

Connecting Oxford

Improving connectivity, reducing congestion and tackling pollution in Oxford.

Oxford needs to tackle some serious, life-limiting issues concerning traffic. The daily heavy congestion experienced in Oxford affects the economy, brings health-threatening air pollution, drastically increases carbon emissions and discourages people engaging in active and healthy travel.

The provision of dedicated infrastructure for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport – bus lanes, cycle lanes, footpaths and public realm – have helped manage the growth in travel movements over past years. However, all parts of the transport network are now under intense pressure. If we are to transform how people travel to and within Oxford and provide enough capacity to meet future travel demand whilst mitigating climate emergency, investment is needed to improve pedestrian, cycle and public transport routes to make sure these are more attractive to users.

The current Oxford Transport Strategy confirmed that doing nothing is not an option, with climate emergency and with a 25% increase in commuting journeys to and within Oxford predicted by 2031[1]. This amount of additional car traffic in Oxford is simply not sustainable and would severely overburden an already over-burdened transport network, increase the already unacceptable impact on people's quality of lives, as well as causing death and life-limiting illness.

Connecting Oxford proposals have been developed jointly with Oxford City Council and are for further 'bus gates' in Oxford's city centre and in the 'Eastern Arc[2]' of the city, similar to those introduced in 1999 in the High Street and other locations in Oxford city centre, and a workplace parking levy (WPL) in the Eastern Arc.

There will be a further roll-out of Controlled Parking Zones (CPZ) across areas not already covered and in addition to the nine CPZ schemes that the county council approved in April 2019 for formal consultation. The councils also continue to work towards the implementation of a Zero Emission Zone (ZEZ) for the city, which would see all road traffic become zero emission by the mid-2030s. (see topic paper Zero Emission Zones)

The Proposals



Connecting Oxford proposes a workplace parking levy and additional bus gates. These measures would be accompanied by additional parking controls. Whilst these measures would be applied within Oxford, the improvements they would enable and directly deliver would have benefits across the county, particularly for the large number of people who currently regularly travel in and out of Oxford for work, education or leisure and those who will do so in the future as the county population increases.

Workplace Parking Levy (WPL)

A workplace parking levy (WPL) is an annual charge paid by employers for each parking space they provide, on or off-site, that is used for employee (commuter) car parking. Operational parking is exempt from a WPL as are fleet, visitor and customer car parking spaces. Whilst employers are responsible for paying the charge, they may choose to pass some or all of it on to employees who park at work. Net proceeds from a WPL are only available for the purpose of directly or indirectly facilitating achievement of local transport policies including those set out in the Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan and Oxford Local Plan.

A WPL incentivises employers to reduce their car parking supply and/or incentivises employees not to drive to their place of work, and travel by public transport, walk or cycle instead. As well as benefits to personal health, lower congestion, lowered emissions and

improved air quality, a WPL also provides a substantial, predictable, locally controlled source of ring-fenced funding to invest. This could be in new and improved bus services, additional Park and Ride capacity, better walking and cycling routes, travel planning, employer and employee benefits, including grants for car parking management and discounted bus fares.

Additional 'Bus Gates'

Additional bus gates would reduce the number of vehicles taking up valuable space on the roads. This means road space can be reallocated to create better, cleaner space for other modes of transport:

- Wider, segregated cycle lanes to allow for all abilities of cyclist
- Safer, more pleasant walking and cycling environment
- Buses able to flow freely, even where there is no road space for bus lanes
- Less pollution and noise
- Essential vehicles will move around the city more easily.

Buses, cyclists, taxis and private hire vehicles, and emergency vehicles, would be allowed to pass through the bus gates. They would be enforced using cameras. Reduced traffic levels would have major air quality and carbon reduction benefits, and more people travelling by active modes would benefit from improved physical/mental health and wellbeing.

Traffic reduction would reduce carbon dioxide emissions, with transport in the UK estimated to contribute about 33% to overall emissions – and 17% within the city of Oxford. This proposal therefore supports Oxfordshire councils in their commitments to zero carbon.

Connecting Oxford has already been the subject of a public engagement exercise in September and October 2019 and the county and city councils are moving on to the next phase of work. The next steps in the process are:

January-October 2020 – develop more detailed proposals and continue discussions with stakeholders.

Winter 2020/21 - formal consultation on a detailed proposal.

May/June 2021 - possible Public Inquiry.

Autumn 2021 - request for Department for Transport approval (as required)

[1] Equivalent of 13,000 more journeys a day

[2] Area surrounding the B4495 that arcs from North to South/South to North around the east of the city.

Question 16

Did you comment on the Connecting Oxford proposals?

Yes

No

To respond please use the online consultation form.