

Frequently Asked Questions

What is happening in Cowley area?

During March 2021, we are introducing Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) in the 3 Cowley areas of Church Cowley, Florence Park and Temple Cowley.

What is a Low Traffic Neighbourhood?

A Low Traffic Neighbourhood (LTN) is an area where outside traffic is prevented from taking a short cut through the residential area. This creates quieter streets where residents can enjoy their street and feel safer when making local journeys. This is achieved by the introduction of traffic filters which restrict movement of motor vehicles.

What is a Traffic Filter?

A traffic filter is basically a barrier in the road that prevents motorised traffic driving through it, but has gaps wide enough for pedestrians, cyclists and those with buggies or mobility scooters to pass through. The filters will be bollards or planters or a mixture of the two.

In two locations (Cornwallis Road in Florence Park and Bartholomew Road in Church Cowley), the filter also permits buses, taxis and private hire vehicles through but not general traffic. These are backed up by automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) cameras. All traffic filters are introduced through a legal procedure and can be enforced by the Police.

What are the benefits?

The predicted benefits are that as residents, your local streets will feel less noisy and stressful because of the reduction in traffic. It will feel safer and more pleasant for residents, including children, to walk or cycle to local destinations, such as shops, schools and local employment.

In the Waltham Forest LTN in London there was a 50% decrease in motor traffic after the LTN was introduced. The LTN was also popular. After 12 months, 55% said they would not change the LTN scheme with just 18% wanting to remove the filters. This mirrors a national YouGov poll which found that 57% people supported low traffic neighbourhoods, while just 16% opposed them.

What do residents of Cowley say?

In November 2020, we sent out 5800 letters to all households in Cowley asking residents to comment on the proposed scheme. Over 1000 residents responded. The results below show that a majority of residents in each area supported the LTN proposals.

LTN support Area	Total Support	Fully Support	Support with reservations	Neutral or no answer	Do not support
Church Cowley	59%	46%	13%	3%	38%
Temple Cowley	71%	59%	12%	1%	27%
Florence Park	79%	70%	9%	2%	19%

Why now?

These proposals are part of wider Government and County Council measures to promote active travel and reduce traffic congestion. In 2020, the Council was successful in winning £3 million bid to promote active travel. Oxford Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) sets out a policy to introduce LTNs in areas in Oxford where there is local support from residents and members. LTNs support ambitious targets to increase cycling in Oxford by 50% by 2031.

How is it being funded?

Part of the scheme is being funded out of Council reserves and part is being funded by the Government Active Travel Fund (ATF).

When do the public get a say?

The scheme is being introduced using Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (ETROs). In an ETRO, the scheme is introduced first and consultation happens afterwards. In that way, residents can assess its impacts before making their comments. Likewise, the Council can monitor the impacts on factors such as traffic and travel behaviour.

After implementation in March 2021, there follows a statutory six-month period when the public can submit objections or letters of support.

After the six months in September 2021, the Council must assess the objections and letters of support and either cancel, confirm, change or extend the scheme. The ETRO can be extended for a further 12 month

review period to give more time for consultation and monitoring. After 18 months in total, the scheme must be made permanent, altered or removed.

Traffic Regulation Orders can be modified at any time to solve any unforeseen problems.

How will the Council monitor the impacts?

The Council is setting up a monitoring regime to measure the impacts including traffic flows on the residential roads and the surrounding main roads, cycling and walking flows along the improved cycle routes through the LTNs, and noise and air quality monitors at key locations. The Council will also monitor residents' attitudes and behaviour through questionnaires and surveys.

Can I get to my home by motor vehicle, and will I be able to receive deliveries?

Yes, you can, all homes can be reached by car. However, you may have to use a different route when going by car. The schemes have been designed to make it easy for residents to drive to the nearest main road from their home to minimise traffic within the area. At most times of the day, new routes should not add more than around 5 to 10 minutes to a journey (according to Google map timings).

It will be like living in a large cul-de-sac, where there is typically only one way in and out for motorised vehicles. There are many areas in Oxford already like this, such as Iffley Village and Rose Hill estate.

Aren't there other ways of doing this, which don't inconvenience residents?

It is very difficult to prevent rat-runs without traffic filters. For instance, traffic calming has been introduced on several rat-runs in Oxford to prevent through traffic, with some success in reducing traffic speed but not much success in preventing through traffic.

