

Councillor Emma Garnett – CMDTM 22/1/2026

I'm the County Councillor for Parks and I was elected with a mandate for improving active travel and sustainable transport in my division.

I welcome most of the recommendations here, particularly for increased cycle parking. Thank you to the officers for the time they've spent on these proposals, consultations and report writing.

I have had residents contact me asking for more cycle parking so that they could safely store a cargo bike to transport children. No resident to date has contacted me to ask for more car parking spaces. There are bikes tied to road signs across my division in the absence of suitably placed or enough cycle parking. I am therefore surprised to see some recommendations for increased car parking.

For East Oxford item 8, I ask the cabinet member to accept officer recommendations for 8a, c, f, g, h, i, j, k and reject recommendations for 8 b, d and e.

I agree with my Green colleague and Active Travel Champion, Emily Kerr that if it is at all possible, defer the decision on b (Cave St) as has been done for h (Boulter St cycle parking), in order to re-consider using it for cycle and micro-mobility parking instead - rather than rejecting it outright.

I have particular concerns about paragraphs 57 & 58 in the East Oxford Report which claims we need more car parking spaces to make women, disabled people, the elderly and children safer without any supporting evidence.

We know that women are less likely to have a full driving license (1) and drive fewer miles than men, though they make more car trips (2). Children of course - cannot drive at all until aged 17 and driving lessons are prohibitively expensive for many (3).

Women also travel more miles and make more trips by bus than men - we should be prioritising more frequent buses to improve travel for women - not increasing car parking spaces.

“Evidence indicates that many women and vulnerable individuals may avoid sustainable modes such as cycling or walking, especially after dark, due to inadequate lighting, lack of secure infrastructure”

Well, the County Council should be looking to provide adequate lighting and secure cycling and walking infrastructure to make active travel more accessible to everyone. We should not exacerbate the problem by providing car parking spaces, which encourages more car trips and therefore discourages cycling. There are many, many more car parking spaces than cycling spaces on residential streets already and people using their bikes deserve to have convenient bike parking, whether during the day or night.

Transport is the highest emitting sector of greenhouse gases in the UK. We have a responsibility to present and future generations to decarbonise travel as soon as possible. This means fewer car trips and more public and active transport. This will also bring so many benefits to public health from improved air quality to enabling people to take more exercise safely. Research has found reducing car parking spaces in cities is the second most effective way to reduce the number of cars in cities, second behind introducing a congestion charge (5).

I appreciate there will sometimes be circumstances where more car parking spaces may be needed, but I think the thresholds for that should be very high and are not met here.

Let's not undermine the effects of the congestion charge by bringing in more car parking spaces that there is little demand for.

1. <https://www.aptaco.com/insights/blog/whos-behind-wheel-driving-licence-trends-and-penalty-points-across-uk> (men: 22.7 million; women: 19.7 million)
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-travel-survey-2024/nts-2024-household-car-availability-and-trends-in-car-trips>
3. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c7vnp4j2811o>
4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-travel-survey-2023/nts-2023-trends-in-public-transport-use-and-multi-modal-public-transport-trips>
5. <https://theconversation.com/12-best-ways-to-get-cars-out-of-cities-ranked-by-new-research-180642>