and junctions need to be made safe. This was emphasised in a National Infrastructure Commission report in 2018 but considerably more investment is needed, including to prevent deaths of cyclists which frequently occur at junctions.[[28]](#footnote-28) This NIC report has an extensive range of specific road by road recommendations for improving cycling infrastructure in Oxford.[[29]](#footnote-29) Stressing the importance of networks not just disconnected tracks, it should be noted that:

“Typically, a cycle network is developed by prioritizing routes between key destinations. This is a substantial task of mapping – origins, destinations, routes – and assessing where improvements are needed…’[[30]](#footnote-30)

Cyclox[[31]](#footnote-31) continues to work with local councils to improve cycling infrastructure, as Oxford Pedestrians Association[[32]](#footnote-32) does for walkers, but both are frustrated by the long-term under-funding of walking and cycling which is part of the long-term impoverishment of local government since 2010. The concerns of both groups can be seen as part of the campaign for ‘Vision Zero’ – the elimination of road deaths and injuries in Oxfordshire by 2050.[[33]](#footnote-33) Cycle tracks should be connected to improved cycle routes outside Oxford.

Cargo bikes, ecargo bikes and ebikes all require at least 1.7 metre width cycle tracks. In the Netherlands, they are using a minimum of 2 metre width, and often 2.3 metres. So future proofing for more cargo bike use for freight, carrying children or tools suggests 2.3 metres as a normal width for two cycling tracks. Cargo bikes for freight should be encouraged and promoted for a much larger proportion of deliveries than at present. The potential of e-cargo bikes is worth encouragement, and investment, to help cut Oxford’s traffic.[[34]](#footnote-34) Parallel crossings where a Pelican crossing has a cycle crossing beside it, as on the Cowley Road near where it meets Marsh Road in Temple Cowley, need to be considered for more locations as part of ensuring a joined-up cycling network. It is essential that these crossings are coloured marked in the same colour used for cycle tracks as part of making them visible to drivers.

Cycling is a major health promoter.[[35]](#footnote-35) One typical study suggested cycling to work cuts cancer risk by 45%, risk of heart disease by 46% and reducing risk of premature death by 41%.[[36]](#footnote-36) The more cycling, and walking, the less pressure on the badly under-funded and under-staffed NHS. It is notable that such considerations have led the Dutch and German governments to promote cycling through education, pricing and parking.[[37]](#footnote-37) The World Health Organisation has offered research evidence for walking and cycling policy development.[[38]](#footnote-38) Sustrans has also created the Walking and Cycling Index as part of an effort to explain the value of cycling and walking.[[39]](#footnote-39)

Walking and cycling, combined with far more pedestrianised space in Oxford, can help strengthen access to goods and services within 15-minute neighbourhoods – of considerable importance to the 20% of workers who are entirely home-based, and the 30% who are partially home working amongst Oxford’s workforce. Critical to this and creating better networks is infrastructure design.[[40]](#footnote-40) There is also evidence that pedestrians and cyclists spend more than the average car driver in local businesses.[[41]](#footnote-41) TfL have provided a useful summary of the economic benefits of walking and cycling.[[42]](#footnote-42) Some notable features of this include that cycle parking delivers 5 times the retail spend per square metre than the same area of car parking; high street and town centre improvements generally lead to a 17% reduction in vacant retail units. These are things the business community should be fighting for.

15 minute neighbourhoods have been thoroughly investigated for Oxford by the Coalition for Health Streets and Active Travel,[[43]](#footnote-43) which reinforces the need for more walking and cycling, and for which the Walking and Cycling Alliance has also made a compelling case.[[44]](#footnote-44) Concerning commuting, using the Census: “of those who were commuting to work, 38.8% of Oxford residents aged 16 and over used active travel to do so, including 17.2% who commuted by bicycle and 21.6% by foot.”[[45]](#footnote-45) Also, since the national figures suggest 17% of car journeys are under 2 miles, it is difficult to see why any able-bodied person might not walk or cycle such a distance. Small traffic reductions can make a huge difference to Oxford’s junctions which are all at or over capacity in the rush hour/school run twice each school day.

