

Witness 1 – Negatively impacted by LTNs, living on periphery

This is a personal statement and is not as a representative of any organization.

I am writing this statement as a resident of Oxford Road, a main peripheral road in Cowley. Oxford Road is in middle of the LTN areas of Florence Park and Temple Cowley (known as Cowley LTNs). I have lived in Cowley all my life and in my current residence for over 40 years and seen transport changes for good and bad. I have spent a lot of time listening to people who have different views and I do understand that LTNs were installed to reduce traffic but I have weighed up the advantages and disadvantages.

Prior to the pandemic Oxford Road was congested and polluted - it is the main road leading to Cowley Road and used to reach side roads. The pandemic changed transport ways of behaviour and substantially increased cycling and walking and cars/vans were limited - this was a Utopian ideal that I do not believe will ever be repeated except in extreme circumstances - but we all got an idea of how life would be like with very little traffic. There were also great hardships due to the lack of traffic.

This ideal was never going to be perpetuated when we returned to a 'new normal' but I can see how this is an opportunity for LTNs to be trialled. The experimental traffic order (ETO) has nearly concluded in Cowley and a vote will be made as to its permanency by the County Council.

I believe the experimental traffic order has been a failure for these reasons.

1) As a resident on a main road my quality of life has been impacted as there is greatly increased transferred traffic that would normally be using side roads as short cuts. There has always been a fair level of traffic on Oxford Road and congestion and pollution are prevalent particularly during rush hours and school run times. However, this is just more of a challenging problem now and the windows are rarely open (except at night) as the drivers are sat in cars with their engines running. This has a knock-on effect so we have fewer pedestrians on the main road or even the side roads. This seems to have had an opposite effect for LTN expectations. The LTNs have not brought traffic evaporation as expected within the 18 months trial.

2) The benefits of the LTNs are that side roads are quieter (I live close to a junction) but the traffic has been displaced to the main roads. It has brought divisions to our neighbourhood in a way I have never experienced before. I have spoken to locals who have benefitted and some have acknowledged that other residents have been disadvantaged. I used to go to Florence Park and the Community Centre but it is such a longer journey and sitting behind polluted vehicles I don't bother. The same with the Cowley Centre - I spend less money as I go less but that's not good for businesses.

3) I have never seen such bad general behaviour by all road users since the LTNs and the pandemic. We used to get some cyclists riding on the pavements but now many are riding past the window regularly and as a resident I feel unsafe even walking outside my front gate. For the first time I noticed a motorcyclist was riding along the pavement at speed.

4) Businesses- I used our local business Parchment Printers regularly and they made a statement that the LTNs meant their business had to close. In order to go to a printer I now have to go across the other side of town - not accessible by bus - so blue badge is used. This does not make any sense to reducing the carbon footprint. Many Oxford locals (including myself) use Smith and Lowe - an old-type of shop where you can buy one battery and fuse and find things that are not accessible in other shops. As Sylvesters (nearest comparison) is closing due to East Oxford LTNs, I am extremely concerned we will lose our local independent stores. The LTNs have been installed at a time when businesses need to recoup footfall, not reduce it. For those that are not aware of the problems to drive to Smith and Lowe car park instead of using the short cut of Crescent Road (speeding was an issue but there are less draconian speed calming measures other than LTNs) now we have to drive to the junction of Hollow Way and then up to Crescent Road and then to the carpark - this is not helping the carbon footprint.

5) To get to the main Oxford Road we need to drive out of a side road. This has taken up to 10 minutes on occasions and drivers are becoming frustrated and taking risks coming out of them. The delay is the same for all residents that live in side roads as well. Unless bikes and feet are your main form of transport, all driver residents are affected adversely. It was often difficult to get on the main road but again this has made a difficult situation much worse.

6) Taxis and buses

I have a bus pass but I still need to reach destinations by car. I live on a good bus route but the buses are gridlocked so I use them less and go out less (the opposite of what LTNs were advocating). Also the bus timetable is often not kept and the drivers are doing their best but have many disgruntled passengers.

