

Questions from Members of the Public

Questions are listed in the order in which they were received.

1. BERNADETTE EVANS	COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT
<p>The installation of the pilot ZEZ scheme in 2021 was delayed until after Christmas <i>"because we want to give Oxford's economy a helping had to have the best Christmas possible"</i>*. According to the council's website the Congestion Charge is due to begin 'in the autumn'. Can Cllr Gant confirm what is meant by 'the autumn' and that the Congestion Charge won't be installed immediately before or during the Christmas trading period?</p> <p>* Cllr Tom Hayes (Oxford City Council), Cabinet Member for Green Transport and Zero Carbon Oxford, said it was being launched after Christmas because businesses had been "hit by shortages and Covid's lingering effects". "We want to give Oxford's economy a helping</p>	<p>This is a false comparison.</p> <p>The zero-emission zone pilot covers a handful of streets in the city centre. Car access to the zone is extremely limited, and there's no public car parking apart from blue badge holder parking, which is exempt from ZEZ charges.</p> <p>The decision to delay the ZEZ pilot was therefore unrelated to considerations of customer access; the Council simply felt it was preferable not to introduce a new scheme which might require additional administrative effort on the part of city centre retailers in the immediate run-up to Christmas, when there was no urgent need to do so.</p> <p>In late 2021, businesses were still facing numerous post-Covid challenges and traffic levels were down due to the continuing effects of the pandemic on travel habits. All the main traffic routes into the city centre were fully open. Congestion was not a pressing concern, and in any event the ZEZ pilot wasn't designed to tackle congestion.</p> <p>There was therefore no urgency to introduce the ZEZ, and on balance the councils felt an early 2022 launch was more appropriate.</p> <p>In 2025 we find ourselves in a different position. Botley Road remains closed. Bus operators and the city council have urged the council to act quickly to address traffic congestion in the city, and the county council is doing just that.</p> <p>If the temporary congestion charging scheme is approved by the council's Cabinet following consultation, we will introduce it as soon as possible. Until the consultation has been</p>

<p>hand to have the best Christmas possible," he said.</p>	<p>completed and any changes made to the proposals in response to feedback, we can't set a specific date.</p> <p>For the 90% of city centre visitors who come by park and ride, rail, bus, on foot or by bike, the congestion charge can only make visiting Oxford city centre easier (and potentially cheaper). Boosting the city's attractiveness for 90% of visitors is surely the best way to support city centre retail and hospitality businesses during their most important trading season.</p> <p>With 100 free permits for Oxford residents and 25 for Oxfordshire residents, many of the 10% arriving by car should also benefit from clearer roads when they head out to do their Christmas shopping, without paying a penny extra.</p>
<p>2. EMILY SCAYSBROOK</p> <p>Best practice Council consultations on schemes likely to have a significant and lasting impact on people's daily lives - including how they work, travel, access services, and support their families - typically run for 12 weeks and avoid scheduling over holiday periods. With that in mind, can Cllr Gant explain why the Council has chosen to depart from these widely accepted principles, with a six-week consultation scheduled over the summer holidays, and specifically explain how he believes this approach satisfies the legal</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>The Transport Act 2000, the legislation that governs charging schemes, does not specify a consultation duration but it should be proportionate. The temporary congestion charge proposals have been based on the previously approved traffic filters trial, which has been through lengthy engagement and consultations over the years with wide ranging media reporting. The temporary congestion charge proposals were also outlined and debated at the county council's cabinet meeting on 17 June 2025 with papers published on 10 June, introducing the concept. Approximately 20 speakers made representations, many with a good level of understanding, even before the consultation had begun. Additionally, less than 24 hours after the consultation opened, more than 1500 responses had already been received. After week one, almost 3,000 responses to the consultation were received. With more than 3,750 responses after 10 days. The county council objective is to reach as many people as possible, which statistics show we are.</p> <p>Four weeks is the advised minimum duration for council consultations, as per the council's corporate guidance. The consultation started on 23 June – prior to the start of the summer holidays by some 4 weeks. The Gunning Principles do not set out at which time of the year consultations should be undertaken.</p>

