Oxford Traffic Filters

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OXFORD CITY COUNCIL

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Contents

Our vision for transport in Oxford

An affordable bus network with new and improved routes, able to travel at the speed limit 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

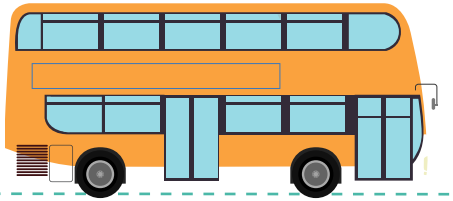
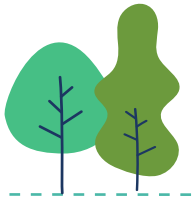
A comprehensive, safe cycle network with reallocation of road space from motor vehicles to cyclists and pedestrians.

Congestion-free roads for residents, visitors and businesses to make essential journeys in zero emission vehicles.

Beautifully designed streets and public spaces, with clean air.

Introduction




Transport plays an important role in our everyday lives. It enables journeys to work, education, shops and healthcare, supports 30,000 businesses across the county and connects us to our family and friends.

An affordable, reliable and sustainable transport system is a key step to making Oxfordshire a greener, healthier and more inclusive county. We know this will help our poorest communities the most, protect our environment and help businesses thrive. It will also help us successfully accommodate future growth in an economically and environmentally sustainable manner.

The Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) adopted earlier this year outlines a clear long term vision for our county. Our vision is ambitious, and to achieve it we need to reduce the need to travel in private cars, and make walking, cycling and public transport the natural first choice. Traffic filters are an important tool to help us achieve this vision.

We are proposing six trial traffic filters on key routes across Oxford. We recognise that they represent a major change to the transport system in Oxford. That is why we are proposing to introduce them as a trial for a minimum of six months from summer 2023 under an experimental traffic regulation order (ETRO) and want your views on the ETRO. We are also proposing a number of exemptions and permits.

Traffic filters are designed to reduce traffic, make bus journeys faster, and make walking and cycling more convenient and safer. When they are operating, private cars will not be allowed through without a permit. All other vehicles including buses, taxis, vans, mopeds, motorbikes and HGVs will be allowed at all times.

People don't need to give up motor vehicles entirely. We understand that there are many reasons why some journeys by car or other motor vehicles are necessary. We want to enable these essential journeys to continue as well as giving us more options to travel in other ways, such as by bicycle, e-scooter, bus, or on foot. Leaving cars and other vehicles for the necessary journeys only.

We can only make this vision a reality with feedback and engagement from the people of Oxfordshire. We know it will take a while to get to where we want to be, but we have a clear plan for shifting the balance away from single occupancy cars in favour of something healthier and more sustainable.

Traffic filter benefits

Six traffic filters will deliver the same benefits as many kilometres of bus lanes, reduce the risk of road collisions and improve air quality.

The traffic filters will

- Reduce traffic levels across the city within the ring road.
- Make bus journeys faster.
- Increase bus and Park and Ride use.
- Enable new and improved bus routes.
- Reduce overall accidents within the city.
- Improve air quality due to traffic reductions.
- Increase cycle mode share.
- Support investment in modern buses

Less traffic and better bus services will encourage people to leave their cars at home, which will make walking and cycling safer and more pleasant. It will improve our urban environment and public spaces. This will benefit our economy, our health and our wellbeing.

A Case for change

As our economy and population continues to grow, so does traffic on our roads. In 2019, the total vehicle miles driven in Oxfordshire passed 4 billion for the first time. All road users, including people who walk, cycle and use the bus suffer the effects of the resulting traffic.

The cost of congestion to families and businesses is too high. We can't spend all our lives stuck in traffic jams. Traffic congestion causes air pollution which is harmful for our health and environment. Cyclists and pedestrians are at risk of accidents. Bus journeys are taking longer and are often unreliable.