Taxis - the increased traffic on the peripheral roads mean that taxis and buses are in the same long queue as drivers and much slower travelling from A to B with increased fares for passengers.

7) Blue badge holders

Blue badge holders are unable to go through bus gates on Bartholomew Road and this needs to be addressed.

8) I have noticed a decrease in police emergency vehicles using Littlehay Road to access Florence Park area. With modal filters, no emergency vehicle can go through but there is access to reach all areas, but on a longer route. I asked for Environmental Information Request (EIR) for LTNs and Emergency Services

Following the EIR request for any delay times in emergency services between May 2021 and May 2022, the reply is as follows and is reassuring, but there is no information as to whether there is any delay.

"Oxfordshire County Council have received feedback from the emergency services that they are currently meeting their target responses."

9) I am proud to be Cowley born and bred and Cowley is the home of the motor car. The traffic restrictions are deterring visitors and we need them for our local economy. I deplore the activities of arson and vandalism to modal filters and bollards, but I also understand the frustrations that have turned to anger.

Although LTNs are a solution - they are a bad solution in that the disadvantages outweigh the advantages and too many drivers are financially impacted by increased petrol costs due to longer journeys. There has been a misjudgement in numbers that use cars as a necessity and not a convenience. Cycling and walking is often dependent on good weather and I have noticed even more traffic on inclement days.

One aim was to reduce locals using their cars on unnecessary journeys - I believe the cost is too high. I don't walk or cycle so I stay in when I see the line of traffic. So, it could be argued that the LTNs have been effective, but I would ask you to look at what cost. I rest my case.

Here are three possible solutions to consider

- 1) Bus fares need to be reduced
- 2) More bus lanes where possible
- 3) Cycling and walking is obvious but not available to disabled and some elderly, and those needing cars for work and deliveries.

Witness 2 - Written statement from Care Agency – negatively impacted by LTNs

To Whom It May Concern,

We are local domiciliary care provider based in Oxford city delivering over 700 hours of care per week with the majority of this being in the OX4 area of Oxford.

Since the LTNs have been introduced it has had a significant negative impact on business continuity which is causing our vulnerable service users to suffer. The increase in travel times throughout the day has meant that carers are unable to arrive for appointments on time, which is causing service users anxiety and leading to them having to wait longer times between appointments. It is also causing their morning appointment to be delayed which means some are now having to spend longer times in wet overnight pads which can lead to skin breakdown.

The longer-term impact is that we may have to take appointments from our employees' normal working day to factor in for the increased travel times which could cause us as a business to have to hand some care packages back to the local authorities, who are already having issues with capacity within the city.

I hope the local authorities can find a sensible solution which doesn't have a determinantal impact on the quality of our service users' lives.

Please feel free to contact me should you wish to discuss the problem further.

Witness 3 – Negatively impacted by LTNs - living within an LTN

This witness statement was read to the jurors.

It has not been provided here, as the witness has not provided permission.

Witness 4 – Negatively impacted by LTNs

I am main carer for my 94 year old mother who lives the other side of the bus gate in Bartholomew Road. She lives independently and has many appointments that I need to take her to. I can walk to hers (daily) if I'm just visiting but for appointments, my car journey to collect her has now changed from 5 minutes to anything up to 25 minutes. This will become much worse once all the bus gates are in place and I dread to think in an emergency. It then takes much longer to drive to the various appointments causing her and me much stress. EMS are being hugely affected too.

I understand some care companies are refusing to take on care for folk who live within or around the affected areas as it is not cost effective. This is extremely worrying for the whole area...apart from those fit enough to walk or cycle of course.

I consider this scheme to be discriminatory against the elderly and the less able and is against equal rights. The original notification about the consultation was initially not sent to those in peripheral areas but final results still showed most were against the scheme. It was also conducted on line which many elderly do not have access to, so I am sure the results would have been an even higher majority against, if it had been available to all.