

Divisions Affected - Cowley; Rose Hill and Littlemore

**CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAY MANAGEMENT
24 FEBRUARY 2022**

**OXFORD – CHURCH COWLEY, TEMPLE COWLEY AND FLORENCE
PARK AREAS: LOW TRAFFIC NEIGHBOURHOODS - EXPERIMENTAL
TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER (ETRO)**

Report by Director of Growth and Economy

RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet Member for Highway Management is RECOMMENDED to:

- **Recommend to make permanent the provisions of the current Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders for the Church Cowley, Florence Park and Temple Cowley area Low Traffic Neighbourhoods.**
- **Instruct officers to investigate options to mitigate issues identified in paragraph 33, and where necessary submit schemes for future funding.**

Executive summary

1. It is widely recognised nationally that increasing traffic levels are becoming more unsustainable. This is resulting in higher levels of congestion and air pollution and contributes to poor health. Traffic calming, such as road humps and chicanes whilst successful in reducing speeds, are not as effective at reducing traffic on local streets or encouraging use of alternative forms of sustainable transport. The Oxford Transport Strategy along with supporting local plans seeks to promote and encourage a shift in how we move around Oxford.
2. Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) have been identified in the Oxford Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) as a method for achieving this goal. The Cowley LTNs have been trialled as a stepping stone towards this, in line with council priorities relating to public health, decongestion, climate change and air quality. As such, following consultation in 2021 the three Cowley LTNs were implemented in March/April 2021 as part of an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order and consulted on for a period of 6 months.
3. The key measures of success for any LTN scheme which have been monitored during the trial are traffic volumes, pedestrian volumes, cycling volumes, vehicle speed, bus journey times, air quality, impact on emergency services response and a feeling by residents that it is safer or more desirable to use non-vehicular based travel modes.
4. In line with the objectives of the LTNs, there has been a significant decrease in car traffic volumes and a notable relative increase in cycling and walking levels within the limits of the LTNs. There is also some evidence suggesting bus patronage is also starting to increase. Refer to Annex 4.

5. Overall, air quality monitoring indicates that there is an improvement on LTN-boundary roads, although it is noted that the percentage decrease is not as high as other control areas across the city, potentially due to the increased comparative traffic levels on boundary roads compared to control sites.
6. The consultation showed that just over a quarter (26%) respondents supported the scheme that they commented on, 11% expressed concerns and nearly two-thirds (63%) objected to the measures. Generally, it was found that there were higher levels of support from residents living on cut-through streets than other streets particularly cul-de-sacs.
7. Some key issues were identified which affected public opinion within the LTN, these either have already been addressed, or could be addressed with mitigating measures as outlined in Annex 3.
8. As expected there have been some negative impacts on the network, in that compared to other main routes in the city traffic volumes are comparably higher by an average of 3% across the day. However, this may improve as more people think about alternative travel options.
9. There is a general feeling within the LTNs that they result in more inconvenience and do impact negatively on the boundary roads, in terms of congestion, trip times and main road residents' lives. But there are also positive impacts such as reduce traffic, improved safety, improved air quality and people are starting to think about alternative travel options.
10. History shows us that transport changes, particularly those restricting the use of the car, are politically contentious when first introduced, generating strong opposition. Such changes also often result in a period of upheaval and changes to traffic movements, but once established, they reset the norm.
11. It is acknowledged that there is still more work to be undertaken through other initiatives across the City to reduce the carbon footprint of travel and encourage more sustainable methods of transport. Whilst there is still some opposition to LTNs and further work to be undertaken to address ongoing issues, the outcome of the monitoring exercise does indicate that LTNs are successful in encouraging to rethink how they travel where they are able to do so.

