

## Questions from Members of the Public

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

| 1. ROBIN TUCKER                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
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| <p>We note the recent support for a traffic-free cycling route between Witney, Brize Norton and Carterton from the Member for Witney West and Ducklington. And while Witney Road between Curbridge and Brize Norton has not been put forward as a potential Quiet Lane, it is clear the road requires some intervention because it is so dangerous. Seven collisions causing injuries in five years on a two-mile stretch, including three serious and one fatal. There is also a large development mooted, which would put extra pressure on this dangerous road.</p> <p>We note also the Council's study into public transport options between Carterton, Witney, Eynsham and Oxford. (<a href="#">Study will look at public transport options to link the Witney area and Oxford</a>)</p> <p>We don't know what the best solution is, but based on these factors and the Council's Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, would the Cabinet Member agree that the time is right for an options study for an active travel route between Witney, Brize</p> | <p>The Witney Road between Brize Norton and Curbridge presents a strategic long-term opportunity to improve sustainable transport routes as part of wider strategic transport, movement and place planning for the Witney and Carterton area.</p> <p>The Council has looked at a number of high-level options to deliver a safe cycle route between Carterton and Witney as listed in the <a href="#">Carterton LCWIP (2025)</a>. Witney Road is the most direct option.</p> <p>The LCWIP was developed before the emerging Local Plan 2043 sites were discussed, and the scale and direction of growth proposed in the Carterton and west Witney area means that public transport routing options also need to be considered and developed in tandem. This work is ongoing. Additionally, a development proposal of significant scale has recently been proposed along the Witney Road corridor.</p> <p>The Council has recently commissioned a Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) study to explore both mode and route choices between Oxford, Eynsham, Witney and Carterton. However, development in the local bus network to accompany any future possible MRT will also be required.</p> <p>Officers are and will continue to work with West Oxfordshire District Council and developer colleagues to develop sustainable transport solutions which meet the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan and Decide and Provide Policies to create high quality active travel and sustainable transport networks, and will ensure to engage with local active travel groups to achieve the best outcomes.</p> |

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| <p>Norton and Carterton, possibly linked to the public transport study, and safety improvements to Witney Road, to ensure that this Council can work the District Council and developers to achieve safe and sustainable transport in this area?</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <p><b>2. BERNADETTE EVANS</b></p> <p>The red lights are flashing, and the klaxons are blaring that the congestion charge is damaging trade for small family-run high street businesses all over Oxford. Multiple hospitality, hair and beauty and retail small business owners are telling the council that trade fell off a cliff immediately after the congestion charge was introduced (separately from other economic headwinds they're also experiencing). Furthermore, the council's own data tells a story of footfall and spend falling throughout the city.</p> <p>Is the council's narrative on the congestion charge still that it's 'good for the high street'? And if so, what evidence can you provide to support this?</p> | <p><b>COUNCILLOR LAURA GORDON, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY</b></p> <p>I do fully recognise that some businesses are experiencing real concerns about the temporary congestion charge, and I and officers take those concerns seriously. However, I do not accept the characterisation that trade has "fallen off a cliff" across Oxford. The evidence published to date does not support that conclusion. A survey of 300 Oxford-area businesses found that 79% of those who gave a view on performance compared with a year earlier said they were doing the same or better. On the temporary congestion charge specifically, views were mixed: 48% reported no noticeable effect, 22% reported a positive effect and 30% reported a negative effect. That does not dismiss the concerns of those businesses reporting negative impacts, but it does show that the evidence is more mixed than the claim of a city-wide collapse in trade suggests.</p> <p>Whilst it is a complicated picture and I do appreciate the intelligence from those impacted directly, we need to recognise that the temporary congestion charge is not the only factor that will have caused changes to trading conditions, and in some cases, it may not even be the main factor.</p> <p>The spend data we have published also shows a more mixed picture than has been suggested. Total spend in Oxford city centre for the first six months of the congestion charge scheme compared to the same six months the year before declined by the same amount in the comparator city centres (4.3% compared to 4.2%). Footfall in Queen Street over the same period declined less than in a</p> |

comparable retail street in Cambridge (2% year-on-year drop in Queen Street, 5% year-on-year drop in Sidney Street, Cambridge). Only a third of city centre car parking can be accessed without passing a congestion charge point.

Over the same six-month period, year-on-year spend in Oxford's suburban destinations has declined more than the average in comparator areas (8.4% compared to 2.5%). All car parking in suburban areas is accessible without passing a congestion charge point. These figures do not suggest the congestion charge has caused a trade to "fall off a cliff" in the city and it is particularly interesting to note that the city centre (where the majority of car parking can't be accessed without paying the charge) appears to be performing similarly to comparator centres.

