

To: Council

Date: 18 March 2024

Report of: Head of Law and Governance

Title of Report: Public addresses and questions that do not relate to matters for decision – as submitted by the speakers and with written responses from Cabinet Members

Introduction

1. Addresses made by members of the public to the Council, and questions put to the Cabinet members or Leader, registered by the deadline in the Constitution, are below. Any written responses available are also below.
2. The text reproduces that sent in the speakers and represents the views of the speakers. This is not to be taken as statements by or on behalf of the Council
3. This report will be republished after the Council meeting as part of the minutes pack. This will list the full text of speeches delivered as submitted, summaries of speeches delivered which differ significantly from those submitted, and any further responses.

Addresses and questions to be taken in Part 2 of the agenda

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Addresses and questions to be taken in Part 2 of the agenda

1. Address from Zuhura Plummer

This motion mixes up three different traffic interventions – the LTNs, the filters and the workplace parking levy - and casually asks that all of them are dropped despite them being very different policies, covering different areas, with different aims, at totally different stages of implementation. This clearly demonstrates that while the proposers claim they are interested in evidence; they're not.

If they were interested in evidence they might note that in 2013 a poll of Oxfordshire business showed 76% thought congestion adversely affected them¹. In 2016, the Strategic Economic Plan put congestion and housing as the two most pressing challenges for the economy.

In the same year, the Oxford Mail reported “traffic jams ... worse than ever” and mentioned bad jams on Botley Road, Cowley Road, London Road and Iffley Road². This was way before any LTNs.

We have 100,000 houses being built in our county³, which means about 142k more cars on our roads⁴. If cars remain the default we are **all** going to be sitting in gridlock. It's common sense that some of us are going to have to swap out some car journeys to keep the city moving. Few people are going to do that by being asked nicely – hence traffic filters and LTNs which make driving less convenient, *while* making the alternatives better – the filters speed up buses and LTNs make cycling and walking safer and nicer.

The LTNs have manifestly succeeded in their primary goal of making walking and cycling safer and more accessible. For example, at Larkrise primary - a school with 20% pupil premium children and 40% on the SEN register - the LTNs and school streets have enabled ninety children, a fifth of the pupils, to switch from being driven to walking, cycling, scooting⁵. That's 360 fewer times cars are driven to the school and out again.

Let's look at the evidence around the Cowley Road

We tracked every opening and closing of business from 2010 to the present day on the Cowley Road from the Cape of Good Hope to Divinity Road –168 premises. Between 15-16 open and close along the stretch every year. These figures remained the same since the LTNs went in, in fact there was a dip in closures in 2022⁶. The Cowley road is a vibrant and brilliant place because 40,000 people live within walking distance⁷, something that's nicer to do with LTNs.

Let's look at the evidence around air pollution. The article which Cllr Reham and Aziz have referenced clearly stats that air pollution at the Plain was still lower 2022, post the LTNs, than it was in that same location in 2019 before the LTNs⁸. Of course, there was a rise between 2021 to 2022 as we all returned to normal life. The article they reference, which is based on the City Council annual air quality report, shows you huge reductions in pollution within LTNs while simultaneously having a slight decrease at Oxford most polluted spot⁹. This is a win for everyone.

But it is telling what issues the proposers do not mention where there is extremely strong evidence. For example, around inactivity. The Royal College of Surgeons recently announced that 20 minutes of light exercise daily, such as walking or cycling a short journey, cuts the risk of dementia by 30%, type 2 diabetes by 40%, breast cancer by 25%, depression by 30%, heart disease by 40% and osteoporosis by 50%¹⁰. Some people might look at this evidence and say ‘my gosh, we should make it as easy as possible for people to make better choices for themselves! Despite a multi-billion dollar

¹ <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/business/news/10743126.traffic-jams-major-threat-county-economy/>

² <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/14639676.traffic-jams-worse-ever-oxfordshire-businesses-count-cost-congestio>

³ https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/roads-and-transport-connecting-oxfordshire/Strategic_Assessment_traffic_filter.pdf

⁴ <https://www.nimblefins.co.uk/cheap-car-insurance/number-cars-great-britain>

⁵ https://primarysite-prod-sorted.s3.amazonaws.com/larkrise-ps/UploadedDocument/f050dbcf-503e-42a9-8932-b8425be8dfb3/27.larkrise-news-2021_2022-13th-may-2022.pdf

⁶ https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1m-MKf46mp3iUxr5ijD_vKsziSD5ENg-e/edit#gid=405704725

⁷ www.dataptive.com based on Census 2021

⁸ https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cgr61x5y28zo_amp

⁹ <https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/file/833/air-quality-annual-status-report-2022>

¹⁰ <https://publishing.rcseng.ac.uk/doi/full/10.1308/rcsbull.2020.28>

car industry wanting us to drive everywhere, let's make it more inconvenient to drive, and nicer to walk or cycle! But no, they're suggesting we do the opposite.