Background

12. In March 2020, the Council approved the Oxford Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). This set out an ambition to increase cycling in Oxford by 50% by 2031, which supports Oxfordshire County Council's commitment to become carbon neutral by 2030 and contribute to a reduction in climate change.
13. The Oxford LCWIP includes Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) as one of its eight core policies to promote cycling and walking, especially where they also promote 'Quietway' cycle routes. OCC is currently working on a new Transport Strategy for Oxford, and this includes embedding LTNs in as a key tool to improving the city.
14. In May 2020, in response to COVID-19, the government issued statutory guidance as an update to the 2004 Traffic Management Act (TMA) requiring councils to take measures to reallocate road space to promote cycling and walking, including the use of filters to create LTNs.

15. Active and healthy travel is more than just another mode of transport. These travel choices have the added benefit of:
 - a. improving personal health and fitness
 - b. contributing to cutting congestion
 - c. decreasing pollution.
16. An LTN is an area where motorised traffic is prevented from taking short cuts through a residential area with the use of traffic filters. They seek to challenge how people think about how they travel and provide an environment that allows alternatives to be considered by creating quieter and safer streets where people feel safer and more comfortable when making local journeys by bicycle, by e-scooter and by foot to local amenities such as local shops, doctors' surgeries, and bus stops for journeys further afield.
17. The Cowley LTNs are made up of 3 areas Church Cowley, Temple Cowley and Florence Park and were chosen as priority areas due to their high volumes of through traffic and lower levels of cycling. They form part of the Council's wider Oxford Transport Strategy.
18. An informal consultation with the public and other stakeholders was undertaken between 23 November – 18 December 2020 in tandem with statutory consultation with emergency services and other statutory consultees.
19. In January 2021 the Cabinet Member for Environment approved implementation of the three Cowley LTNs under Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO). The report can be found [here](#). The LTNs were implemented in March/April 2021 and consisted of planters, bollards, waiting restrictions and signs. There was some delay in implementation due to the limited supply of lockable bollards, which resulted in the formal ETRO consultation commencing in May 2021 for a period of 6 months.
20. In June 2021 a change to the ETRO was made to permit Voi E-Scooters through the filters as well as some minor adjustments to filter locations which saw the consultation extended to 19 November 2021.
21. This report details the outcome of that consultation, along with monitoring of modal shift, traffic volumes and air quality within the LTN and on the boundary roads.
22. It is accepted that LTNs will generate increased traffic volumes on the boundary roads, but that overtime as more initiatives are brought forward and travel behaviours changes that this will begin to normalise and in the longer term reduce.

Consultation and assessment

23. The report is based on the evidence from the sources below.
 - Statutory consultation.
 - Public perception survey: The Council undertook a baseline and a follow-up survey 6 months after the full barrier implementation (except ANPR cameras)
 - Traffic and air quality monitoring including an assessment of modal shift.

Statutory Consultation

24. A total of 2,295 questionnaires were completed using the County Council's e-Consult and Let's Talk platform alongside 59 email responses. The responses were assessed

by an independent consultant and a copy of the report is attached in **Annex 1**. Key findings are highlighted below.

25. Of the 2295 responses, just over half (55%) stated that they live or work in Oxford, while 15% answered more specifically that they are based in Cowley, and 11% in Littlemore. Only 4% of respondents identified as living or working in or close to the Temple Cowley LTN, and 1% in both Church Cowley and Florence Park LTNs.
26. The consultation showed that just over a quarter (26%) respondents supported the scheme that they commented on, 11% expressed concerns and nearly two-thirds (63%) objected to the measures. Overall, the percentage of those objecting to the proposals were higher in Church Cowley and Temple Cowley 68% and 67% respectively. However, a lower percentage objected to the proposals in Florence Park at 54%. Outside of the LTNs 68% objected, 11% had concerns and 20% support the scheme.
27. Altogether 38% of respondents lived in the LTN areas, 13% on the boundary main roads and 46% in Oxford and 3% in rest of Oxfordshire. Of those living within an LTN, 35% support, 11% concerns and 54% object.
28. Levels of support could also be analysed for individual streets in the 6-month survey and the pre-implementation survey. Generally, it was found that there were higher levels of support from residents living on cut-through streets than other streets particularly cul-de-sacs, but for all streets, levels of support declined, and levels of objection increased.
29. As with previous consultations the percentage of businesses responding negatively was high at 84%, although overall the response rate was low with businesses accounting for 4% of the total number of respondents.

