

Stephen Gower

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the officers' recommended changes to the low traffic neighbourhood implementation in Cowley. As a resident of Cowley I believe that these changes will undermine the positive impact the scheme has had on our community and our quality of life.

Firstly, I would like to highlight the significant benefits the Low Traffic Neighbourhoods have brought to our area. Since their introduction, the low traffic neighbourhoods have made it considerably easier for my young family to travel independently and safely. The filters themselves have become a place to pause and interact with others, and this could be improved with seating and landscaping. Even the modest planting by neighbours in some planters has improved the area, and the council should have ambitions to introduce urban trees and rain gardens at these locations. The reduction in through traffic has created a calmer, more pleasant environment for pedestrians and cyclists, allowing us to enjoy our neighbourhood without the constant worry of heavy vehicles speeding through residential streets. In particular the Florence Park low traffic neighbourhood opened access for my daughter (10 at the time of implementation) to cycle independently to primary school and as time has gone on this has extended to activities on and near the river, and from there, using the Thames Path, as far as the city centre too.

For the few periods the Church Cowley low traffic neighbourhood has been operational, access to the ring road by bicycle has also been possible, making safe the only route my daughter can cycle, accompanied by my wife or I, to swimming lessons at the Leys Pool. With the poor reaction of the Council to vandalism, this route has again been open for weeks at a time to a constant stream of aggressive driving, not least from those driving private hire vehicles (the black cabs have been notable absent from abusing the missing bollard and remain a credit to our city). My daughter and wife no longer feel confident in cycling to swimming and instead drive, adding additional congestion to the road network. While Crowell Road, and Littlemore Road at the filter point, look to be wide thanks to the development of the Cowley Centre, it is a different matter at the other end of the route, where Cowley Road, Littlemore is a generations-old narrow road, which has been subjected to the modern menace of pavement parking. I could only support measures to open Littlemore Road to additional traffic if the proposals came after changes to remove the on-street parking and create protected cycle lanes for this important route between Littlemore and Cowley. Unfortunately, this council has not managed to find a way yet to fund this possible future and instead the proposals recommended simply reinforce the current situation created by vandals, where too much traffic is trying to use the route and putting off vulnerable users from making the switch to active travel. In addition, without a significant period of bollard-protected operation of the current scheme, it will not be possible to monitor the effect of changes at this filter, so at the very least I ask for a deferral of this decision until the bollard protection has been in place for a continuous 6 months or more.

I am equally opposed to the recommendation of the officers for Littlehay Road. I have this evening spoken to neighbours who were generally supportive of the consulted proposals for emergency vehicle access, so did not raise a formal objection. These neighbours are shocked that the recommendation is now to open up a shortcut for taxis and other vehicles and are very surprised that they haven't been notified of the changes. I am supportive of access for emergency services if there is evidence that this is required. Such evidence has been lacking, but I believe the best method to achieve emergency access is ANPR combined with the rebound bollards. With ANPR, the incentive to vandalise the plastic bollards is gone, and with the bollards in place there will be a clear protection of the route from those who might mistakenly drive through otherwise.

My requests then are

- that no decision is taken until the existing low traffic neighbourhood filters have been properly operational for significant period, which sadly we can all agree has not been the case
- that if there is evidence that opening filters for emergency access is required, this be achieved with rebound bollards and ANPR together
- that changes that inevitably increase traffic levels are only implemented after protected cycle lanes have been introduced, and neighbours have had a reasonable chance to be informed of the proposals.

Thank you for your consideration of this submission.