

Duncan Parkes

I'd like to speak about the effect the proposed traffic filters will have on Oxford children's journey to school.

We can all agree that it is a good thing when children travel to school actively rather than being driven by their parents. It's good for their health; it's good for their independence; and it gets them into good habits for later in life. It's good for their parents:

instead of driving they can spend their time on other things. And it's good for wider society, as the school run contributes a huge amount to rush hour traffic.

There is a virtuous circle here: the more pupils cycle or walk, the fewer cars are doing the same journey, and the safer and easier it gets.

Where I live, in South Oxford, most secondary school children attend the Swan School, on Marston Ferry Road, cycling four miles in each direction.

Their route is carefully planned to avoid traffic, and because of this it takes almost twice as long as a direct cycle would. However, it's impossible to avoid traffic in the city centre, where South Parks Road is a particular worry. The proposed filter on St Cross Road will help by reducing traffic crossing the city centre via South Parks and Longwall Street - a route totally unsuited to the number and type of vehicles that currently use it. This camera could enforce the widely flouted ban on vehicles over 7.5T.

The other filters will have similar stories.

The proposed bus gates are much less than I was hoping for. There are so many exemptions that I fear the decrease in traffic may be disappointing. In a household with 200 yearly passes, parents will be able to drive through a filter every school day, and on wet days extra parents will drive, increasing the danger for children doing the right thing by cycling. Larger vehicles and vans, the main cause of serious accidents, are set to be exempt. These exemptions will stress our virtuous circle.

Nevertheless, I hope you will approve the bus gates and the rest of the Central Oxford Travel Plan today. In time the list of exemptions can be reduced and we'll see a real safety improvement. I dream of a future where Abingdon Road is safe enough that children can cycle the direct route to school.