**Traffic filters:** *six traffic filters as proposed should be implemented, with a minimum of exemptions; additional traffic filters for Abingdon Road and the Botley Road to be investigated.*

Oxford City Council stated in 2013 that: ‘..operational capacity has already been reached or exceeded on much of the road network.’ Subsequently, traffic levels have risen and new housing on the periphery of the City, and close to it, is not going to help.[[46]](#footnote-46) Whilst the City is planning new housing in Oxford is to be generally car free by covenant or other means, which is good for increasing the density of homes and the amount of space per person when car parking is not present, it has no control over what happens in neighbouring local authorities. The usual excessive car parking provision will probably accompany what are often Green Belt developments. There seems to be a general failure to deliver much of the promised facilities or infrastructure to new communities as Council planning authorities lack enforcement powers and often staff. This is ‘building car dependency’ and needs to be stopped.[[47]](#footnote-47) The alternatives of using the existing built environment better and building over, around and/or above car parks in Oxford, as is so often done on the continent, have not been considered effectively by either City or County Council. The City also specifically needs more funds for buying up empty homes and homes on sale for council housing and keyworker shared ownership homes, to meet the unmet need for very low-cost housing in Oxford.

The County Council estimates that – by about 2031 – vehicle movements within Oxford could rise 25%.[[48]](#footnote-48) Imagine the ‘sea’ of rush hour traffic at the Green Road roundabout between Headington and Risinghurst having a 25% addition. The tailbacks in rush hour/school run would be far worse, bus movements would be even slower and pollution would increase. Then imagine all junctions in Oxford with the same problem. The number of vehicles generally has been repeatedly projected to increase by the Department for Transport. But this is a nightmare scenario for all communities in Oxford which are, in effect, being strangled by vehicles already. Really radical cuts in traffic are needed to prevent this: there is no choice but traffic reduction for Oxford’s future transport development and quality of life. Opponents of LTNs and other traffic reducing measures offer NO realistic responses to the chaos of Oxford’s increasing traffic.

The County Council’s ‘Do Something’ traffic filter scenario is projected to lead to 20% less car traffic within the City. This would improve rush hour-school run flows of traffic and relieve congestion. However, since it is only expected that the filters will reduce to/from City journeys by 1%, the actual net reduction in traffic is only 9%.[[49]](#footnote-49) Since there is a strong likelihood of continuing increases in overall traffic, only extra Traffic Filters on additional roads are likely to maintain the push to reduce traffic. Rail will benefit from an estimated 6% increase resulting from 6 Traffic filters; bus trips increase by 2400, P&R buses up 650; but the really big change is that walking and cycling trips are projected to increase by 20,000. These are all weekday figures.[[50]](#footnote-50) We are concerned that, given under-estimates by the Department for Transport in van and HGV traffic, exemptions for light goods and heavy good vehicles will deter transfer of goods in these vehicles to cargo/ecargo bikes.[[51]](#footnote-51) We suggest an initial one-year exemption for these vehicles with a requirement for payment for entry through traffic filters after year one, to encourage fewer vehicle movements. Also, paid permits would be restricted by time slots for movements to decrease total vehicle movements by vans and HGVs. The Government’s support for longer HGVs is unwelcome for cyclists and other road users, and presents logistical challenges in relation to places in Oxford they might try to deliver to.

Traffic reduction measures ‘..in London and elsewhere have delivered significant boosts to footfall and trade at shops, restaurants and other businesses.’[[52]](#footnote-52) Claims of LTNs being responsible for declining trade in Oxford ignore the very serious impacts of the cost of living crisis on households, and are not credible. See also for example:[[53]](#footnote-53)

It is worth bearing in mind that commuting by Oxford residents is at about 38.2% using cars or vans, meaning active travel and public transport account for the majority of commuter movements already. But this does not consider the fact that half of Oxford’s workforce commute into the City from outside, and all too many of them in vehicles that do not get stored in Park and Rides. Traffic filters can deter such movements and improved public transport can offer options. About 33.5% of Oxford households do not have a car or van,[[54]](#footnote-54) and are not getting the attention they deserve here or elsewhere for their transport needs.