Threat to our bus network

Some bus services in the county have been cut recently. More services are at risk if we do not take action to improve bus journey times and reliability. Over 30% of residents in Oxford do not own a car and are reliant on bus services. Fewer bus services would reduce travel options and opportunities to access jobs and services for many people.

Oxfordshire is the most rural county in South East England, but it still has one of the best bus networks in the country with 41 million bus journeys made in 2019. However, passenger numbers were badly hit by the impact of the pandemic.

Demand for buses during the peak of COVID decreased and is still only back to just under 85% of pre pandemic levels. Bus companies need the demand for buses to increase to at least pre pandemic levels to keep buses running and viable. They are also dealing with rising fuel prices, shortages of drivers, and uncertainty about financial support from the government.

People, both young and old travel by bus to get to their workplace, shops, places of worship, hospital appointments or meeting friends. Persistent traffic congestion and the decline in bus use since the pandemic are making buses slow and more expensive. The average speed of buses on many routes in the city is below 10 miles per hour throughout the day.

Bus operators have already cut some services and further changes will negatively affect the many people who do not own cars and therefore rely on public transport.

Over 60% of visitors to the city centre travel by public transport or active travel. Urgent action is needed to improve these travel options to ensure businesses located in the city centre can continue to thrive.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TAXI

Unacceptable injuries and deaths on our roads

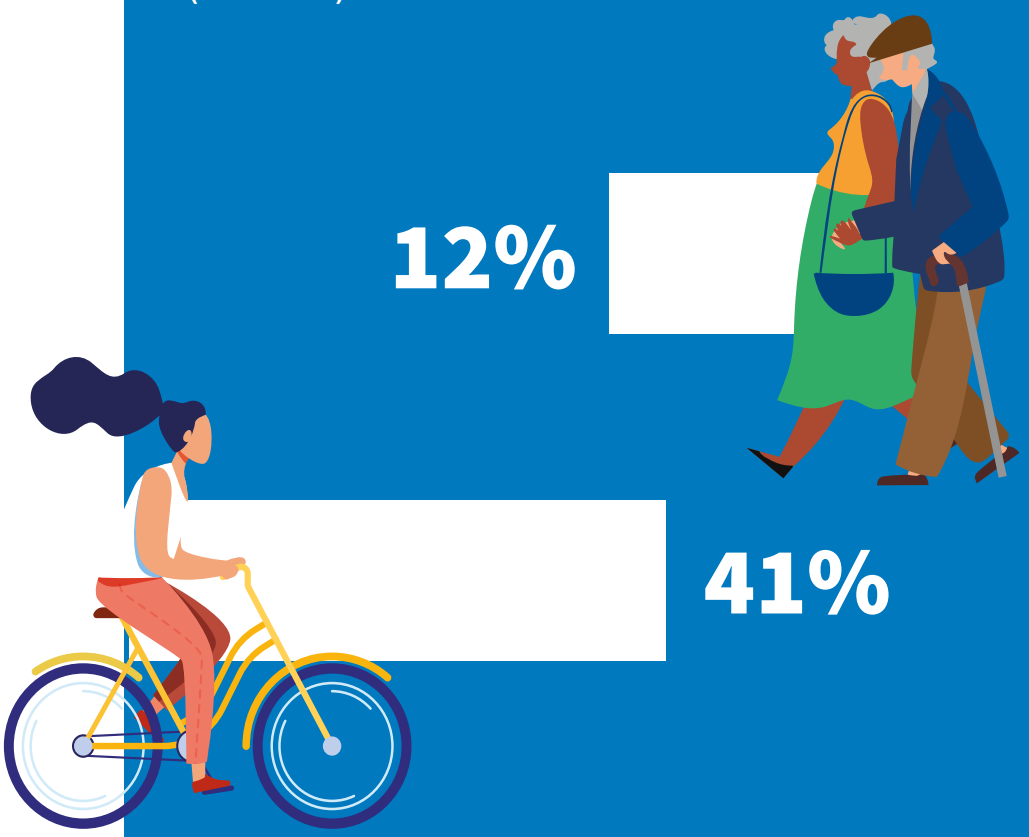
High levels of traffic create an unsafe and unpleasant environment for people walking and cycling in Oxford.

