Climate Impact Assessment

Summary

Directorate and Service Area	Environment & Place, and Transport & Infrastructure
What is being assessed	The Oxford Traffic Filters scheme. It is proposed to use an experimental traffic regulation order to trial the introduction of the Traffic Filters. Impacts of the scheme will be monitored during the trial and before any decisions to introduce traffic filters on a permanent basis are made. Some technical work is underway with emerging findings used to inform some of this assessment, but the assessment will be reviewed following the consultation on the ETRO and during the trial period if approved. As no decisions have yet been made to introduce these proposals, this is an interim assessment and which will be updated as technical work progresses and ahead of any Cabinet decision.
Is this a new or existing function or policy?	Proposals for traffic filters in Oxford were first proposed in Connecting Oxfordshire, the county council's previous Local Transport Plan adopted in 2015, and more specially the Oxford Transport Strategy. Traffic filters are included in the current Local Transport & Connectivity Plan, adopted in 2022, and emerging transport strategy for central Oxfordshire (the Central Oxfordshire Travel Plan).
Summary of assessment	It is proposed to use an experimental traffic regulation order to trial the introduction of the Traffic Filters. This means the filters can be tested, and any changes made, before a decision to introduce the filters on a permanent basis is made. Some technical work to better understand the scheme's potential impacts is also underway, with emerging results suggesting that traffic filters could bring about large reductions in traffc and congestion, particularly within and on approaches to the city centre. This in turn will mean faster and more reliable buses, better road safety including for pedestrians and cyclists, and improved air quality. Whilst a large number of car trips are expected to transfer to public transport, walking and cycling, some car trips may also change the time travelled or route used to avoid the filters. This may lead to some traffic increases on the ring road and outer sections of the city's radial routes. These and other potential impacts will be monitored during the trial to establish whether alternative routes become busier. If needed, changes could be made to the scheme, such as the timing of the filters and/or amending permitted access.
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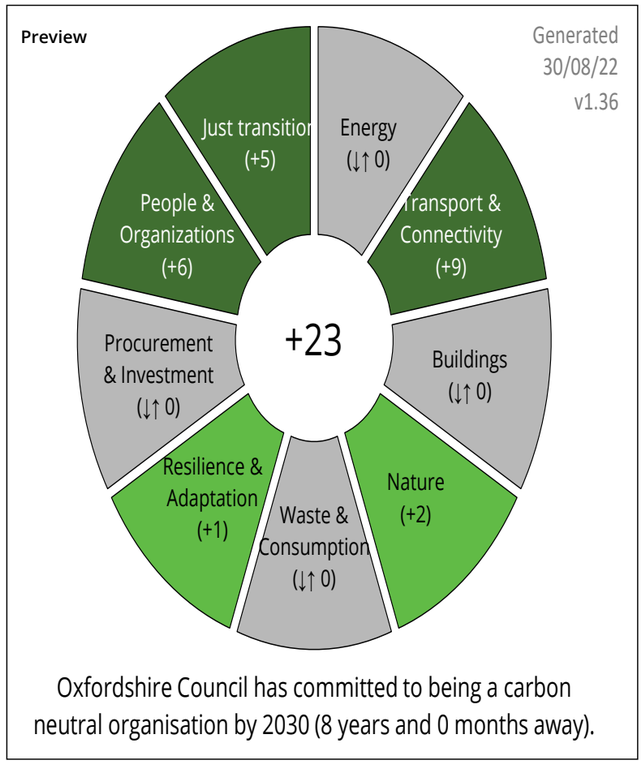
Assessment date	44798