The County has a rather long list of potential exemptions for the traffic filters.[[55]](#footnote-55) Apart from vans and HGVs, we agree that the following should be exempt long-term:

Buses

Coaches

Taxis

Private Hire Vehicles

Mopeds

Motorbikes

Emergency service vehicles

Professional health and care workers (for operational journeys, not commuting, would require an exemption sticker, renewable each year)

Community transport vehicles (which could include schools buses/passenger minivans - would require an exemption sticker, renewable each year)

Those in receipt of mobility-related benefits (would require an exemption sticker, renewable each year)

Those in receipt of direct travel payments (would require an exemption sticker, renewable each year)

Other categories:

Blue Badge holders (either driving the car or being driven in the car) and disabled tax class vehicles. There is an enforcement problem that a person driving the car whilst not having the actual blue badge holder in the car would be inherently difficult to detect. So, the problematic short journeys some able-bodied people insist on making within Oxford would still be possible. We look forward to seeing proposals from the County Council about how this is to be prevented. Direct promotion of online shopping to Blue Badge holders should be done by City and County Councils.

‘Non-professional carers’ (in receipt of carers allowance). This would require evidence and a sticker renewable annually.

Not to be permitted at all:

Businesses within the permit area using a private car as a goods vehicle.

Since businesses could be permitted to claim charges made upon them for entering traffic filters as business expenses for tax purposes, there is no reason whatsoever to make this an exemption. Given the overloaded cars we have often seen being used for deliveries, we think there is a serious case for action to stop this practice altogether.

The Government’s longer HGVs decision is unacceptable and such vehicles should not be permitted through traffic filters on safety grounds.

**Car parking:** *reductions in car parking within Oxford to continue indefinitely, to counter the impact of projected increasing numbers of road vehicles. Space for SUVs should be diminished by cutting the size of car parking spaces, especially in central Oxford. Differences between car parks in costs should be removed, e.g. the heavy use of the cheaper Westgate car park creates traffic problems which, if the parking charges do not match the City Council’s, can only be reduced by a traffic filter on the Abingdon Road.*

Any new developments in Oxford, at its periphery and outside when serving the City, must be car free by covenant or other agreement whenever possible. 20,000 homes on green belt around Oxford[[56]](#footnote-56) means a probable 2 cars per household. However, these new homes would also generate: thousands of utility vehicle movements per year; thousands of delivery vehicle movements per year, etc. Since Oxford’s junctions have been at or over-capacity in the rush hour-school runs on weekdays, there is no realistic prospect of accommodating the movements of these vehicles if they are moving in and out of Oxford. Prevention of traffic is easier than cure.

Car parking reduction must include on University/College sites, which have in the region of 4,000 parking spaces in the City Centre alone. Reduced campus parking has been shown in a review of research to create a drop-in car parking of between 7-27%.[[57]](#footnote-57)

**Hiring and sharing vehicles:** *The City and County Councils should promote hire or sharing of vehicles as a preference to ownership.*

We see this step as a means of allowing people to access top of the line electric vehicles when needed and avoid the customary depreciation, monthly payments, repair costs, etc of owning a vehicle. This should help to reduce the monthly outgoings of a household and encourage greater use of active travel and public transport. A review of research suggests cars are, on average, parked 96% of the time.[[58]](#footnote-58) This means the owner is bearing the cost burden of maintaining a vehicle that is, most of the time, not in use. Car sharing has also been shown to reduce traffic levels.[[59]](#footnote-59)

**Public Transport:** *The City and County should ensure better bus and train services as far as possible, and the re-opening of rail lines to reduce commuting into Oxford by car.*

Bus service passengers were still under 85% of pre-Covid use in October 2022. The County intends traffic filters to speed up bus journeys to encourage use.[[60]](#footnote-60) Bus fares have had a temporary cut to £2 which appears to be increasing use already.[[61]](#footnote-61) But this is only temporary. However, it is important to note that the central area – particularly the High Street and St.Aldates – is near capacity for bus use.[[62]](#footnote-62) In practice, it is better to pedestrianize these areas and radically reduce buses entering the central area of the City. This is better for footfall and therefore increasing retail spending, and far better for accommodating tourists and guided walking tours.