Let's also look at what might happen if the County were to follow this suggestion and just dump the traffic filters. The traffic filters speed up buses. This is overriding, overwhelming reason they were chosen above other measures. This is what would happen if the filters were dumped:

Two brand new bus routes wouldn't happen. These are outer loops and will around the city so you don't have to change in the centre. Both will serve the hospital from the west, south and east. Maybe the proposers would like these to be cancelled?

- Would they like the planned increased frequency of the 3a and 5a serving Littlemore to be cancelled?
- Would they like the planned increase frequency of buses serving Wallingford, Didcot and Banbury to be cancelled?
- Would they like the planned increased frequency of P&R services on Sundays to be cancelled?
- Would like the 159 electric buses, invested in as a direct result of the traffic filters, to be cancelled? Would they prefer big petrol buses to keep pumping out toxic fumes on the arterial roads of Oxford?

Those bus improvements are coming about because buses are going to be faster, which frees up drivers and vehicles along a route.

I have some sympathy for the request around school streets for private schools. These schools tend to have far, far higher rates of car drop offs as they are non-catchment schools¹¹, and compared to state schools they are located closer into the centre of Oxford¹² – driving traffic right into the centre of our city. I believe the schools need to be far more proactive about a school bus for each individual school, and simply buy HomeRun, which is a secure app designed especially for school liftsharing. Luckily for the people of Oxford, the traffic filters are likely to drive behaviour changes around private schools, although, like Cllr Rehman and Aziz I would like to see much more done in this area.

I would urge you to oppose this motion today.

¹¹ <https://www.solvetheschoolrun.org/our-data>

¹² <https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1iAf6p2z4rVUmkTJ2WiASnjRtA5WqA&ll=51.75615078985504%2C-1.2346043499999948&z=12>

2. Address from Dr. Sheikh Ramzy

Honourable esteemed Members of the Oxford City Council,

Greetings and blessings

In light of our city's rich history and commitment to inclusivity, I would like to request that Oxford City Council consider giving its support to a two state solution to end the conflict in Gaza. This proposal reflects our shared values of justice, equality, and the pursuit of peace, aligning with the United Kingdom government's endorsement of a two-state solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The enduring conflict between Israel and Palestine has resulted in profound suffering and loss for both sides of the conflict. It is widely acknowledged that a comprehensive resolution is essential to ensure the security and rights of all parties involved. Central to this resolution is the establishment of a viable and independent Palestinian state alongside Israel.

Should Oxford City Council provide support for such a solution it represents a significant and symbolic step towards the parties to the conflict advancing the peace process. It underscores our solidarity with the Palestinian people and affirms the Council believes that a solution should be underpinned by international law, self-determination, and human rights. By confirming its support the Council will demonstrate support for a just and lasting solution to the conflict.

Oxford City Council, as the authority of a city renowned for its prestigious academic institutions and diverse community, is well-suited to lead by example in supporting the recognition of Palestine. As a city that values inclusivity and tolerance, Oxford City Council has a responsibility to champion the rights of marginalized communities. By endorsing this proposal, the Council honour our tradition of standing up for justice and equality.

In 2014 Sweden to recognised Palestine as a state in 2014, setting an important precedent for other nations and municipalities. By supporting a two-state solution, Oxford City Council will be lending its voice to the global momentum behind the recognition of Palestine. Such collective action amplifies the voices of the Palestinian people and strengthens calls for constructive dialogue and negotiation.

In conclusion, I urge the Oxford City Council to consider lending its support to the two-state solution to the conflict, demonstrating Oxford's unwavering commitment to peace and human rights, affirming your values as a compassionate and progressive city and standing in solidarity with those striving for dignity and freedom.

3. Address from Danny Yee

Outside my front door is a marked parking bay which can, if everyone parks carefully, just fit four small cars. But even one large car reduces its capacity to three.

Those of you who drive may have experienced finding a space in a car parking lot only for there to be wide vehicles on either side, right up to the dividing line, making the space impossible or very difficult to use. And car parks that might have had a hundred spaces twenty years ago may now only have eighty, because they have to cater for wider cars.

So charging larger vehicles more for parking would be justified simply on fairness grounds. But larger vehicles also create a whole range of community harms - pretty much all the harms created by cars are worse with larger and heavier cars.

In some places on-street parking has been shifted onto pavements, making them difficult or impossible to use for people walking or wheeling, because wider cars parked on the carriageway wouldn't leave enough room for bin lorries or fire engines.

A child is eight times more likely to die in a collision with an SUV than with an ordinary car, because they go under the SUV rather than onto the bonnet of the car. And because larger vehicles have poor visibility they are more likely to hit children, especially when reversing. Larger vehicles also contribute to road danger indirectly, even when parked or stationary, because they block visibility, raising the risk of collisions between other people - walking, wheeling, cycling or driving.¹³

Heavier vehicles cause more damage than lighter ones, both to the carriageway and to pavements. This is non-linear, and some analyses suggest the heaviest SUVs may do twenty times as much damage as a typical car.

Particulate air pollution largely comes from tyre wear, road dust resuspension, and brake wear. This means it is not solved by electrification, but also that larger vehicles create more of it. There is no safe level of particulate air pollution, which is why the World Health Organisation guidelines are now 20% of the UK legal limits.