Main themes of support, objection and concern

30. The key themes identified in the consultation are detailed below (a full list of main concerns and advantages is available in **Annex 2**, however it is notable that both those supporting and objecting to the schemes expressed concern that the bus gates were not being enforced.
31. Those **supporting** the LTNs identified many benefits including:
 - LTNs have transformed the neighbourhood for the better, creating a better sense of community
 - Less traffic, less speeding, more cycling and improved safety
 - Streets are quieter with better air quality
 - LTNs benefits outweigh some inconvenience when driving
 - LTNs are a first step but there is a need for more measures
32. The main themes from those **objecting** to the LTNs were:
 - Many of the roads closed are main thoroughfares (not “rat-runs”)
 - Alternatives such as traffic calming, cycle lanes, speed limits preferred
 - Traffic just displaced onto main roads leading to traffic congestion and more pollution
 - Some people have no choice but to use the car in their daily lives
 - Single exits out of LTNs are inconvenient, difficult and dangerous

33. As well as general comments, respondents raised specific concerns that they felt impacted on the success of the LTNs. Some concerns raised are being addressed through other initiatives, however, it is recommended that mitigating measures are investigated for some specific issues as outlined in **Annex 3**.
34. Addressing these concerns would ensure better operation of the LTN and the level of support in the community. It is recommended that options are investigated, and where appropriate scheme proposals are submitted for future funding.

Monitoring

35. The following section summarises the outcome of the Perception Surveys and monitoring of traffic volumes, journey times and air quality. Copies of the full report are attached in **Annex 4**.

Perception Survey

36. Public surveys have been used to understand how perceptions, views, and behaviours change over time in the Cowley area. A baseline and a follow-up survey 6 months after full implementation were available on Oxfordshire County Council's consultation platform. Overall, comments both for support and objections largely mirrored the main consultation.
37. In the open-text responses there was a 9% relative swing in favour of supporting the LTNs. There was a notably positive shift in attitudes towards walking and cycling. The most referenced benefits mirror many of the objectives of the LTNs and include reduction in traffic noise, improved air quality, and perceptions of safety owing to less traffic, and how this has led to improvements to residents' quality of life.
38. A concern raised was that whilst leading to reduced traffic within the LTN, traffic seems to be displaced to other surrounding areas, creating a level of perceived 'unfairness' in the impact of the LTN. An additional concern raised was that reduced passing traffic might create an unsettling environment, particularly after dark. Special care needs to be taken in ensuring the LTNs create lively areas that are and feel safe.
39. It should be noted that public perceptions of increased traffic and/or reduced air quality may be partly due to the comparison against periods of extremely low traffic in 2020 and early 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
40. An important finding is that opinion within the LTN areas is polarised. There was a significant shift within the LTNs, from individuals who replied to both surveys with respondents moving from tend to object, neutral or tend to support categories into the either strongly object or strongly support categories.

Comparison between pre-implementation survey and 6-month survey

41. Further analysis showed that 38% of responses were from the LTN areas compared to 62% outside the LTN areas. Around 17% of households in the LTNs responded – a similar percentage to the pre-implementation survey. In every LTN area, there was a shift in the 6-month survey from support to objection for their local LTN areas, though it should be noted that each area also experienced an increase in numbers fully supporting the LTNs.

42. Overall, the findings from the survey indicated that LTNs seem to be an effective measure to improve active and sustainable travel and the quality of life of the residents. Data from questions on use of different modes of transport identified a shift away from everyday car use and towards active travel and public transport between March and November 2021. The survey also identified a generally greater level of consideration given to modal choice by respondents than had previously been the case. However, there are important issues to consider, regarding the increased traffic volumes in boundary roads and inconvenience to some car users.