<p>standards established by the Gunning principles, particularly the duty to allow adequate time and information for intelligent consideration and response?</p>	<p>As explained in the Cabinet paper debated on the 17 June and the consultation materials, the proposal being consulted on is a <u>temporary</u> congestion charge so is not expected to have a “lasting impact on people’s lives”. The traffic filter trial is expected to be implemented soon after the Botley Rd reopens, currently scheduled to be in August 2026. The traffic filter trial had its own engagement, consultation and decision-making process and will include a six-month consultation during the trial, when people can provide feedback based on their experience of travelling in Oxford with the scheme in place.</p>
<p>3. PETER WEST</p> <p>Could you please explain why the baseline DM-BR Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) outlined in Ricardo's Oxford Traffic Interim Scheme dated 13th June 2025, are, in numerous locations, significantly different from those recorded in the measured data recorded on the OCC website please? e.g Ricardo’s Report - London Road 4,560, OCC 16,360.</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>All transport modelling is subject to uncertainties. Our transport model is designed to assess the broad impacts of transport interventions. Forecasts for individual roads should therefore be treated with caution.</p> <p>The Ricardo report estimates the air quality impacts of the proposed congestion charge by comparing modelled flows on selected road “links” under a congestion charge scenario with flows previously modelled for the traffic filters, for which full dispersion modelling was completed.</p> <p>Concentrations for the present scenario (Botley Road closed) and a scenario with Botley Road closed and £5 congestion charging points in place were estimated based on the forecast change in annual average daily traffic (AADT) from the traffic filter modelling. These estimates represent a reasonable approximation of the changes in nitrogen dioxide concentrations resulting from traffic flow changes caused by the congestion charge scheme. The limitations of the methodology are clearly noted in paragraph 2.2 of the report.</p> <p>The AADT figures in the Ricardo table differ from the AADT figures shown on the council’s website for three reasons:</p>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The AADTs on the council's website are two-way flows. The flows in the AADT report are in one direction only. In air quality modelling road links are often split into two directions to allow more accurate modelling of pollution dispersal. Ricardo have selected the direction of flow closest to the monitoring location for which nitrogen dioxide is being estimated. 2. The transport model used for the traffic filters and congestion charge is a strategic model, designed to assess the broad impacts of transport interventions throughout Oxfordshire. We do not expect or need the model to forecast flows with 100% accuracy on every road in the model. The model has been developed in line with Department for Transport Appraisal Guidance (TAG). 3. The transport model was last updated in 2023 and reflects the city's permanent transport network – i.e. with Botley Road open. The present transport network with Botley Road closed differs significantly from that permanent condition. The figures shown for the "DM-BR" scenario (with the Botley Road closure in place), are therefore a forecast of this temporary arrangement. <p>It is therefore to be expected that absolute flows on specific roads in the model will differ from traffic count data on our website. As set out in the Modelling and Income Forecasting Report the forecasts are more reliable in terms of forecast impacts at a strategic level (e.g. impacts on overall car demand), and less reliable at more granular levels of detail. This does not alter the model's suitability for assessing the broad impacts of the proposed congestion charging points.</p> <p>If implemented, the scheme will be monitored using data from our extensive network of traffic and air quality monitors.</p>
<p>4. ELIZABETH MCHALE</p> <p>Given that proposed central Oxford congestion charge</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>Traffic flows and congestion in Oxford city centre are highest between 7am and 7pm, as shown by the charts below. We consider these to be the simplest and most effective</p>

<p>locations would operate 7am - 7pm seven days per week, and therefore cut across the daytime / night time, week day / weekend Oxford economy, please specific the specific evidence source (or sources) that informed the specific timings of these proposed congestion charge locations?</p>	<p>operating times to tackle congestion in the city centre. The congestion charging points are a temporary step towards the approved trial traffic filter scheme, so we have aligned most aspects of the scheme with the traffic filters. However, the proposals are currently out to consultation and views on the operating hours and all other aspects of the proposals are welcome.</p> <p>Only 10% of city centre visitors drive and park in the city centre. The other 90% won't need to pay the charge and their journeys will improve.</p> <p>Around a third of public car parking in the city centre and all of the city's 5,900 park and ride spaces will remain accessible without paying charge. Residents of Oxford and Oxfordshire will be eligible for 100 days and 25 days free travel respectively through the congestion charging points. The city centre is well served by bus and park and ride services.</p> <p>Both flows and congestion are high until 7pm on weekdays (the figures for "6pm" below are for the hour from 6pm to 7pm).</p> <p>Traffic flows and congestion are lower at weekends before 10am and from late afternoon onwards. However, having different operating times on weekdays and weekends would complicate the scheme and the signage, and reduce the income available for transport improvements. Reducing the operating hours also increases the risk of increasing congestion in the hour or two before the charges start and the hour or two after they finish as people re-time their journeys to avoid the charge.</p> <p>Few early visitors to the city centre would avoid paying if the charges started at 10am, because they would still incur the charge on their outbound journey if leaving later than 10am.</p>
<p>5. RICHARD PARNHAM</p> <p>Can you please explain why the baseline "DM-BR" NO2 pollution</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p>