Between 2015 and 2019 over 1,700 traffic accidents were reported in Oxford, resulting in over 2,000 casualties.
People walking and cycling are more vulnerable than car drivers and over half of these casualties were cyclists (41%) and pedestrians (12%).

Road safety is a major barrier to people walking and cycling. In response to the Oxfordshire Cycle Survey in 2019, over 60% of people said that traffic levels and road safety were their main concerns.

Most road casualties are concentrated in the city centre and on the main roads leading there. The traffic filters are expected to create a much safer and more attractive environment for walking and cycling by reducing traffic levels and freeing road space for better cycle lanes and pavements.

Cyclist and pedestrian casualties (2015-2019)



Air pollution and health challenges

Air pollution is a major public health risk in the UK and the government has declared it to be a ‘top environmental risk to human health’.

In Oxford 40% of nitrogen dioxide comes from transport.
This level increases at busy roadside locations.

There is no ‘safe’ level of air pollution; the World Health Organisation is clear that even low levels can be harmful to human health over the long term.

One of the fastest ways to improve air quality is by reducing the use of private cars and walking and cycling or using low or zero emission buses instead.

Inactivity

High levels of traffic combined with high levels of air pollution make walking and cycling less attractive. We know that physical activity has a direct impact on health, and walking and cycling are the cheapest and most accessible ways of being active.

By making it easier for people to walk and cycle, we can provide more opportunities for children, adults and older people to stay active and protect their health.

CHILDREN	ADULTS	OLDER ADULTS
Bone health	All-cause mortality	Falls
Cognitive function	Stroke + heart disease	Frailty
Cardiovascular fitness	Hypertension	Physical function
Muscle fitness	Type 2 diabetes	
Weight status	8 cancers	
Depression	Depression	
	Cognitive function	
	Dementia	
	Quality of life	
	Sleep	
	Anxiety / depression	
	Weight status	

Why traffic filters?

We need a sustainable solution to make our buses faster and more reliable and make walking and cycling safer and easier.

Oxford has very little space for new or wider roads. The only way to reduce traffic is to improve public transport and create safer and more attractive walking and cycling facilities.