Detail of proposal

Context / Background	Traffic Filters are part of Oxfordshire County Council's Local Transport & Connectivity Plan (adopted in 2022) and Oxford City Council's Local Plan (adopted in 2020). The councils engageged with the public and stakeholders on initial proposals for traffic filters and a workplace parking levy in October 2019, and published updated proposals in February 2022. Since February 2022, the councils have engaged with a large number of local and national stakeholders. Changes to the traffic filter proposals since the 2019 engagement exercise have been made as a result of feedback from the public and stakeholders and more recent technical work including assessment of equality impacts, for example. A consultation on whether to introduce the traffic filters using an experimental traffic regulation order (ETRO) is being carried out during September and October 2022. Responses to this consultation will be reported to the county council's Cabinet in November 2022, and will inform their decisions about whether or not to proceed with the ETRO.
Proposal	Traffic filters are points on roads through which only certain types of vehicles (e.g. buses, taxis and cycles) may pass, similar to the existing bus gate in Oxford High Street. Any vehicle that goes through the filter but is not exempt will be issued with a penalty notice charge. The proposals include six traffic filters; three of these will be located in the city centre on St Cross Road, Thames Street and Hythe Bridge Street, the remaining three filters will be located on St Clements, Marston Ferry Road and Hollow Way. For the trial, it is currently proposed to exempt some vehicles from the traffic filters including Blue Badge Holders, residents living within the permit area, health and care works, for example. Further details of these and other exemptions are published as part of the ETRO consultation. Automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) cameras will be installed to monitor vehicles going through the traffic filters. Traffic signs will also identify the location of each traffic filter, including operational hours and vehicles that are exempt to travel through. The preferred strategy is to introduce measures which reduce the number of vehicles on Oxford's roads, whilst allowing essential .
Evidence / Intelligence	The previous evidence base for the Local Transport Plan is summarised within the LTP itself. Outcomes of the October 2019 Traffic Filter and WPL engagement (known as Connecting Oxford) are set out in the Cabinet paper (https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/documents/s49498/CA_JAN2120R12%20-%20Connecting%20Oxford%20Report.pdf) and more detailed report of engagement (https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/documents/s49499/CA_JAN2120R14%20-%20Connecting%20Oxford%20Annex%203.pdf). The latest proposals are a result of that previous and more recent engagement and emerging technical work including transport and air quality modelling, a Habitats Regulation Assessment, and assessment of the equality implications of the proposals which is set out in a seperate Equality Impact Assessment report.
Alternatives considered / rejected	Alternatives to the overall strategy set out in the OTS were considered as part of the OTS and are covered within the OTS document, published online. Doing nothing is not an option because the problems of traffic congestion and local air pollution and climate change would remain and worsen if nothing is done. Investment in sustainable transport infrastructure is important and is a key part of our overall strategy. However, opportunities to increase use of bus, cycling and walking, and railways, purely through sustainable transport infrastructure improvements are limited by the space available in a constrained city like Oxford, and by the availability of funds. The construction of large infrastructure projects of any kind also consumes resources and contributes to climate change.

Category	Impact criteria	Score (-3 to +3)	Description of impact	Actions or mitigations to reduce negative impacts	Action owner	Timeline and monitoring arrangements
Energy	Increases energy efficiency	N/A				
Energy	Promotes a switch to low-carbon or renewable energy	N/A				
Energy	Promotes resilient, local, smart energy systems	N/A				
Transport & Connectivity	Reduces need to travel and/or the need for private car ownership	3	Emerging technical work suggests proposals could lead to a significant reduction in traffic levels in parts of the city, especially the city centre. As well as people transfering to public transport and active travel modes, some trips may no longer be made, reducing the need to travel, and proposals may also reduce the need to own a private car.	Over the years the county council has been introducing pedestrian and cycle schemes to improve links within and to Oxford. This includes along Botley Road, routes in Headington, tow path upgrades and more recently Quickway cycle routes. Other schemes are planned to be introduced over the next few years including along the A40 and A44, and over time traffic reduction benefits of the traffic filters will mean more road space can be reallocated to create wider cycle and pedestrian routes and give these modes greater priority at junctions in the city. Futher details of proposals for improving walking, cycling and public transport are contained within the Central Oxfordshire Travel Plan. Although there are no parts of the city that will not be accessible by car, to avoid the traffic filters some traffic may choose to travel at a different time or will need to use an alternative route during the hours the traffic filters are in operation (7am to 7pm). This may lead to some traffic increases on the ring road and outer sections of the city's radial routes. Day passes will be available for residents of Oxford and areas to the west, plus all vans and HGV are exempts, so these impacts should be minimised. Impacts would be monitored during the trial to establish whether alternative routes become busier and impact on routes used by buses, pedestrians and cyclists. If needed, changes could be made to the scheme, such as the timing of the filters and/or amending permitted access.	OCC Project Team	If the trial if approved, on-going monitoring and engagement during the trial (ETRO) period is expected to start from summer 2023
Transport & Connectivity	Supports active travel	3	Traffic reductions will immediately reduce danger to pedestrians and cyclists and over time allow more road space to be allocated for cycle lanes and wider pavements and better public realm. This in turn will encourage greater use of active travel modes.			
Transport & Connectivity	Increases use of public transport	3	Reduced traffic levels and congestion brought about by the filters will create improved conditions for buses including quicker and more reliable journeys. This and modal shift from private car to bus will increase use of buses incl. Park & Ride, with some car trips also expected to transfer to rail.			
Transport & Connectivity	Accelerates electrification of transport	3	The introduction of new electric buses relies on the implementation of the six traffic filters. If introduced, these zero emission buses will represent 69% of the total daily milage within the smartzone area. The zero emission buses would start to be delivered during 2023, and would provide residents and visitors with a cleaner and more modern fleet of buses that are expected to serve all parts of the city.			
Buildings	Promotes net zero new builds and developments	N/A				
Buildings	Accelerates retrofitting of existing buildings	N/A				