<p>numbers in the Ricardo "Oxford traffic filters interim scheme" report repeatedly overestimates (or, to a lesser extent, underestimates) real-world 2024 NO2 pollution levels (as reported in the City Council's recently published Annual Air Quality annual status reports) in the vast majority of the locations set out in Annex 2 - thereby providing an unclear baseline against which to evaluate the possible pollution impact of the £5 daily charge?</p>	<p>All transport modelling is subject to uncertainties. Our transport model is designed to assess the broad impacts of transport interventions. Forecasts for individual roads should therefore be treated with caution.</p> <p>The Ricardo report estimates the air quality impacts of the proposed congestion charge by comparing modelled flows on selected road "links" under a congestion charge scenario with flows previously modelled for the traffic filters, for which full dispersion modelling was completed. The dispersion model used was validated against the latest measured air quality data available from before the Botley Road closure (2022).</p> <p>Concentrations for the present scenario (Botley Road closed) and a scenario with Botley Road closed and £5 congestion charging points in place were estimated based on the forecast change in annual average daily traffic (AADT) from the traffic filter modelling. These estimates represent a reasonable approximation of the changes in nitrogen dioxide concentrations resulting from traffic flow changes caused by the congestion charge scheme. The limitations of the methodology are clearly noted in paragraph 2.2 of the report.</p> <p>Differences between the "DM-BR" estimates and the city council's latest published data are to be expected. Air quality is strongly influenced by numerous factors including weather and fleet changes, as well as by traffic flows. The Ricardo report provides an estimation of the impact of the Botley Road closure and congestion charge proposals based on traffic flow changes alone. The purpose of the report is to highlight where the congestion charging proposals is expected to improve or worsen air quality (relative to not implementing the scheme), and the methodology is entirely appropriate for this central purpose.</p>
<p>6. CITY COUNCILLOR AJAZ REHMAN</p> <p>Can Councillor Gant explain how your congestion charge plans, that are projected to significantly increase traffic levels and</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>All transport modelling is subject to uncertainties. Our transport model is designed to assess the broad impacts of transport interventions. Forecasts for individual roads should therefore be treated with caution.</p>

<p>pollution on the Eastern bypass (directly alongside housing in Cowley) will help to reduce congestion in that part of Oxford and especially in the city ward of Lye Valley?</p>	<p>The congestion charge proposals will reduce congestion where it most affects bus passengers, other road users and residents. Like the trial traffic filters, it is not a magic wand and we have never claimed either scheme will reduce congestion everywhere.</p> <p>The traffic increases on the Eastern bypass are forecast to be in the 5-15% range, with a corresponding nitrogen dioxide (NO2) increase (excluding the effects of background fleet improvement, weather and other factors) from 25.5 microgrammes per cubic metre to 27 microgrammes per cubic metre at the TF30 monitoring site at the end of Oliver Road immediately adjacent to the Eastern Bypass. However:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, the number of dwellings adjacent to roads where traffic increases are forecast is far lower than the number of dwellings adjacent to roads where traffic reductions are forecast (including numerous dwellings in and around Hollow Way, in the Lye Valley ward) • Few dwellings are affected by traffic increases on the Eastern bypass, and any affected dwellings are some distance from the road. • In 2022 NO2 at site TF30 was 34 microgrammes per cubic metre, so even with a small increase to 27 microgrammes per cubic metre, the air at this site would be significantly cleaner than three years ago. • The site is expected to continue to meet both the national target for NO2 and the city council's local target of 30 microgrammes per cubic metre • There may be no increase at all at TF30 because non-traffic factors will also affect the actual future NO2 levels. For example, the Botley Road closure increased traffic flows on Abingdon Road by 16% between 2022 and 2023, but NO2 dropped from 21 to 18 microgrammes per cubic metre over the same period.
<p>7. PETER WHITE</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p>