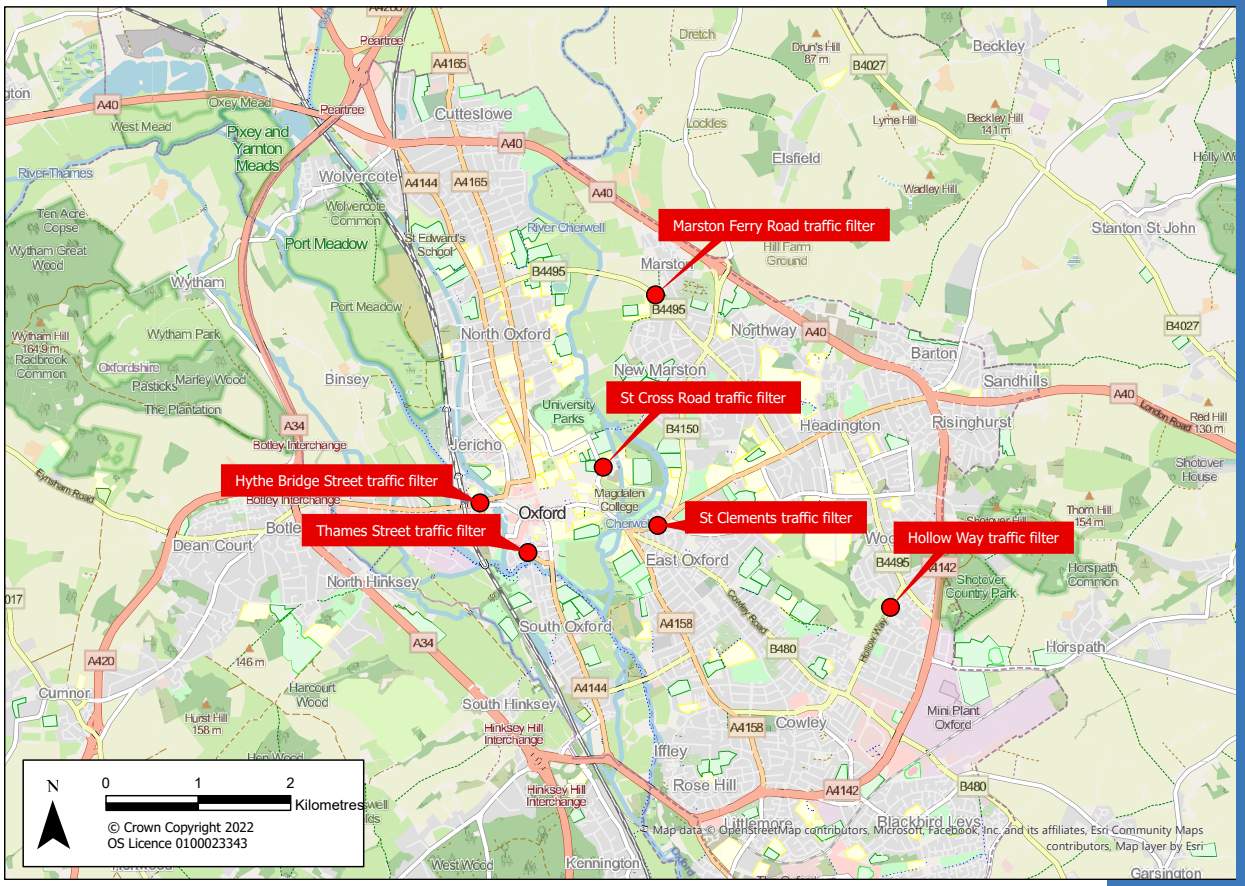
Traffic filters are part of a wider plan for Oxford (as detailed in the **Central Oxfordshire Travel Plan)** and surrounding areas that could significantly reduce traffic on bus routes to allow buses to flow freely. Without the disruption, high cost and pollution that comes with physically building new roads. We will also be able to reallocate road space from private vehicles to cyclists and pedestrians.

What are traffic filters?

Traffic filters are designed to reduce traffic, make bus journeys faster, and make walking and cycling more convenient and safer. When they are operating, private cars will not be allowed through certain sections of roads without a permit. All other vehicles including buses, taxis, motorbikes, vans, mopeds and HGVs will be allowed at all times.

Traffic signs identify the location of each traffic filter, including operational hours and vehicles that are exempt to travel through. The scheme will be enforced using automatic number plate recognition cameras.

The concept of traffic filters was first introduced in 2015 in the Oxford Transport Strategy which was part of the county's local transport plan. We have been engaging with our partners and residents over the last few years. The latest proposals are a result of that engagement work and updated transport analysis and evidence.



How and when will the traffic filters operate?

Automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) cameras will be installed to monitor vehicles going through the traffic filters. Traffic signs will identify the location of each traffic filter, including operational hours and vehicles that are exempt to travel through.

Any driver of a vehicle that goes through the traffic filter and is not exempt or using a permit, will be charged a penalty (currently £70).

The traffic filters will operate 7 days a week from 7am to 7pm, apart from traffic filters on Marston Ferry Road and Hollow Way which will not operate on Sundays.

Where will the traffic filters be located?

The proposals include six traffic filters. Three of these will be located in the city centre on St Cross Road, Thames Street and Hythe Bridge Street.

