

Dear Oxfordshire Councillors,

Although I am broadly in favour of living in an ecologically sustainable way, I am horrified by the speed at which the Oxford city transport plan has been implemented, without adequate consultation, and having potential to ruin the health, well being and livelihood of huge numbers of Oxford city residents, with decisions made by county councillors who live outside the area. The last elections were in 2021, and there was no mention of bus filters in the East Oxford manifestos, which means that local residents are denied a fair representation in this critical decision with serious implications for many years ahead.

I have had a disabling condition for the last 22 years, and despite Oxford being a world class centre of learning, medical treatment and research, and having travelled extensively in my career in global health, I have sadly found Oxford to be the least disabled friendly city that I ever visited. I also believe that despite a community rich in diversity, the current transport policy is promoting discrimination, inequality and division.

1. **The Bus Gate survey was not accessible** enough to allow people with disabilities and health issues to take part. I have a degree from Oxford University but I could not access the bus gate survey before the deadline 13 October having tried on 4 different occasions. Some of my symptoms include chronic pain and brain freeze, which makes it very difficult to follow simple instructions, and despite my best efforts I could not register an online account, at one point I had error messages come up three times in a row when I tried to register a password. The website had no second option to enter the survey offline, no phone number to ask for help, and contravened the UK accessibility regulations for public sector bodies (23 September 2018), since the survey was not operable for those with disabilities and low IT literacy. As pointed out by the GOV website, "*you may be breaking the law if your public sector website or mobile app does not meet accessibility requirements.*"¹

2. The concept of a 15 minute city, where all amenities are within 0.75 mile **is farcical for anyone with health issues or less abled bodies**. It sometimes takes me 10 minutes just to walk 0.06 miles (100m), as I go from lamppost to lamppost to keep my balance.

3. According to the UK government at least 1 in 5 people in the UK have a long-term illness, impairment or disability, with many more having a temporary disability¹. **The county council could not cope with all the blue badge applications which would come flooding** in if the bus filters are implemented. Currently many people meet the requirement for a blue badge, but they don't apply as they can manage by driving their car and using standard parking places. There are already not enough city centre disabled spaces for those with blue badges.

4. Due to house prices in Oxford very few people are able to live 0.75 miles from their work, and many people cannot use the buses due to unaffordability (£4.50 return), unreliability, no night shift cover, not living close enough to bus route, multiple changes for a short distance as the crow flies, and personal health reasons (mental or physical, e.g. agoraphobic or immunocompromised). **Jobs are at risk because of the transport chaos**.

5. **The proposed Bus Gates block every route to the hospitals** through and across the city. When someone is unwell, infectious, receiving surgery, in case of an emergency, or about to give birth, going by public bus is a complete impossibility. Being forced to go round the ring road with traffic of up to 2 hours to go 2 miles would be a common outcome if the bus gates are put into place.

6. The zoning of the city into districts separated by bollards and Bus Gates is only going to **decrease mobility and increase inequality**. I have lived here since 1997 and I have sadly witnessed all kinds of discrimination, racism, crime and I have personally had to report a situation of harassment to the police. A healthy city is one where people can move without limits, whether that be walking, cycling or driving. Imposing £70 fines for Bus Gates where people need to drive day in day out just to get to work to keep bread on the table is absolutely ludicrous. The vibrant, ethnically diverse Cowley Road business ecosystem is dying out as businesses predictably cannot afford to stay open with the LTN reduced footfall. Most of their customers live more than 0.75 miles away, where buses are not routed. **I believe a civilised society should focus on equality, diversity and inclusivity**, making policies with the weakest, frailest and most deprived in mind. Hence my huge concern for city transport policy.

Yours sincerely, Miss Naomi Gray

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/accessibility-requirements-for-public-sector-websites-and-apps>