<p>Can you explain why the Ricardo report - which your Council commissioned - has focused its evaluation of traffic and pollution impacts of the planned £5 daily congestion charge on a side road (Ashhurst Way) in Rose Hill, but not on the far more important Rose Hill itself (near Newman Road) where there is both a traffic monitoring and pollution monitoring sensor?</p>	<p>All transport modelling is subject to uncertainties. Our transport model is designed to assess the broad impacts of transport interventions. Forecasts for individual roads should therefore be treated with caution.</p> <p>The Ricardo report includes air pollution estimates at a sample of 39 sites across the city.</p> <p>Whilst not included in the Ricardo report, Rose Hill is included in the transport modelling report, which forecasts little change on Rose Hill. We would therefore expect no significant change in air quality on Rose Hill as a result of the scheme.</p>
<p>8. MEHMET KARAKUS</p> <p>What is the predicted traffic and congestion impact on Garsington Road as a result of Oxfordshire County Council's £5 congestion charge plans, especially at peak times – and what is the predicted pollution impact? Please be as specific as possible.</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>All transport modelling is subject to uncertainties. Our transport model is designed to assess the broad impacts of transport interventions. Forecasts for individual roads should therefore be treated with caution.</p> <p>Between John Smith Dr and Hollow Way there is a predicted increase (total 2 way) of 1325 vehicles in a 24 hour period. Between A4142 and John Smith Dr there is a predicted increase of 2180 vehicles (2 way in a 24 hour period). These increases are in the region of 10-15% depending on the section of Garsington Road in question.</p> <p>In the AM peak (8-9:00) there is a predicted increase of 280 vehicles (two-way combined) between A4142 and John Smith Dr and 90 vehicle (2 way combined) increase between John Smith Dr and Hollow Way. The larger increase is in the region of 20-25%</p> <p>For the PM peak (17-18:00) the two-way flow increases are 350 and 330 vehicles for the respective sections of Garsington Road. The larger increase is in the region of 20-25%.</p>

	<p>Taking only traffic flow changes into account, we would expect these changes to increase nitrogen dioxide concentrations by around 5-6%. In 2024, the measured nitrogen dioxide level on Garsington Road was 14 microgrammes per cubic metre (down from 20 in 2022 and 17 in 2023). An increase of 6% would take this to 15 microgrammes per cubic metre (rounded up).</p> <p>However, there may be no pollution increase at all at because non-traffic factors will also affect the actual future NO2 levels. For example, the Botley Road closure increased traffic flows on Abingdon Road by 16% between 2022 and 2023, but NO2 dropped from 21 to 18 microgrammes per cubic metre over the same period.</p> <p>The congestion charge proposals will reduce congestion where it most affects bus passengers, other road users and residents. Like the trial traffic filters, it is not a magic wand and we have never claimed either scheme will reduce congestion everywhere.</p> <p>This scheme should be seen as part of a wider strategy to reduce congestion and improve public transport, walking and cycling across the city.</p>
<p>9. NICHOLAS HARDYMAN</p> <p>Building on the partial modelling data provided by Steer and Ricardo, can councillor Gant please provide me with the latest AM and PM peak time traffic numbers on Banbury Road (ideally focusing on the area between Davenant Road and the Cutteslowe Roundabout) - and also the predicted equivalent AM and PM peak time traffic number totals in the same location, if the</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>All transport modelling is subject to uncertainties. Our transport model is designed to assess the broad impacts of transport interventions. Forecasts for individual roads should therefore be treated with caution.</p> <p>In the “without charge” model there are 1,200 vehicles in the AM (8-9:00) and 1,160 vehicles in the PM (17-18:00) as a combined 2 way flow on Banbury Road between Cutteslowe roundabout and Davenant Rd.</p> <p>In the modelled scenario with a charge of £5, the total 2 way flow is predicted to be 1,250 in the AM (net increase of 50 vehicles an hour) and 1375 in the PM (net increase of 215 vehicles an hour).</p>