The remaining three filters will be located on: St Clements, Marston Ferry Road and Hollow Way.

Exemptions

For the trial, it is currently proposed the following vehicles will be exempt from the traffic filters. This means they can travel freely, at all times and without applying for a permit.

- **Buses**
- **Coaches**
- **Taxis**
- **Private hire vehicles**
- **Mopeds**
- **Motorbikes**
- **Vans (excluding people carriers)**
- **Heavy goods vehicles (HGVs)**
- **Special vehicles such as emergency services**

Permits for private cars will be available for:

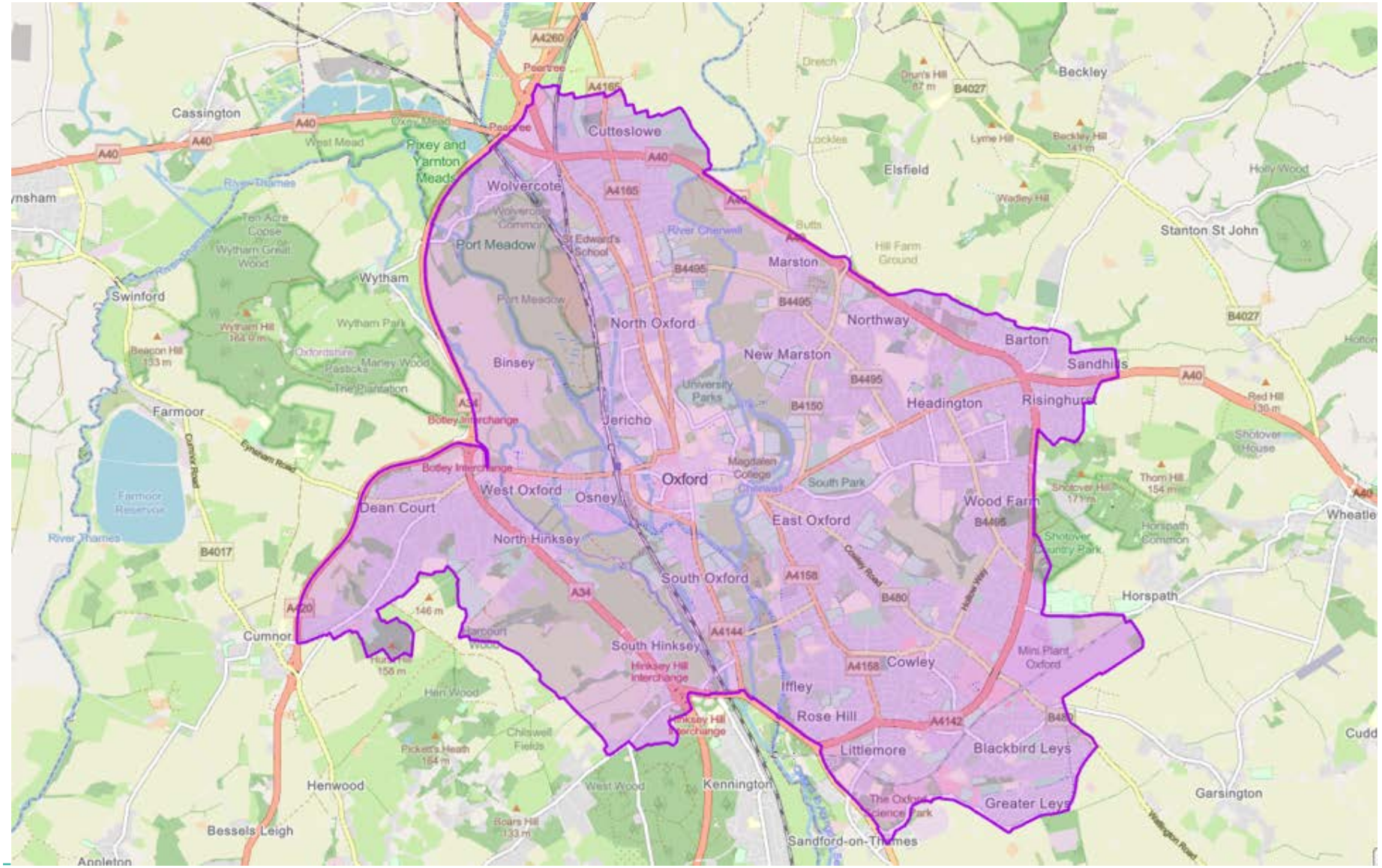
- **Blue badge holders**
- **Professional health or care workers**
- **Non-professional carers (for operational journeys, not commuting)**
- **Cars used as goods vehicles by businesses based in the permit area (see map opposite)**
- **Residents living in the permit area (see map opposite)**

