

Resident statement for consideration – Cowley LTN ANPR decision meeting, June 22nd.

Dear Councillor Gant, dear Cabinet members,

I am unable to attend today's meeting so asked to submit a written statement instead. Thank you for including my views in your considerations.

First of all, I would like to let you know how transformative the Cowley LTNs have been for my neighbourhood. Before the LTNs, I have never seen so many children of all ages walk, scoot and cycle to/from school, and never have I seen so many people of all ages walk, wheel, scoot and cycle through the area in general. There used to be literal traffic jams outside my house with every school run. Cycling through Rymers Lane, to get to the Cowley Road shops and restaurants or to the city centre used to be unpleasant, hostile and didn't feel safe. Now it's a joy! Everyone deserves to move about their neighbourhood and through the city without it being a hostile experience every single time.

Reading the officers' recommendations following the consultation on replacing some of the filters with ANPR, I am confused about the proposed ANPR exemptions for taxis and private hire. I was under the impression that the proposal for ANPR would be used to enforce the existing rules for existing filters, not change the filters' nature, i.e. to remove through traffic for all motor vehicles, not to open the filter up to "some" cars. This was not mentioned in the consultation.

I am concerned that with the proposed changes to replace some filters with ANPR, the LTNs will become "leaky" again, especially if more exemptions start creeping in. Opening Littlehay Rd will create a straight cut through via Cornwallis Rd for anyone willing to breach the filter - and especially if there are new taxi exemptions introduced. Littlemore Road is a concern too, it is supposed to be part of an essential cycle route connecting Littlemore with Cowley and the city centre, but whenever the filter has been vandalised, it is hostile and dominated by aggressive driving. I have been tailgated through the Littlemore filter more times than I care to think about, and many times this involved taxis.

People on local social media are already talking about how they will use magnetic devices to obscure their number plates, or that they look forward to the winter when they can claim they hadn't noticed their number plate was so dirty it's illegible. There was an article the Telegraph in 2016 that reported that an estimate of 1 in 12 number plates are cloned. We have seen exceptionally aggressive behaviour from drivers when the bollards were constantly vandalised, almost as if they wanted to demonstrate they dominate these roads. I personally have been verbally abused and driven at aggressively, when the bollards were missing, and I know many others, especially women, have had similar experiences while cycling. I worry that if we create more opportunities for people to break the rules, there will be more people willing to do so, and it will more likely be these types of aggressive drivers.

I am also concerned about taxi exemptions. I understand that taxis are part of the solution to help people drive less, however in my experience (and this is shared by many people who regularly travel by bicycle in Oxford), our local taxi drivers can be some of the least considerate. The amount of times I saw taxis illegally go through the vandalised filters, although they should clearly know how to interpret a "no motor vehicles sign" is only one example. I have been close-passed, cut off and tailgated by more taxis in Oxford than any other type of driver. And these are professional drivers who we should expect higher

standards from. So why would we allow more dangerous drivers to make the school run less safe? It makes no sense, and it wasn't part of the consultation. There is no valid reason for these exemptions in the officers' report either. My concern is that replacing the filters with ANPR will create a slippery slope for more exemptions (as demonstrated by the officers' recommendations!), and we will be back to a medium to high traffic neighbourhood.

My preference would be to retain the filters as they are, potentially add ANPR to enforce the filters for motor bikes. However, if you decide to replace some filters with ANPR, please do not include additional exemptions, and please have a plan in place to work closely with the police to ensure number plate tampering won't become widespread and enable aggressive rule breaking drivers to cut through our neighbourhoods. Thank you.

Ines Wilhelm