

Nicholas Hardyman's statement to the Scrutiny Committee on 27 August 2025

Other Congestion charges dissuade visitors from driving into another city. Residents in Summertown, Cutteslowe and Wolvercote particularly oppose this proposed congestion charge as it will tax them for driving in their own city for over 70% of the year.

The Marston Ferry Road checkpoint will make it harder for people in Summertown to travel to other areas of their city and, particularly, to attend hospital appointments. People going to hospital are often not capable of cycling, walking far or waiting at bus stops. The effect on teachers working at Cherwell School has been well documented in the press. Why should they, other teachers, and health workers at the hospitals, be taxed for driving to work when they can't afford to live within easy cycling distance.

For the Summertown shops there will be no direct limitation on visitors arriving down the Banbury Road and no projected increase in traffic on that road. The effects will be indirect – projected increases in ring road traffic between them and their Oxfordshire client base making it a less convenient area to visit.

Traffic is, though, predicted to increase substantially on the Woodstock Road to the detriment of residents living on the road and in the adjoining streets, with an average projected increase of 1,217 vehicles a day. This is over 444,000 vehicles a year. These vehicles will be driving past two primary school playgrounds right next to the road, both of which should be safeguarded from increased traffic-related NO₂ and PM2.5 pollution.

The Summertown shops are mainly a convenience shopping area, not a destination one. People call in to pick things up. Anything that makes it harder for them to do so will damage the viability of businesses in Summertown, which is considered one of the most successful district centres in the country. We should be proud of this, not threatening it.

*The wider area of Summertown is, however, also a regional draw. The 2021 Neighbourhood Forum survey of car park users found that external visitors were travelling on average 17.3 miles on a weekday, and 24 miles on a Saturday; not distances that lend themselves to cycling and walking.

An additional challenge for Summertown businesses, will be the peak time restrictions on the Marston Ferry Road, which will hinder direct access from Headington, Northway and Marston. Summertown acts as an important local hub for Northway and Marston as they have few leisure, retail or hospitality facilities. Residents there may go instead to Headington, thereby adding to congestion and pollution on Headley Way and London Road, and the schools situated there.

*None of the projections of traffic movements show any improvement in congestion in our area, quite the reverse, with massively increased congestion on the Woodstock Road. I ask you to advise against this proposal.