The permit area includes:

- **Oxford City Council's administrative area**
- **North Hinksey Parish**
- **South Hinksey Parish**
- **Cumnor Parish east of the A420, including Botley, Dean Court, Cumnor Hill, Chawley and parts of Cumnor**

Residents in these areas will be able to apply for a permit to drive through the traffic filters for up to 100 days per year, with a maximum of three permits per household and one permit per person.

Traffic filter permit area



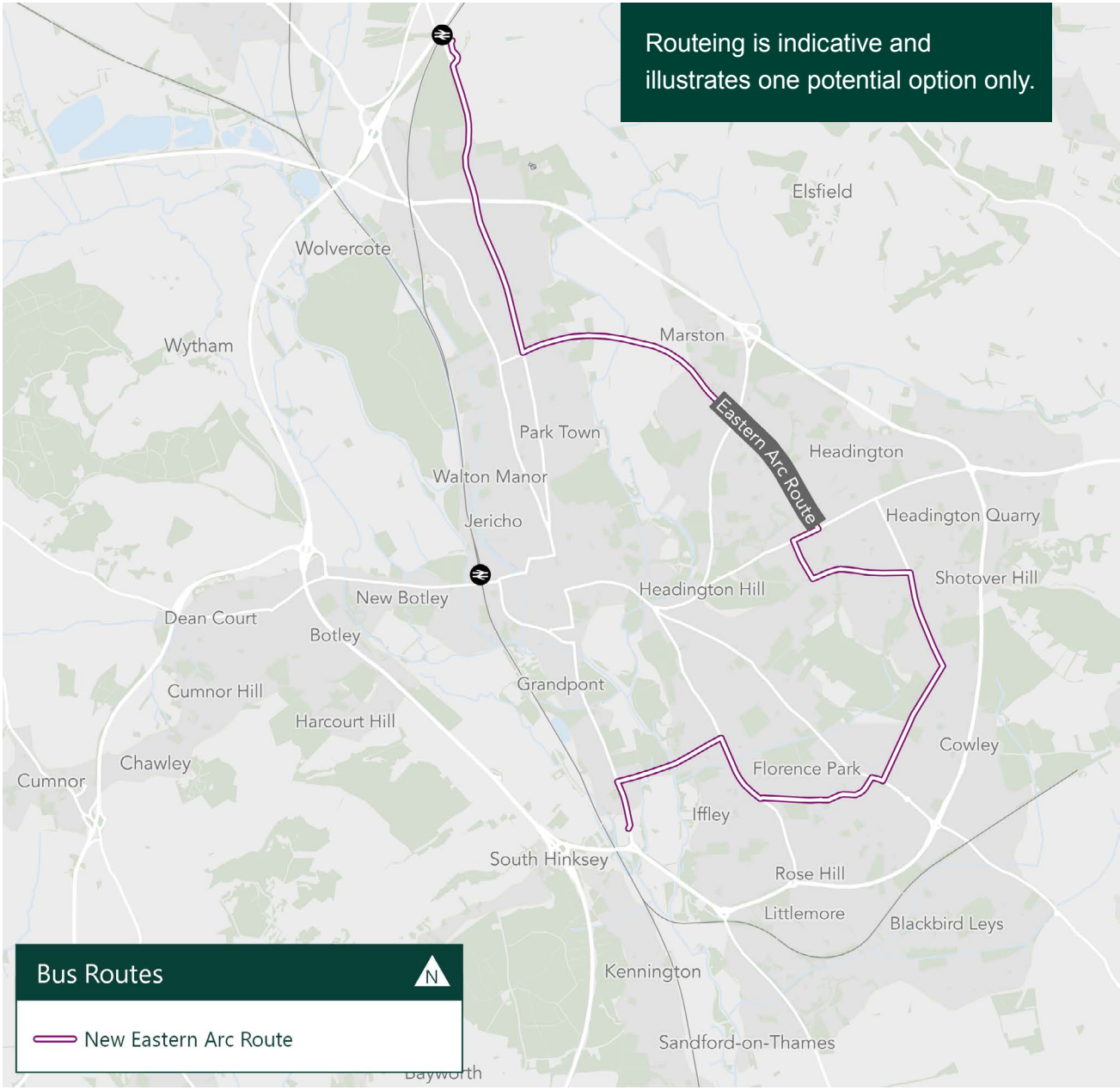
Bus service improvements

New ‘eastern arc’ service

If implemented, new services will be introduced in the eastern part of the city. We expect there to be a frequent service connecting the following destinations:

- **Oxford Parkway**
- **Summertown**
- **John Radcliffe hospital**
- **Oxford Brookes University**
- **Cowley Centre**
- **Redbridge P&R**