Traffic calming already exists in Rymers Lane and Cornwallis Road- Littlehay Road in Florence Park and Crescent Road in Temple Cowley, but all these roads have high levels of through traffic.

Another possible option is to introduce camera restrictions, but the Council can only install and enforce cameras on bus routes. Traffic cameras are also expensive to install with on-going costs for enforcement and keeping exemptions up-to-date.

Will this create more traffic and pollution?

Whilst some journeys will be slightly longer, the LTN should result in less traffic in residential areas. Traffic surveys in the Cowley area show that through traffic on the busiest routes represents 30-50% of traffic movements during peak hours.

Furthermore, it is anticipated that over time many residents will make minor behaviour changes, for instance deciding to walk or cycle for local journeys because it feels safer, quieter and more convenient. In response to the Cowley survey, around 50% of all residents said they definitely intended to walk or cycle more during the LTN trial. Waltham Forest experienced a decrease in traffic of up to 50% in their LTN.

What about traffic displaced onto the perimeter main roads? Will traffic get much worse?

Generally, we do not expect traffic to get much worse on the perimeter main roads. When local streets feel safer and quieter, people making short journeys will be more likely to walk and cycle rather than drive. It is anticipated that many other longer journeys will divert onto the bypass rather than use the main radial roads inside Oxford. Waltham Forest LTN saw a marginal impact on overall traffic levels on the perimeter roads. However, it is impossible to predict the longer terms impacts and that is one of the key factors that the Council will monitor.

Won't traffic at junctions with the main roads be worse?

Generally, traffic should reduce at the junctions where local traffic meets the main road. This is because of the removal of short-cutting and through traffic and changes in local journey patterns. The Council will monitor the situation and assess the need for changes if there are any problems.

What about car parking in my street?

Parking restrictions won't change as a result of this scheme, although short lengths of double yellow lines will be required in the vicinity of some of the filters to ensure vehicles can turn and cyclists are not blocked from travelling through the filter.

In the longer term, the Council is planning to introduce Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs) to prevent commuter parking in residential streets. CPZs are being rolled out across Oxford. Note there is one area (along Bartholomew Road) where the CPZ is being introduced at the same time as the LTN and residents in that area will receive a separate notification from the council.

Won't traffic speeds increase if there's less traffic in my street?

It is not anticipated that vehicle speeds will increase. Many of the longer straighter streets will have filters along them, meaning that vehicles will have shorter distances to gain speed.

Will cycling and walking feel safer?

It is anticipated that the reduction in traffic will result in improved road safety for all users. We expect an increase in cycling, as traffic levels decrease and the roads feel safer. Around 50% of residents who responded to the LTN survey said they would definitely cycle or walk more during the LTN trial. The Council also has Government funding to improve both cycle routes within the Cowley area and cycle routes along the main roads in East Oxford. These schemes are planned to be introduced during 2021-2022.

What will be the impact on local shops without so much passing trade?

Local businesses vary considerably in their reliance on passing trade and business success is often more dependent on wider macro-economic issues. It is difficult therefore to predict the impact on all local businesses. With more people walking and cycling, there may be opportunities to focus on that passing trade. We will monitor the impacts.

Won't this be a problem for the emergency services or for refuse collections?

Emergency services and waste services have been consulted to identify and minimise any issues. Generally, there are equally fast ways for emergency services to get to any house or dwelling in the area. In a few cases, bollards will be locked by a key so that waste lorries can pass through on collection day. All houses and businesses will still be fully accessible.

What will disabled people or older people do?

We have assessed the impact on all protected groups (such as disability, age and gender) in an Equality and Community Impact Assessment (ECIA). We asked questions in the Cowley 2020 survey. Altogether 45% of disabled respondents and 56% of people over the age of 65 supported the LTN trial against 36% of disabled and 23% of over 65 year olds who did not support it. On balance we expect there will be benefits for most protected groups in terms of better safety and ease of travel.

What else is the Council doing?

The LTNs in Cowley are the part of wider transport changes coming to Oxford. We have £3 million in Active Travel Funding from the Government to improve the cycle routes along the main roads in East Oxford. The Council is also planning LTNs in 6 other areas of Oxford. Connecting Oxford proposals and Zero Emission Zones will see further changes to give residents and commuters more choice of transport modes whilst promoting active and sustainable travel throughout Oxford.

How can we make our views known?

Please leave your comments in the consultation webpage. These will be monitored. Unfortunately, we are not able to reply to individual comments.