<p>£5 daily congestion charge is introduced?</p>	<p>The congestion charge proposals will reduce congestion where it most affects bus passengers, other road users and residents. Like the trial traffic filters, it is not a magic wand and we have never claimed either scheme will reduce congestion everywhere.</p> <p>This scheme should be seen as part of a wider strategy to reduce congestion and improve public transport, walking and cycling across the city.</p>
<p>10. ADRIAN ARBIB</p> <p>Has OCC sought to establish what impact congestion charge proposals will have on the total vehicle miles driven in Oxford?</p> <p>If so, what is the estimated impact?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>All transport modelling is subject to uncertainties. Our transport model is designed to assess the broad impacts of transport interventions.</p> <p>The model forecasts a 1% reduction in the total vehicle miles driven in Oxford, including the ring road.</p> <p>The congestion charge proposals will reduce congestion where it most affects bus passengers, other road users and residents. Like the trial traffic filters, it is not a magic wand and we have never claimed either scheme will reduce congestion everywhere.</p> <p>This scheme should be seen as part of a wider strategy to reduce congestion and improve public transport, walking and cycling across the city.</p>
<p>11. SHEENA PREW</p> <p>Regarding the proposed Congestion Charge, what defines "frequent" in terms of "frequent hospital patients permit" eligibility, and what specific sensitive personal data or personal health information would need to be shared with the Council?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>All hospitals in Oxford will be accessible at all times without paying the congestion charge by choosing a route that does not pass through one of the six charging locations.</p> <p>All residents of Oxford will be eligible for 100 days free travel through the charging locations per year, while Oxfordshire residents will be eligible for 25. Permits are available for people with disabilities, for unpaid carers caring for someone outside their household, and for volunteer drivers taking people to hospital appointments.</p>

	<p>No charges are payable at the two charging locations closest to the city's main hospitals between 9am and 3pm, or on Sundays.</p> <p>For patients who choose to drive through one of the congestion charging locations during the hours when the charge applies and don't have one of the other types of permit mentioned above, a "frequent hospital patient" permit is proposed.</p> <p>Patients would be eligible for a frequent hospital patient permit if they are required to attend a hospital in Oxford for planned medical appointments on at least three separate occasions in any 90 day period.</p> <p>Patients will be asked to upload a copy of their appointment letters and will be asked to redact confidential or sensitive medical information. We will only require the following details to be visible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patient/applicant name • Date, time and location of the appointments <p>This information will be used solely to verify eligibility for the permit and will be handled in accordance with our data protection policy.</p>
<p>12. SAM HARDAKER</p> <p>Regarding the proposed Congestion Charge, can you please clarify how Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in Oxford will be treated under the 2 permits per household rule? Specifically, how many Congestion Charge permits will each tenanted room be allocated, given that they're considered</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>Under the current proposals, there would be a limit of three permits per address in the Oxford Permit Area, and two permits per address in the Oxfordshire Permit Area. In common with controlled parking zone parking permit limits, the maximum applies per eligible address.</p> <p>HMO would be treated as a single address, with a limit of three permits for an address within the Oxford Permit Area. Each permit holder would be entitled to 100 days free travel per year through the congestion charging points.</p> <p>Further details of all permits are on our consultation webpage https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/congestion-charge</p>

<p>separate households for certain purposes (e.g., BBC license fee payments) and each tenanted room may need to use a car for essential journeys?</p>	
<p>13. PHILLIPA JACKSON</p> <p>If the Oxford Congestion Charge goes ahead how will the subsequent increase in the number of cars on Marsh Lane affect staff, patient and visitor access to the John Radcliffe Hospital?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>All transport modelling is subject to uncertainties. Our transport model is designed to assess the broad impacts of transport interventions.</p> <p>The congestion charge is designed to improve access to the city's hospitals, by reducing congestion and improving access by bus, park and ride and active travel.</p> <p>Bus services to the John Radcliffe have recently been improved, including the new 600 park and ride service. These improvements have been made in anticipation of the approved traffic filter trial, for which the congestion charge is a temporary precursor. If the congestion charge and traffic filter trial don't proceed, the roads will remain congested and bus services are likely to get worse, not better.</p> <p>Our transport modelling forecasts a small traffic increase on Marsh Lane, in the region of 5%.</p> <p>The congestion charge is expected to significantly reduce traffic on Cherwell Drive. This should mean we are able to give more 'green time' to Marsh Lane at its signal-controlled junction with Cherwell Drive. We are also reviewing the traffic signals at the Marsh Lane with the aim of increasing capacity for traffic turning into and out of Marsh Lane. These changes should mitigate any additional delays on Marsh Lane resulting from the small forecast traffic increase and may even reduce delays compared to the existing situation.</p> <p>Together with wider congestion reduction, the availability of permits and public transport improvements resulting from the scheme, we therefore expect the congestion charge to significantly improve staff, patient and visitor access to the John Radcliffe hospital.</p>

