

Presentation to the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 27th August, 2025 by Graham Jones on behalf of ROX-backing oxford business

We recognise that members of this committee have a very important role in properly assessing the proposals for a temporary congestion charge within Oxford.

You must be able to ascertain whether the huge inconvenience to residents and businesses and the likely damage to the local economy are outweighed by the hoped-for benefits.

The main benefit being targeted by the congestion charge is to improve bus times by 10% and yet, some LTNs, forcing local traffic on to major bus routes and some new 20 MPH stretches, where bus drivers normally hoped to catch up on their schedules, have already set back this aim.

Instead of trying to right this, the congestion charge locations, not all of which are on prime bus routes, seem set to add to the problems rather than solve them.

That is unless one of the other stated objectives can be achieved, that of a reduction in traffic. The Council's own data suggests that a sizeable reduction of 15% to 20% is required but admits that some areas, including the ring road, are forecast to see increased traffic levels. Perhaps on bus routes not affected by the congestion charge points.

So, these charging points are not in logical locations but will, nevertheless, divide communities. Please look at a map?

The rules around permits and exemptions are very complex and restrictive, not appreciating that many people living in the county and beyond will have limited or no free access.

Has the Council seriously considered the challenges that will be faced by visitors and customers to retail outlets and hospitality businesses, as well as staff, to the city centre and suburban shopping areas?

In spite of the new Westgate, Oxford has seen a significant decline in its shopping offer with many different types of retailers disappearing altogether.

The County Council needs to look to see how it can help to reverse this rather than squeezing the lifeblood out of the city.

Cllr Gant has said on several occasions that alternatives have not been offered. This is not true and **ROX**, in its submission to the consultation, put forward six well considered ideas.

Why have these not been looked at in more detail by traffic planning officers while they had time with the postponement of the traffic filters?

We implore you as a scrutiny committee to stop the council from bringing in these measures. To do so and before Christmas will seriously knock the stuffing out of the Oxford business community.