

LTN petition speech

Thank you for receiving and accepting my petition of over 3500 signatures.

Having been an elected member for Cowley ward for seven years both as a Labour councillor and as an independent Councillor I appreciate the complexities of both representing a local view and delivering on party policies. The LTN scheme has polarised local politics, and segregated communities.

Independents and most residents acknowledge that there is a problem with the number of vehicles on 'our' roads and will work with anyone to solve this problem. Using funding from central government to create 'Active Travel' should be just that a mechanism to introduce active travel and not a means to weaponize the Labour/LibDem and Green alliance and their war on private car ownership.

In recent months we have also seen the introduction of a local council parking Levy scheme for Oxford businesses that have parking spaces, this is an unfair tax, as the calculation for central government business rates takes into account the number parking spaces business provide. Oxford businesses are therefore hit twice for providing parking provision. We have to protect local businesses to further protect jobs and livelihoods.

The Oxford Labour war on personal car access and ownership fails to consider the needs of individual residents. Cllr Yvonne Constance upon approving the Cowley scheme stated concerns that she hadn't heard from residents with disabilities, and that the original consultation had failed to measure or assess the impact on peripheral roads.

Indeed, I have campaigned long and hard for access for Blue Badge holders and concessions for local residents through the ANPR cameras. As a father with a son of severe autism, getting Julian to his special needs school and increased his anxiety and reduced his adult social care budget due to increased journey times and fuel costs. There is no reason why these cameras couldn't be turned off on weekends or evenings to provide access to friends and family. Care workers delivering essential services to a vulnerable and other health care workers should and could be given unfettered access. In the case of Bartholomew Road, a school street would suffice. After all its not really a war on the car, but a war on those people that need a car.

There has to be a means for businesses who are facing closure due to the scheme and Independents in affected by the scheme a mechanism for regaining their loss of earnings. The county council must come forward with a compensation package.

The LTN scheme was originally proposed by Labour's John Sanders and seconded by seconded by Cllr Damian Haywood and developed in conjunction with Oxford Living Streets, whose members were and still are white and middle class.

Consciously or unconsciously the LTN planters and ANPR cameras have divided Oxford into socio-economic zones, with areas of high deprivation such as Littlemore and Blackbird Leys cordoned off from Cowley, which has seen a significant drop in footfall of 50,000.

Residents along Church Cowley and Oxford roads, can no longer open windows or relax in their gardens due to the increase in pollution. The gentrification of Florence Park and created a living hell for those residents living on the wrong side of an LTN. Children living along these peripheral roads will see a future drop in academic attainment as the noxious gases affect their cognitive recall.

St Greg's secondary school has been hit hardest, as parents rightly seek alternative schools. From a cohort of 1200 students and 80 staff, the school has halved in size to 650 students and 40 staff. Those students who are late due to the increased traffic volumes in the area, receive an automatic break or lunch time detention. Is this fair? The Oxford Academy already stretched and currently in special measures has had to absorb increased numbers of students avoiding St Gregs. This will have an impact on those students attending there. When St Greg's sneezed it was the Oxford Academy that caught a cold.

Today, I'm wearing my St John's ambulance uniform. I am a volunteer vaccinator and ambulance driver for the charity. Colleagues in the emergency services including the police, ambulances and Fire service have been directed to go around the LTN scheme and not through it to get to their destinations. All of the services accept that journeys through the LTN scheme have witnessed delays. The quality the services provide are further impacted by the increased traffic on the peripheral roads prior to accessing the LTN scheme. Clearly there is an increased threat to the public both within the LTN scheme and near it.

Work with the Independents and local residents for a better inclusive solution that is more considerate of schools, religious organisations and local businesses. Jobs, livelihoods and residents' health which must come front and centre of any future decision, and stop the blind biased war on car ownership, but use the funding to create better segregated cycle lanes and school street provision. Making our roads safer for all users will promote active travel, blocking them is a barrier to that aim.

It is time to stop putting the public at risk, and remove the current LTN scheme and ANPR cameras.



Petition text below

Stop The Cowley LTN and remove the ANPR Cameras

On July 19th Oxford County Council is required to make a decision to whether to make the Cowley LTN scheme permanent, extend the trails for six months or cancel them. Now is your time to make your voice heard.

The current LTN scheme is designed to divide and segregate communities. The scheme doesn't factor in residents with disabilities, local businesses, emergency services living and working within and the surrounding communities. Key workers serving the local community and local residents will be fined by ANPR cameras for accessing schools, shops, and places of worship.

Traffic in the area has simply been displaced with little net gain, and immense suffering for many people both within and around the LTN and ANPR cameras.

Public consultations reveal a strong opposition to the current scheme, by signing this petition you will trigger a larger debate at City and County Council, and a further opportunity to reverse this scheme.