

Oxford temporary congestion charge: update to traffic filters business impacts assessment

June 2025

Background

This technical note provides a brief commentary update on the [traffic filters business impacts assessment](#) completed in 2022. The note focuses on the differences between the original traffic filters scheme and the proposed congestion charge, as described below.

The scheme would be identical to the trial traffic filters except for the following differences:

1. Drivers of cars without a permit would have the option to pay a daily charge to drive through the six filter locations, which would now become congestion charge locations.
2. Under the traffic filters, all parts of the city currently accessible by car would remain accessible at all times for cars without a permit but drivers may need to change their route. Under the charging scheme, most of the city would still remain accessible at all times for cars without a permit, except an area of the city centre known as the “central permit area” which would only be accessible by passing through a congestion charge location (either Hythe Bridge or Thames Street).

Due to (1), two new permits will be offered in addition to the permits already offered for traffic filters:

- A new resident permit, giving residents living in the “central permit area” unlimited, free access through all congestion charge locations at all times AND 50 visitor permits per resident per year for those visiting residents in the central permit area
- A new commuting permit, giving users of workplace parking in the central permit area unlimited, free access through all congestion charge locations at all times.

Traffic filters business impact assessment

Table 1 below is extracted from the original traffic filters business impact assessment and shows the overall benefits and adverse impacts.

Table 1: TRAFFIC FILTERS business impact summary (2022)

Business type	Sub-group	Travel time	Direct costs	Effect on business operations	Effect on business demand / market	Effect on labour market-recruitment & retention
Directly affected (transport and distribution)	Taxi operators	2	0	0	1	0
	PHVs	2	0	0	1	0
	Businesses with fleets of vehicles	2	1	0	0	0
	Bus operators (public buses)	2	1	0	1	0
	Bus operators (private buses/coaches)	2	1	0	1	0
	HGV operators	2	0	0	0	0
Businesses operating in Oxford (General)	City centre	2	0	0	0	0
	District centres	2	0	1	0	0
	Other	2	0	1	0	0
	Outside Oxford	0	0	0	0	0
Businesses (Consumer services)	City centre	1	0	0	1	0
	District centres	1	0	0	1	0
	Other	1	0	0	0	0
	Outside Oxford	0	0	0	0	0
Public sector	Schools	0	0	1	0	-1
	Hospitals	0	0	0	0	-1
	Universities	0	0	0	0	0

Score	Impact
-3	Large adverse
-2	Moderate adverse
-1	Slight adverse
0	Neutral – no significant benefits or disbenefits
+1	Slight beneficial
+2	Moderate beneficial
+3	Large beneficial

Congestion charge – positives for businesses compared to traffic filters

- The traffic reductions are still expected to be significant (and in some outer areas, slightly greater than traffic filters due to reduced traffic displacement) and will still be a significant improvement compared to the present conditions.
- Additional permits (including 25 day passes for Oxfordshire residents) have been introduced since the original traffic filter business impact assessment was completed.
- The congestion charge allows drivers of cars without a permit to pay a daily charge to pass the congestion charge locations, rather than having to re-route around them – meaning access by car will be quicker and more direct for those paying the charge, particularly as congestion will be reduced on routes passing congestion charge locations.
- For the congestion charge, a commuting permit will be available for users of workplace parking in the “central permit area”.
- The congestion charge will generate revenue that will be used to improve bus services and reduce the cost of Park & Ride

Congestion charge – negatives for businesses compared to traffic filters

- The journey time benefits of the congestion charge for non-car modes (on which many businesses, particularly in the city centre, heavily depend) are expected to be lower compared to the traffic filters, because the congestion charge has a lower traffic-reducing effect compared to the filters. In addition, the Botley Road closure has temporarily reduced access by non-car modes from the west.
- Paying the daily charge may not be an affordable option for regular commuting trips, due to the cumulative cost of paying a daily charge to make regular journeys
- Whilst all areas of the city would remain accessible without passing a traffic filter, an area of the city centre which includes the Westgate car park, Worcester Street car

park, Oxford station and a number of businesses and other organisations will only be directly accessible for car-borne customers or visitors by paying the congestion charge during the scheme's operating hours. These areas include a large proportion of city centre car parking spaces.

- The ongoing closure of Botley Road reduces access by all modes from the west.

Conclusion

Taking into account the new positives and negatives of the congestion charge (together with the Botley Road closure) compared to the original traffic filter scheme assessed in 2022, the impact scores are expected to remain the same as in Table 1, albeit for different reasons in some cases.