Finally, larger vehicles burn more fuel and emit more carbon dioxide. All the decarbonisation gains achieved by vehicle electrification have been undone by increasing vehicle size.¹⁴

So we need to discourage the ownership and use of larger vehicles, especially in urban areas such as Oxford with large numbers of people walking and cycling and breathing the air. Increased parking charges would be a small but direct deterrent but would also, if accompanied by a suitable explanatory campaign, provide moral and psychological suasion.

Many other local authorities have emissions-based charging and a few have size or weight-based charging. Oxford and Oxfordshire should follow them. Please support this motion.

¹³ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0022437522000810>

¹⁴ <https://infotec.news/2023/11/28/suvs-massively-undermine-efforts-to-decarbonise-transport-says-report/>

4. Question from Richard Parnham

This question is mainly directed at Anne Railton, Oxford City Council Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice.

"Can the cabinet member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice explain whether or not the Oxford Air Quality Annual Status report for 2023 will include a detailed analysis of historic / recent NO2 pollution levels across the planned Oxford ZEZ expansion zone?"

5. Question from Dr. Dominik Metz

Dear Leader of the Cabinet Member,

I am a GP working in a community with a hotel housing asylum seekers. As more asylum seekers are granted refugee status, they are also being given 1 month notice (or less) of eviction from the hotels they reside in. As many will not have received any state financial support by this time and will not have had the necessary documents to find a job, they are facing destitution. As a GP working with asylum seekers, I can confirm that many are vulnerable for multiple reasons. My personal experience is that this month alone over 25 refugees from an Oxfordshire hotel are being evicted. I am very concerned for their welfare and ask the council if this current situation can be classed a housing/homelessness emergency? What measures can the Council take to support such persons?

6. Address from Kaddy Beck

We are campaigning to save Bertie Park, the only recreation ground in the southern half of the Hinksey Park ward.

How many times have you told us:

“Bertie Park has been on local plans for 20 years,” and “there’s been extensive consultation?”

Both are false. Your proposals depart from all previous plans which all required the park to be moved. You never asked us if we wanted the Park destroyed.

Bertie Park is not judged surplus to requirements, but your 2040 local plan has simply dropped the requirement to move it.

It says the Park is suitable for residential housing because “there is potential ... to replace the function of the site partially within the site and partially elsewhere in the local area.”

It says there should be a playground (of some sort) within the new development. The Multi-Use-Games Area could become “an alternative type of facility,” or maybe you could “increase the capacity” of the small kick-about area on Fox Crescent. The recreation ground itself isn’t mentioned.

Your current consultation on local byelaws shows that Bertie will disappear from the map.

In compensation, you will improve access to what you now call the Cold Harbour Nature Area.

No-one is concerned about access. Parents don’t allow kids to go there alone because it’s scary. There’s no natural surveillance. You’ve never any idea who or what you could find there. Thames Valley Police have said it’s not safe for unaccompanied children.

We are not NIMBYs. If you wanted to build housing there, few would object. But we do object to you building on our recreation ground.

Government guidance states that recreational space should only be built on if “the loss resulting from the proposed development (is) replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location.”

Our research shows our community is of the overwhelming opinion that this would not be the case.

You have no intention of complying with government guidance. Yet you insist that new facilities will meet the needs of existing and future users.

After you have granted planning permission, you will ask us whether the fence posts should be blue or red and whether we want swings or roundabouts.

When Bertie Park has gone, you’ll say “there’s been extensive consultation” and “we are meeting the community’s needs.”

We all know that Oxford is a housing catastrophe; 3,000 people on the housing list; most ordinary working people can't afford to live here. You say that building on our 1.7-acre park will transform the lives of 31 families. "Don't we want somewhere for our children to live?"

Meanwhile, on the North Oxford Development, you have different priorities. The 64-acre site will provide one million square feet of labs and workspaces, 4,500 jobs, 3 public parks, but only 480 homes. This will super-charge the housing crisis. Advertised as a "model of sustainable living," few working people will afford to live there. If this site was used for housing, you could build 1,237 homes.

In this part of Oxford, you intend to build an additional 230 homes. UK children are getting less exercise than ever, but you want to destroy the only park we've got. Hinksey Park is over a kilometre away. For residents of your new development on Redbridge Meadow, it will be even further.

Will you use the 3 new parks in North Oxford for social housing too? It is clearly one rule for them, and another rule for us.

What makes this worse is that you are keeping us in the dark. Last time you gave us notice that Bertie Park would be discussed at cabinet, we leafletted our area to let everyone know. Many were disappointed when it was dropped from the agenda at the last minute. So now you keep quiet.

We've signed up for alerts. Each month we wait for cabinet and planning committee agendas to appear. Appropriation of Bertie Park has been on 3 forward plans. The latest says you'll decide in June. But we know you could cancel again. You're having us on.

We are Oxford residents. If you are determined to build on our only community facility, the least you could do is to keep us informed.

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