Traffic and air quality monitoring

43. This section covers monitoring covers traffic, pedestrian and cycle volumes, vehicle speeds, bus journey times, air quality and impact on emergency services. Noise pollution assessment is still underway. COVID-19 restrictions made this evaluation particularly challenging by disrupting the reliability of recent trends. Where possible, a baseline for monitoring sources has been set before COVID-19. Areas unaffected by the LTNs were used as control sites, with the aim of accounting for other confounding variables, such as society's changing responses to COVID-19. The key conclusions from this analysis are given below.

Pedestrian, cycle and car traffic within the LTN areas.

44. Data as shown in **Annex 4** is from Vivacity camera sites, which were installed in 2019.

Primary effects: LTN area

45. Overall figures within the LTNs show a clear increase in walking and cycling when compared to control sites and pre-LTN levels and a reduction in car traffic volumes as summarised below:
- Car traffic volumes have decreased by 42% from March to November 2021 with greater reductions of 51% between July until November 2021, when compared to 2019 levels for equivalent months and control sites.
 - Pedestrian volumes have increased by 19% from March to November 2021 compared to 2019 volumes and control sites.
 - Cycling volumes have increased by 22.5% from March 2021 to November 2021 compared to 2019 levels and control sites.
46. Vehicle speed data suggests that traffic speeds increased within the LTNs between April 2019 and April 2021, however data from June 2021, suggests a levelling, whereby speeds were much more like 2019 levels, and in some cases even lower.

Impacts on traffic on boundary roads

47. Traffic volumes were measured using Vivacity cameras at 5 locations, namely Hollow Way, Oxford Road, Church Cowley Road, Henley Way and Rose Hill. Overall, across the 5 sites car traffic volumes on boundary roads have increased by 3% compared with 2019 levels and control sites, some were worse than this whilst others performed better. However, these impacts are expected to reduce as people start to rethink their travel behaviours and as Covid restrictions lift, people continue to return to the buses. The data does show an initial peak in traffic increase immediately following implementation of the LTNs, which then levelled off.
48. Telematics data (using SatNav systems in vehicles) indicated increased journey times on Henley Avenue in both directions, both in April and June (when comparing to 2019

levels). However, Oxford Road has experienced some journey time improvements, especially West-bound. The PM peak has been slightly negatively affected in both directions, but the AM peak has experienced improvements in journey time in both directions.

49. There are upwards trends in bus service journey times along Iffley Road from March 2021, to which the LTN may have contributed, though overall bus journey times along this road are still lower on average than in 2019.
50. For the Cowley Road, we can see that the PM peak outbound bus services have been most negatively impacted, with journey times generally in excess of 2019 averages since March 2021. The trend upwards from March is apparent for some, but not all times of day on this route; for example, interpeak and evening outbound travel times improved. Other times experienced an initial spike in journey times, which has since reduced back down – notably inbound services, including AM and PM peak.
51. Air quality data indicates that air pollution levels (NO₂) from March to October 2021 reduced on LTN boundary roads by 8% compared to pre-COVID levels. However, the reduction was less than in comparison sites, which have experienced a 17% reduction on average.
52. South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS) Optima Predict emergency response simulation was undertaken and found that impact on SCAS performance at the local level is minimal, with only a 0-6 second delay in the 3 most urgent response categories.

Sustainability Implications

53. The LTNs have been seen to encourage the use of sustainable transport modes as perceptions surveys have identified that people are starting to rethink how they might travel and is starting to see an increase in walking and cycling. This supports the delivery of wider transport initiatives, including the Oxford LCWIP target of increasing cycling by 50%.