Nature	Protects, restores or enhances biodiversity, landscape and ecosystems	1	Reductions in traffic will allow natural green and public spaces to be better protected or even enhanced because of better air quality, for exmaple.	An HRA Stage 1 (Screening) suggests potential for air and surface water quality impacts due to the proximity of the A34 to the Oxford Meadows SAC and potential increases in traffic flow on A34 as a result of the scheme. A State 2 (Appropriate Assessment) will consider the impact of the proposals on the integrity of the SAC including consideration of in-combination effects with other plans and projects. This work will confirm if there are likely to be any adverse impacts, and if so, a Stage 3 (Assessment of Alternative Solutions) would follow. This work is being done in liaison with Natural England. Outcomes of the HRA work will be reported to Cabinet to inform any final decisions about progressing with a trial.	OCC Project Team	If the trial if approved, on-going monitoring and engagement during the trial (ETRO) period is expected to start from summer 2023
Nature	Develops blue and green infrastructure	N/A				
Nature	Improves access to nature and green spaces	1	Reductions in traffic levels will support better access to nature and other public spaces within the ring road, especially by bus, on foot or by cycle.			
Waste & Consumption	Reduces overall consumption	N/A				
Waste & Consumption	Supports waste prevention and drive reuse and recycling	N/A				
Resilience & Adaptation	Increases resilience to flooding	N/A				
Resilience & Adaptation	Increases resilience to other extreme weather events (e.g., storms, cold snaps, heatwaves, droughts)	N/A				
Resilience & Adaptation	Increases resilience of council services, communities, energy systems, transport infrastructure and/or supply chains	1	Reduced traffic levels and highway capacities should reduce the need for as much road maintainance or structural repairs on some roads within the ring road.			
Procurement & Investment	Procurement practices prioritise low-carbon options, circular economy and sustainability	N/A				
Procurement & Investment	Investment being considered supports climate action/ is consistent with path to net zero	N/A				

People & Organizations	Drives behavioural change to address the climate and ecological emergency	3	The filters will accelerate modal shift to public transport, walking and cycling, and are expected to bring about substatial and sustained traffic reduction on some roads within Oxford city.	If the trial is approved, communications would continue to promote the scheme, making all content accessible, and seek to support residents and others through the transition period including travel demand management/ information to support mode shift . This may require third sector outreach, for example, disability groups. This will be developed as part of a wider communications and enagement strategy.	OCC Project Team	If the trial if approved, on-going monitoring and engagement during the trial (ETRO) period is expected to start from summer 2023
People & Organizations	Drives organizational and systemic change to address the climate and ecological emergency	1	The filters will effect staff travel, encouraging more employees to use sustainable modes for travel to work and when on business related travel within Oxford city. Exemptions for vans and commercial vehicles means most operational vehicles will be unaffected as well as those working in health and social car, for example.			
Just transition	Promotes green innovation and job creation	N/A				
Just transition	Promotes health and wellbeing	3	Traffic reductions within the ring road will reduce air pollution levels and encourage greater use of active travel modes. This will improve the health of Oxford residents and visitors.			
Just transition	Reduces poverty and inequality	2	See separate Equality Impact Assessment for further details, but those on lower incomes are less likely to have access to a car and (nationally) are twice as likely to use buses as those on higher incomes and are therefore likely to disproportionately benefit from these improvements. Cycling and walking are normally the lowest-cost transport modes. Improvements in conditions for people using these modes may enable those on lower incomes to make more cycling and walking trips. Improved public transport, walking and cycling routes will also improve access to employment.	See separate Equality Impact Assessment for a more detailed assessemnt, but many of the most deprived areas in Oxford are outside of the ring road. These areas may be subject to increased traffic volumes along the ring road as a result of the filters, which could impact the ability of residents to walk and cycle as well as potentially increasing their journey times by private car, taxi and public transport. Impacts would be monitored during the trial to establish whether alternative routes become busier and impact on routes used by buses, pedestrians and cyclists. If needed, changes could be made to the scheme, such as the timing of the filters and/or amending permitted access.	OCC Project Team	If the trial if approved, on-going monitoring and engagement during the trial (ETRO) period is expected to start from summer 2023