Rail passengers have gradually been increasing and, in April 2023, had reached over 98% of pre-pandemic levels.[[63]](#footnote-63) A useful assessment of how UK rail fares compare with those in Europe notes that UK peak rail fares are much higher than on the continent.[[64]](#footnote-64) Lower fares would doubtless increase use, so we would advocate a 50% rail fare cut as a Climate measure to reduce road traffic and increase rail passengers.

Low Carbon Oxford North has surveyed residents in the North Oxford area about buses.[[65]](#footnote-65) Apart from specific bus service improvement suggestions, this survey report notes a need for access to buses at no more than 400m from each home, particularly for elderly users.[[66]](#footnote-66) The survey notes how the Pick Me Up bus service did attract 38,000 users in its period of operation, but that it was not financially viable as external funding was not found.[[67]](#footnote-67) This demonstrates the desirability of free buses for all.

Contrary to belief by some in car use occurring for most shopping journeys, trips into Summertown in North Oxford, from a sample of 276 responses, showed:

71 walking

65 cycling

44 by bus

71 by car

In response to questioning, there was identifiable enthusiasm for better bus services.[[68]](#footnote-68)

Lower shopping levels by car than expected by car drivers, and particularly the regular anti-LTN correspondents of the *Oxford Mail*, are reflected at the Templars Square shopping area too. A thorough, recent survey of Templars Square in Cowley revealed over 70% of its users did not drive there: 50% walked; over 11% cycled; over 9% used a bus.[[69]](#footnote-69) This suggests a lower traffic City may well be possible with further improvements in these encouraging figures.

Factors stimulating greater bus use seem to include: bus traffic light priority; cashless transactions to speed up loading; free buses for children; simplified ticketing; seats at bus shelters for as many bus stops as practical according to pavement conditions.[[70]](#footnote-70)

We support free buses for all in England. This process could include private shuttles to allow workers to get to larger employment centres directly. A review of research suggests this can cut car commuting to such sites by as much as 37%, making it one of the most effective ways to reduce car movements, whilst potentially reducing costs to zero for the commuter.[[71]](#footnote-71)

Apart from the Cowley rail line opening to passengers, Oxford to Witney-Carterton should also be given priority.[[72]](#footnote-72) In the longer-term, the Cowley line should be re-tunnelled to connect to the rail line at Wheatley, bearing in mind factors such as the transformation of the Wheatley campus into housing and the consequent need to minimise car traffic entering Oxford in rush hours-school runs. If this is not done, substantial housing development on the Wheatley campus will create wholly unacceptable traffic conditions at the Green Road roundabout between Headington and Risinghurst.

**Taxis:** *Taxis should be all-electric by the earliest possible date; pedestrianised areas should not be accessible for taxi parking, with allocated bays in some locations as pick-up points at the periphery of the enlarged pedestrianised zone.*

**Ordering online:** *A virtual City website should be constructed by cooperation between the City Council and relevant businesses to encourage ordering online to reduce total traffic.*

This initiative should place emphasis, deliberately, upon SMEs rather than chain stores. This is to resist Oxford being too much of a ‘clone town’ with the same chains represented as in other towns and cities.

**National initiatives:** *Oxfordshire County Council and Oxford City Council should petition the Secretary of State for Transport for an end to pavement parking in Oxford, like London; Oxford and its main approach roads should have Electronic Road Pricing to decrease avoidable journeys, again requiring support from the Secretary of State for Transport; free buses should be introduced in England for all bus services.*

Pavement parking: Badly Parked Oxford on Twitter offers an extensive range of photographs taken on many days of the year which demonstrate the extraordinary frequency of ill-considered pavement parking in Oxford. Pavements are not designed for the weight of vehicles and, with more electric vehicles - which are heavier due to battery weight - even more pavement damage is likely. So, we need to plan for a general pavement parking ban as in London.

