

Cowley LTN Decision – John Skinner

I stood as an independent candidate for St Mary's in the city council elections opposing the LTNs and providing positive alternative ideas. Independent candidates received an average of 30% of the votes in the wards where we stood despite starting from a standing start and having no party machine or name recognition. I canvassed widely and the following points came up repeatedly.

- Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) is ignoring residents' overwhelming opposition to the LTNs in the consultation; with the planned decision to continue the cabinet is arrogantly insisting it knows best even though none of you live in the area. You are not listening
- The LTNs are crude one-size-fits all, cheap schemes that harm public transport by forcing all traffic onto the main roads; now the schemes have been introduced, the council is making them worse by imposing dangerous cycle Quickways; these encourage cyclists to use the same clogged arterial roads when they are clearly not wide enough to accommodate them; cycling safety specialists advise that cyclists should be separated from heavy traffic. What clowns designed a scheme to clear the side streets of traffic and then force cyclists into the same space? Is it sensible to promote cargo bikes with children and then create polluted quickways?
- All the metrics and evidence produced by the Council on the Cowley LTNs show they are not working; pollution has increased to dangerous levels on the main roads, it has not been reduced as promised; congestion has increased with none of the promised "traffic evaporation"; the council has produced no evidence of any increase in active travel; the scheme is slowing down public transport; and the emergency services have all decided not to unlock bollards delaying access to affected areas (they all opposed lockable bollards in the consultation but were ignored); how can a failed scheme be continued?
- The inequity, unfairness and divisiveness of these schemes needs to be heard; how can it be fair for residents of Oxford Road, Hollow Way, Iffley Road, Cowley Rd, St Clements and Morrell Avenue suffer from hours of excessive pollution caused by traffic exported from other leafy semi-gated gentrified communities? Is it fair to rob the residents of these polluted streets of 640 parking spaces to establish dangerous Quickways? How can it be fair for the poorer areas of Oxford to have this imposed while all Lib-Dem areas are carefully excluded?
- The schemes make it impossible for many to get to work and do their jobs; access to Headington hospitals is made much worse exacerbating existing problems and poor public transport; hospital staff are leaving because they cannot juggle busy work and home lives; many vital GP and Outpatient appointments are being missed because patients can't get to them on time; the council needs to listen and not carry on regardless ignoring all problems.

Finally in its consultation response, OCC is saying that it is willing to consider further changes including the use of ANPR in the areas affected; all previous consultation with affected residents and businesses have been tokenistic, but OCC has assiduously listened and copied ideas from lobbyists from active travel and cycling groups; so far, the council has not listened to businesses, they have not listened to faith groups, they have not listened to carers and workers impacted by the LTNs or to voters. If the schemes are to be changed, these voices must be listened to and the knowledge of the independent and other opponents should be heard. Revised proposals need to be inclusive with a real attempt to bring the different sides together. The unfairness and divisive nature of the LTNs needs acknowledging and addressing, and measures to support business, disabled residents, faith groups and those who use a car for work need to be put in place.