

**Richard Parnham's presentation to OCC Cabinet – Central Oxfordshire Travel Plan  
29 November 2022**

Oxfordshire County Council's Central Oxfordshire Travel Plan includes numerous punitive anti-car measures, all in a single policy. These include a misdirected workplace parking levy (i.e. a £600 per year per space staff car park tax), a zero emission zone that clobbers inconsequential sources of pollution (petrol cars) with charges of £8 per day by 2025 (£4 initially), but doesn't impact on far greater sources of pollution (i.e. buses), and a widely hated traffic filters / bus gates plan that divides Oxford into "sectors", requiring "passes" to drive between. The COTP also aims to reduce or remove swathes of city centre car parking, increase on-street car parking charges (those around Walton Street now cost £15 for three hours), remove residents and business car parking near bus routes, impose yet more LTNs, create 13 more CPZs, and impose more 20mph roads, including bus routes.

A key aim of the scheme is to "[replace or remove 1 out of every 4 current car trips in Oxfordshire](#)" by 2030. Cynically, this timeframe means the council's car reduction target will take no account of the pandemic – the council's own report observes that traffic volumes in Oxford fell by 10% between 2020 and 2022. If you're pushing a dogmatic anti-car agenda, which this council is, it's always "helpful" to ensure your car reduction target is firmly out of reach, because this means that ever more extreme measures are always "justified", to seek to reach an impossible outcome.

The council's workplace parking levy (WPL) plan is, effectively, a plan to hit all businesses with 11 or more staff car parking spaces with a tax of £600 per parking space, per year. However, had the council undertaken even the most elementary evaluation of staff car parking in Oxford, they would have realised that practically the only organisations likely to be hit by the WPL are [NHS facilities](#) (facing annual bills of more than £1m), suburban Oxford schools (new annual bills up to around to around £26k) and organisations based very close to the ring road, including Oxfam (around £60K per year). Are these organisations really OCC's intended target for this new annual tax? If so, why?

The Council's zero emissions zone will hit vehicles that cause practically no NO2 pollution – that is, petrol cars – with a charge of up to £8 per day by 2025, but will not charge one of the main sources of pollution in the city – i.e. buses. According to the city council's own "[apportionment survey](#)", petrol cars contribute just 2% of NO2 pollution in St Clements (buses 69.9%), 4.6% on Worcester Street (buses 18.4%), and 3.8% on Botley Road / Hythe Bridge Street (buses 31.3%). The council's targeting of petrol cars via the ZEZ will therefore have almost no impact on city centre pollution, but will – categorically - contribute to Oxford residents' cost of living crisis. How un-progressive is that?

Finally, and staying with buses - or traffic filters, if the council now prefers. The Council's traffic filter scheme is likely to, according to unpublished modelling, jam up Wolvercote Roundabout with displaced traffic, [increasing vehicle flows considerably](#). It is also predicted to decrease speeds on this roundabout, an import access route to the Pear Tree Park and ride, from 16-17mph to just [6mph](#). How does this outcome help people travelling into Oxford by bus? More importantly, why is the traffic filters decision even happening today, given that the scheme can't be implemented until 2024 at the earliest, due to the Botley Road rail bridge works? Of course, we all know the answer to that question: the council [promised the Department of Transport a decision on traffic filters by the end of 2022, in order to secure a multimillion grant for electric buses](#). It is therefore almost certain to approve the traffic filters scheme today, no matter what anyone says in this meeting. The outcome, bluntly, has all the hallmarks of being pre-determined: I challenge the cabinet to prove me wrong.