Financial Implications

54. The Cowley LTN was implemented by funding identified through the Active Travel Tranche 1 programme. Ongoing works are to be funded through the Active Travel Tranche 2 programme.
55. The current funding available for the entire Active Travel Tranche 2 programme is:

Funding	Capital	Revenue
DfT	£ 2,388,000.00	£597,000.00
S106 (previously agreed)	£ 37,942.17	
S106 (additional funding identified)	£ 199,508.39	
Growth Deal (Capital)	£ 479,000.00	
Growth Deal Quiet Connector Routes (for Marston Road)	£ 140,000.00	
Total Funding	£ 3,244,450.56	£597,000.00

56. The East Oxford LTNs and Quietways are funded as part of the Department for Transport's Active Travel Tranche 2 programme. The funding will cover the cost of physical measures, consultation expenses, legal costs and staff costs.
57. The estimate for potential amendments to the LTN including design development, consultation expenses, legal costs, works costs and staff costs is estimated at up to £135,000.
58. An allowance of £100,000 for ongoing monitoring has been accounted for in the overall budget for all schemes within the funding stream in 2022/23.
59. If the scheme is removed the cost is estimated at £20,000.
60. If the scheme were to be made permanent, further design work in collaboration with the local community would be required to determine what features would replace the temporary planters. This could cost between £320,000 (estimated £20,000 per filter plus development costs) and £750,000 (estimated £50,000 per filter) for development and implementation depending on the type of treatments that are used. Currently there is no allowance for making features permanent and additional funding would need to be sought.
61. No allowance for ongoing maintenance has been provided for in the funding received by the DfT. It is anticipated any future maintenance will be included within the council's maintenance budget. Once implemented, it is anticipated that these costs will be within the existing maintenance budgets. Local groups have shown interest in maintaining planters in their local areas which minimises ongoing maintenance costs.

Comments checked by:
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Staff Implications

62. Ongoing staffing resource is anticipated should the scheme be made permanent

Legal Implications

63. The scheme development will be led by Oxfordshire County Council as the Highway Authority. Oxfordshire County Council will be receiving legal advice on the scheme from their own legal team in development of the Cowley LTNs.
64. The appropriate statutory consultation has taken place and consultation requirements relating to Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders will continue to be complied with, together with compliance with any relevant statutory duty applicable should the ETRO be made permanent.

Comments checked by:
Jennifer Crouch, Principal Solicitor, jennifer.crouch@oxfordshire.gov.uk (Legal)

Corporate Policies and Priorities

65. The Cowley LTNs have been identified as part of the Oxford LCWIP and are consistent with Oxfordshire County Council's aim to achieve zero carbon emissions

by 2050. They also support the wider Oxford Transport Strategy which promotes increased cycling, walking and use of public transport.

Risk Management

66. Cowley LTNs formed part of the Tranche 1 Emergency Active Travel funding streams which had a limited budget, whilst some changes were made to the scheme the budget did not allow for ongoing changes to the trial. Any future changes will be funded by the Tranche 2 Active Travel funding stream. This adds a pressure to the overall Tranche 2 budget and could result in a reduction in the number of schemes that were identified being delivered.
67. The LTNs are highly controversial, and some evidence of vandalism has occurred. Recent negativity in the press could result in an increase in these incidents putting added pressure on maintenance budgets. Additional funding may need to be sought in future years if issues continue.
68. Monitoring has identified that there have been negative impacts on traffic volumes / journey times on boundary roads. However, there is evidence that travel behaviours are starting to change.
69. Special Educational Needs transport is a statutory service with maximum travel target times for students. There is a risk that additional contracts may need to be procured by the council to overcome any potential impact of the LTNs on travel times, at least in the short term if they do breach statutory requirements which could result in budget pressures.

Equality and Inclusion Implications

70. An Equality and Climate Impact Assessment (ECIA) has been completed **see Annex 5**.

OWEN JENKINS – Director of Growth and Economy

24 February 2022

Annex 1 – Marketing Means Public Consultation Findings Report

Annex 2 – Main concerns from Public Consultation Findings

Annex 3 – Issues and Mitigations

Annex 4 – Cowley LTNs Interim Evaluation Report

Annex 5 – Equality and Climate Impact Assessment