On footfall data we have published specifically, the June and July Queen Street figures are currently being checked following an issue identified by the data supplier, so it would not be appropriate to draw firm conclusions from those figures at this stage.

Let us also remember why this temporary scheme was introduced. Oxford has suffered from chronic congestion for many years, and that situation was made significantly worse by the prolonged closure of Botley Road due to multiple delays to the Network Rail works. That prevented the council from introducing the previously approved traffic filter trial and required a temporary alternative. There were calls for urgent action to be taken and that doing nothing until Botley Road reopened was simply not an option. Monitoring shows the scheme is reducing traffic on a number of key routes across the city. Bus patronage has increased, and that increase has not been limited to park and ride services.

We will of course continue to listen to businesses, monitor the evidence carefully and engage through the traffic filter trial consultation. But I do not believe it is accurate or responsible to claim that the available evidence shows a city-wide collapse in trade as a result of this temporary scheme.

### 3. GEOFFREY SUTTON

Given that the congestion charge [terms and conditions \(clause 11\)](#) clearly state that congestion charge permits will be “cancelled” and that residents will “be able to apply for these [traffic filters permits] when the trial traffic filters start operating”, please explain on what contractual / data protection law basis OCC is [automatically migrating](#) congestion charge permits to traffic filters permits? Neither the congestion charge terms and conditions nor its [privacy notice](#) appear to give OCC any legal basis for such automatic migration of permits.

### COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT

The council as data controller processes personal data for the purpose of delivering traffic management schemes in line with the data legislation (in particular the Data Protection Act 2018, the UK GDPR and the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025. The council does so under the lawful bases of Legal Obligation (UK GDPR Article 6.1.c) and Public Interest (Article 6.1.e).

Where the data processing activities and personal information required closely align between the congestion charge scheme and the traffic filter scheme, the data controller follows ‘privacy by design’ (Article 25) and the data protection principles (Article 5) for data minimisation and security to reduce the burden and excessive handling of data, and to provide benefit to the data subject in transition from scheme to scheme.

Where one processing ends and another begins that is reasonably the same or similar purpose, the data controller may pass or transfer the data with due transparency and consideration of impacts. In doing so, the council uses the lawful basis of its Recognised Interest (Article 6.1.ea) to provide traffic management schemes and to provide data subjects with a seamless segway from the old processing to the new, given proportionality, necessity and balance. The Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 provides explicit expansion of legitimate secondary or aligned purposes of processing, which the data controller uses here to reduce excess processing and improve the experience for data subjects and to ensure data subjects do not lose access to benefits or fall foul of processing termination.

In doing so, the data controller has assessed the adequate technical and organisational measures and ensured the greater security can be achieved by transitioning data subjects from scheme to scheme rather than by ejecting all existing registrations and requiring entirely new registrations. Transparency (Article 5 and 13) has also been provided through updated privacy notice and information for the traffic filter scheme.

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|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <p>In all communications, to every permit holder (data subject), the data controller clearly explained this transition and provided the data subject with the opportunity to reply, object or remove themselves from the scheme, whereby the data subject would lose access to the benefits of the scheme or the necessary legal requirements to travel through the traffic filter points:</p> <p><i>"If you don't want us to transfer your congestion charge permit to a traffic filter permit, email <a href="mailto:ccharge@oxfordshire.gov.uk">ccharge@oxfordshire.gov.uk</a> by 11 September 2026 to let us know. Our <a href="#">privacy notice</a> and <a href="#">terms and conditions</a> have been updated to reflect the scheme change.</i></p> <p><i>If you hold any other congestion charge permits, we'll email you about each of them separately."</i></p> |
| <p><b>4. PETER WEST</b></p> <p>I recently received an Oxfordshire County Council email outlining the introduction of the traffic filter scheme and that the OCC would automatically register my name for the relevant permits that I had not asked for.</p> <p>I didn't think that the GDPR legislation permitted this type of action therefore I would be grateful if you would confirm how the procedure that the OCC is undertaking for the Traffic Filter scheme i.e. contacting the public to apply or re-apply for registration for the Traffic Filter scheme using the contact details for previous council</p> | <p><b>COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT</b></p> <p>Please see the answer to question 3 above.</p> <p>This question also asks whether the council may use contact details collected through previous schemes. As data controller, the council may lawfully contact individuals about continuing, additional or new benefits and services where these are clearly linked to those they already receive and the new processing serves a compatible purpose.</p> <p>As above, the council does so under its legal obligations (Article 6.1.c, the public interest (Article 6.1.e) and it's recognised interest (Article 6.1.ea), providing transparency through personal direct communications and privacy notice information.</p>                                                                                                                         |

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