	<p>If implemented, we will carefully monitor all impacts of the congestion charge, including any changes in congestion on Marsh Lane.</p>
<p>14. JENNY WELLS</p> <p>Why wasn't removal of the East Oxford LTNs considered by OCC officers as way of reducing congestion in Oxford city, given that the bus companies have directly blamed the East Oxford LTNs for an "immediate and profound collapse in service reliability and bus productivity across East Oxford" in a joint letter sent to OCC on 19 July 2023.</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>The LTNs are County Council policy and support the County Council's vision to remove 1 in 4 car trips in county by 2030 and accord with the adopted road hierarchy, which prioritises those walking and cycling over car drivers, many of whom are in single occupancy cars – the least efficient form of transport. They offer significant benefits to those living in (or walking and cycling through) the LTN streets which were previously dominated by through traffic. Bus operators support the broad intent of traffic restraint policies, including LTNs, which are part of a comprehensive package of measures to reduce congestion in the city to make walking, cycling and public transport the natural first choice for many trips.</p> <p>It is unfortunate that the County Council has not been able to implement the traffic filter trial due to Network Rail's ongoing works on Botley Road as this would have allowed us to build on the LTNs to tackle congestion on the city's main roads and address the bus operators' legitimate concerns about congestion affecting their services. That's why we are proposing a pragmatic and effective first step towards the traffic filters with the temporary congestion charge.</p> <p>In June 2011, the Oxford Mail reported that Oxford was the 13th most congested city in Europe (Cambridge was 48th), long before the LTNs were conceived. LTNs did not cause Oxford's congestion and removing them will not solve it.</p> <p>I'm grateful to Ms Wells for presenting a petition to the council in February on behalf of mobile tradespeople operating in the city, who are of course exempt from the congestion charge under the current proposals and will benefit from freer running traffic across Oxford if the scheme goes ahead, without having to pay the daily charge.</p>
<p>15. AMANDA CLARKE</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p>

<p>Regarding the proposed Congestion Charge, do you think it's a good use of already overburdened GP's to effectively become gatekeepers of your unpaid carers permit scheme, creating further stress on the NHS?</p>	<p>According to the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, physical inactivity is associated with 1 in 6 deaths in the UK and is estimated to cost the UK £7.4 billion annually. Schemes like the proposed congestion charge are one of the best ways to get more people walking and cycling, whether for their whole journey or as part of a bus or park and ride journey. Far from placing stress on the NHS, schemes like this are essential to tackle the huge burden physical inactivity is placing on our entire health system.</p> <p>We are keen to recognise the needs of unpaid carers in our proposals, and we need a fair and transparent way for unpaid carers to prove their eligibility for a permit. The NHS already strongly encourages unpaid carers to register with their GP, so we are not asking people to do anything the NHS is not already recommending. We are engaging with GP practices during the consultation on the proposals and are happy to work with them to address any concerns they might have about additional pressures that might arise for their administrative teams.</p>
<p>16. RUSSELL WILLIAMSON</p> <p>I would like an answer to the question as to when this congestion charge was first conceived? The same question was asked on the Nextdoor social media site and Neil Fawcett initially answered saying it was after the County elections took place and not before.</p> <p>He was asked another question by someone else regarding the Botley Road fiasco and said the five weeks prior to the elections</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>Since 2021, the county council administration has been very clear with its priorities to reduce traffic and prioritise those walking, cycling and using public transport. It has taken the necessary steps of progressing these aims by approving the traffic filter trial, which was due to commence on November 2024. However, due to Network Rail's prolonged work at Oxford station, the trial has not commenced as planned. The temporary congestion charge proposal is a variant of the traffic filter trial – instead of a prohibition through the 6 filters points, a £5 charge is being proposed.</p> <p>Since Network Rail announced the further delay to reopening Botley Road at the end of January preventing us from launching the traffic filters trial, and subsequent calls from the city council and the bus operators, amongst others, in February and March 2025, officers have been looking at ways to reduce traffic in the interim period.</p>

