

Peter West’s Speech to the Scrutiny Committee 27th August 2025

I assumed that the Ricardo Oxford Traffic Filter Interim Scheme report, was designed to support the Congestion Charge implementation to reduce congestion, pollution and increase bus speeds by 10%. I analysed both the traffic forecasts and pollution levels on an individual road basis and as a broad strategy, as preferred by Cllr Gant however I did note that the Council told Ricardo their preferred option before their report was undertaken, which I believe is both unethical and unprofessional by both parties.

My analysis considered the data outlined in the Ricardo report and compared it with the council’s own ‘OSM ‘Do Nothing / Do Something’ spreadsheets, (obtained by a Freedom of Information request); the City Council’s 2025 Oxford Air Quality Annual Status Report’, dated June 2025 and Google’s ‘Typical day’ maps for Oxford.

Pollution

My analysis concluded that the congestion charge proposal did **not** reduce the ‘broad’ pollution levels, in fact, the City Council Air Quality report provided **measured** air pollution data in comparison to Ricardo’s rather complex **calculations** to disprove the Ricardo report data. The City’s data indicated that the broad average for the roads listed by Ricardo with congestion charging was 19.2µg/m3 that is already below the Council’s target pollution target for 2025. Only 2 roads i.e. St Clements and the Eastern bypass are above the 30µg/m3; 92% of roads are below the 2025 target (30µg/m3) and 64% are already below the 2030 target of 20µg/m3. It should be noted that the City Council’s data related to 2024, that pollution has lessened since then with the increasing use of electric vehicles across the city and will continue to do over the future years.

Traffic

There are numerous questions regarding the traffic data used by Ricardo, many of which are listed below. Whilst Ricardo stated that they would not consider the changes in congestion speeds in their report for some unknown reason, I have demonstrated that total traffic volumes are reduced by 3%, while the traffic speeds remain virtually unchanged.

Analysis of the Google Typical day data shows that the maximum congestion is approximately 6 minutes but generally there is only a problem at morning and evening rush hours and during school’s term times.

Conclusions

My conclusions are that despite the errors outlined below, the Ricardo report does not support any of the council’s claims or objectives regarding pollution, congestion and bus speeds. My analysis has led me to the conclusion that the decision to proceed with congestion charging is a very rushed attempt by the council, using very flawed data, to avoid having to pay compensation to the bus companies and / or increase income to pay for further traffic proposals.

Below are some discrepancies in the Ricardo report:-

The Ricardo report commences with a series of assumptions made and the calculations undertaken, however examination of your OSM ‘Do Nothing/ Do Minimum spreadsheets show that Ricardo have simply copied the ‘Total Vehicle’ numbers from these two spreadsheets; the two spreadsheets do not have identical ‘vehicle type’ headers, yet the data has been used without reference or qualification. I show below an example taken from my analysis. I would be interested in an explanation for the 1,331% change in Car B2/C1 categories?

The data below is a summary of the approx 1,725 roads listed in the council's Traffic Data 2025 'Do Something' / 'Do Nothing' OSM spreadsheets																	
Do Something Titles	Car A	Car B1	Car B2	Car C	Car D1	Car D2	Car E	Taxis	LGV 1	LGV 2	LGV 3	HGV 1	HGV 2	HGV 3	Buses	Total Vehicles (including bus)	Congested speed (kph)
	Car B	Car C1	Car C2														
Do Nothing Totals	295,552	183,711	179,522	2,783,472	407,072	1,297,418	493,521	296,856	111,130	683,851	226,452	13,223	144,986	55,090	148,729	7,320,586	62,470
Do Something Totals	452,118	26,374	2,568,513	141,567	386,111	1,229,994	474,007	428,805	111,977	689,057	228,177	13,375	146,651	55,722	157,749	7,110,197	62,588
%age Differences	53%	-86%	1331%	-95%	-5%	-5%	-4%	44%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	6%	-3%	0%

When you look out of your council office windows onto New Road, you will see lots of motorbikes, cars, vans, lorries and buses passing by in both directions. The Ricardo report lists 528 vehicles/day. However, when you check the Council’s AADT data for this road, this number is for buses only; the others were not counted.

Only 34 roads were selected to represent Oxford, yet key roads were missed or wrongly selected; There are no references to St Cross Road, one of the main traffic filter sites! There are neither buses or congestion on this road!

Several roads selected have the wrong data attached to them e.g. Ashurst Way is a side road on Rose Hill (1,256 V/D) whereas Rose Hill itself, a major road into / from Oxford carries 18,806 vehicles / day.

No mention is made of Horspath Driftway (The Slade) a major route in Headington and the major hospitals, although it carries 19,266 vehicles/day, nor the Cowley Road, that will be directly affected by the St Clements ANPR cameras.

No mention is made of how cars have been calculated to be personal, or business, care or blue badge exempt.