Electronic Road Pricing: ERP has been in use in Singapore since 1998.[[73]](#footnote-73) Devices in vehicles identify them to cameras and charge them according to type/location of use. Since a rising fleet of electric vehicles reduces income from fuel duties, ERP is needed to help provide funds for the overall surface transport system. As with congestion charging, a review of research suggests ERP could reduce city centre traffic by between 12 and 33%.[[74]](#footnote-74) We have already written a report about applying ERP to the Oxford City Region.[[75]](#footnote-75) See also a major report on Road Pricing in Europe:[[76]](#footnote-76)

Free buses: The Street Voice initiative, a Citizens Jury from Headington assisted by the University of Oxford, recommended free bus travel for ‘..as many groups as possible’, in a report to Oxford City Council of September 2022.[[77]](#footnote-77) This was part of an extensive range of useful recommendations which need not be repeated here. A detailed argument in favour of free buses is available, demonstrating that by 2021 they already existed in 96 locations. In terms of cost, free buses for England would require additional financial support (2018) of about £1.8bn each year and an additional £1.2bn if London is included.[[78]](#footnote-78) Roughly £3.6m a year has been obtained from bus fares so a probable figure for fares free buses in England would be about £6bn a year, or a very small proportion of the budget for new trunk roads – a budget which should be dispersed to free buses, active travel and road repair, for example.

**COWLEY AREA TRANSPORT GROUP** – [www.catg.org.uk](http://www.catg.org.uk) Completed May 2023.

1. Oxfordshire County Council, *Oxford Trial Traffic Filters,* October2022, p.31. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/23181580.oxford-commuters-pick-active-travel-public-transport-census-shows/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://www.activeoxfordshire.org/news-and-events/2022/09/increasing-walking-and-wheeling-across-oxfordshire-active-travel-six-months-in#:~:text=This%20month%2C%20we%27re%20celebrating%20the%20past%20six%20months,1%2C000%20participants%20benefiting%20from%20walking%20and%20wheeling%20more>. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See for example: <https://ehq-production-europe.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/b39e4a8a307a379e9b2c66978b25bed0007daa00/original/1669897270/720df0c4966c09286296b16a559968a9_220112_SATN_analysis.pdf?X-Amz-Algorithm=AWS4-HMAC-SHA256&X-Amz-Credential=AKIA4KKNQAKICO37GBEP%2F20230508%2Feu-west-1%2Fs3%2Faws4_request&X-Amz-Date=20230508T101338Z&X-Amz-Expires=300&X-Amz-SignedHeaders=host&X-Amz-Signature=62e0af08dde2cadaece18aed7ac87a8ee7f9d89cdeee0c0c361d990f63823406> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/connecting-oxfordshire/central-oxon-travel-plan> & and our submission to the consultation on the Central Oxfordshire Travel Plan can be see at: <https://www.catg.org.uk/our-consultation-submissions/> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
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27. <https://nic.org.uk/app/uploads//Running-out-of-Road-June-2018.pdf> p.17 [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. <https://nic.org.uk/app/uploads//Running-out-of-Road-June-2018.pdf> p.11. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. <https://nic.org.uk/app/uploads//Running-out-of-Road-June-2018.pdf> pp21-24 [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233058352_Urban_Design_Is_there_a_Distinctive_View_from_the_Bicycle> p.535 [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. See: <https://www.cyclox.org/> [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. See: <https://oxpa.org.uk/> [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. See for example: <https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ambition-to-eliminate-all-road-deaths-and-serious-injuries-by-2050/> [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
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38. <https://www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/9789289057882> [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
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44. See: <https://cyclingindustry.news/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/The-urgent-case-for-more-walking-and-cycling-WACA-report.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. <https://oxfordnewspaper.co.uk/census-shows-most-oxford-commuters-cycle-walk-or-take-bus/#:~:text=The%20new%20Census%20data%20shows%20that%2C%20of%20those,who%20commuted%20by%20bicycle%20and%2021.6%25%20by%20foot>. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
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49. Oxfordshire County Council, *Oxford Trial Traffic Filters,* October2022, p.21. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
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