<p>wasn't long enough to come up with the congestion plan.</p> <p>When it was pointed out that it had been less than five weeks since the County elections and they had suddenly formed this plan in less than five weeks, Neil Fawcett stopped replying.</p> <p>I would like to know when the County Council formulated the plans for this unfair and unnecessary congestion charge, and also why they failed to mention this plan prior to the County elections?</p>	<p>Now that we understand the feasibility and benefits of this proposed temporary interim scheme, making use of the traffic filters infrastructure, the council's cabinet has authorised a public consultation on the proposal.</p> <p>Until early May it was unclear whether a temporary congestion charge would be a) feasible b) effective and c) supported in principle by the council's new administration, which was not officially formed until 20 May. Indeed, DfT sign authorisation was not received until 19 June 2025. This authorisation is key for the temporary congestion charge to operate and be enforced.</p> <p>It would have been presumptuous to present the option any sooner than we did.</p>
<p>17. NASREEN MAJEED</p> <p>As a Marston resident, I am concerned that the proposed congestion charge will exacerbate local traffic congestion.</p> <p>Can Councillor Gant explain how plans, that are projected to increase traffic level and pollution on the already frequently congested residential Marsh Lane, by directing it away from</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>All transport modelling is subject to uncertainties. Our transport model is designed to assess the broad impacts of transport interventions. Our transport modelling forecasts a small traffic increase on Marsh Lane, in the region of 5%.</p> <p>The congestion charge is expected to significantly reduce traffic on Cherwell Drive. It should therefore be possible to give more 'green time' to Marsh Lane at its junction with Cherwell Drive. We are also reviewing the traffic signals at the Marsh Lane with the aim of increasing capacity for traffic turning into and out of Marsh Lane. These changes should mitigate any additional delays on Marsh Lane resulting from the small forecast traffic increase and may even reduce delays and air pollution compared to the existing situation.</p>

<p>the largely free flowing Marston Ferry Road, will help to reduce congestion in Oxford?</p>	<p>The central section of Marston Ferry Road may be free-flowing, but at either end there is frequent peak-time congestion. At the western end of Marston Ferry Road and on Cherwell Drive, traffic speeds between 8am and 9am are almost 60% slower than in free-flowing conditions. Getting buses moving along the B4495 (of which Marston Ferry Road is part) at peak times is critical to improving bus and park and ride services to the hospitals and other workplaces in north and east Oxford.</p>
<p>18. DISTRICT CLLR SALLY POVOLOTSKY</p> <p>Would the Leader of the Council please explain why the families and carers of pupils at Woodeaton School were not informed in advance of the decision to close and relocate the school due to maintenance and repair costs, and instead learned of this significant news through a BBC article published on 6th June 2025?</p> <p>Does the Leader agree that this method of communication—or lack thereof—was deeply distressing for these families, particularly given the needs of neurodiverse children for whom stability, familiarity, and routine are vital to both their learning and emotional wellbeing?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL</p> <p>Thank you for the question. The Council is committed to improving the outcomes for children and young people across the county. Woodeaton Manor School is a grade 2* listed building which is not fit for purpose for our most vulnerable children and young people in the 21st century. Proposals to relocate the school have been in the public domain since February. Our plans for the future relocation of the school are at a very initial stage and will take a number of years to develop. I can understand that for parents and their children, the prospect of moving the school is disturbing. When these plans are firmer, we will involve parents and the school community on how we move forward.</p> <p>Ofsted is external to the Council and is responsible for its own judgements. Prior to the inspection, the local authority raised its concerns about the leadership and management of the school with the governing body. The foundation governing body was responsible for running of the school during the period referred to in the question. The governing body resigned in the Autumn 2023.</p> <p>The Council remains committed to improving outcomes for all our children and young people and in particular providing excellent governance to ensure an education fit for all children.</p>

In light of this, parents are calling for a thorough and transparent review into the events leading up to the 'chaotic' OFSTED inspection in October 2023, and an honest assessment of how a once 'Outstanding' and much-loved school deteriorated to 'Inadequate' in such a short space of time.	
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