

**Richard Parnham's presentation to Oxfordshire County Council
12 December 2023**

Today, you will vote on a motion that the motion's author, Michael O'Connor, says will improve bus services and reduce congestion in the city. However, while it is to be welcomed that Labour is finally proposing to open up various roads to facilitate traffic dispersion, the specific roads Mr O'Connor is suggesting are unlikely – by themselves – to do very little to facilitate this.

Sadly, the roads proposed for opening up seem to be been selected on the basis of trying to rescue Labour's vote across East Oxford, and head off divisions within his own party, rather than for than for the reasons stated. Please correct me if I'm wrong in that impression.

For example, the motion proposes to open up Crowell Road / Littlemore Road / Oxford Road in Church Cowley – a vital link road between Littlemore and the facilities around Templar's Square. That's all great – but let's not kid itself that the move is anything other than a panicked, defensive measure by Labour against the new Independent Oxford Alliance, which had its launch event in Littlemore.

If you were serious about reducing traffic and freeing up bus routes around Hollow Way, you'd consider opening up the Crescent Road filter – but that's not on the cards, presumably because Charlie Hicks will blow a gasket if you do. Be brave – add Crescent Road (and Bartholomew / Cornwallis Road) to the list. Maybe Charlie will leave the party, if you're a little bit more forthright about opening up additional roads around Cowley. Everyone in Cowley, apart from Charlie, wins if that happens. Go on, why not make everyone's Christmas?

Secondly, there's no plan to alleviate the massive traffic jams and wrecked bus services that are the bane of the lives of Morrell Avenue residents by opening up Divinity Road – presumably because you don't want Jemima Hunt, councillor for St Clements, "throwing toys out of [the] pram as expected", as one senior labour councillor said to me recently. It doesn't seem to have occurred to Ms Hunt that there's more to St Clements than Divinity Road.

If Labour thought this motion would allow them to see the back of what – for them – the dreadful Oxford Mail headline "Labour thwarts bid to scrap LTNs", I'm not entirely sure that's going to be successful, based on what's currently offered. "Labour in cynical LTN election ploy" might be a more realistic description of what's on the table today - because I'm afraid that's very much what this motion looks like.