Potential destinations to be served by improved Eastern Arc bus routes

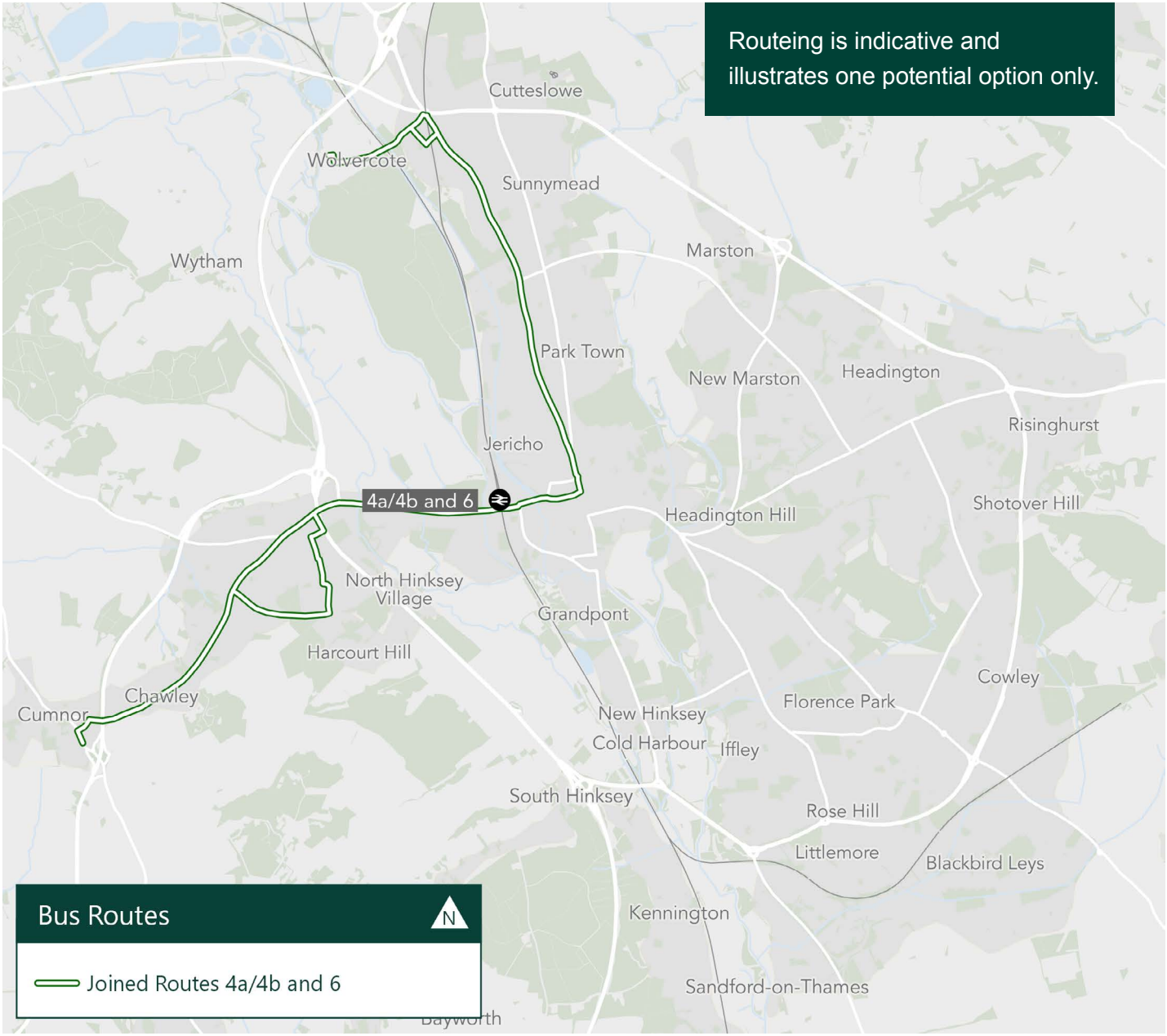


New west-north through service

Connecting existing services 4 and 6 will create frequent a west-north through service between Botley and Wolvercote via Botley Road, city centre and Woodstock Road. This will provide direct cross-city services for movements that currently require interchange between services.

- **Wolvercote**
- **Woodstock road**
- **City centre**
- **Railway station**
- **Botley road**
- **Botley**
- **Cumnor**

Potential destinations to be served by new west-north through service.

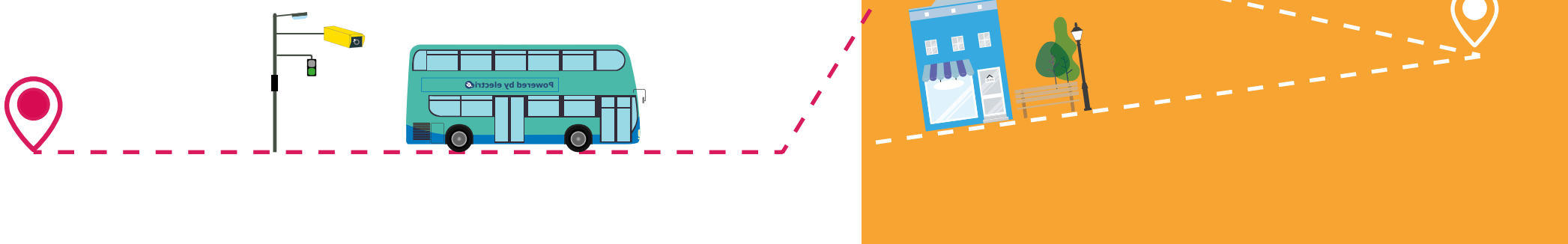


How will traffic filters affect my journeys?

Traffic filters will provide people with a range of different options to make journeys. These will be accessible, inclusive, sustainable and affordable.

Some car journeys might be longer but the alternative bus journey will often be quicker. It will be much more realistic and appealing for some short journeys to be taken on foot or by bike.

Journeys by commercial vehicles, carers and other exempt user groups should become much more efficient, as a result of overall reductions in traffic and related congestion. This will also help business operations within the city.

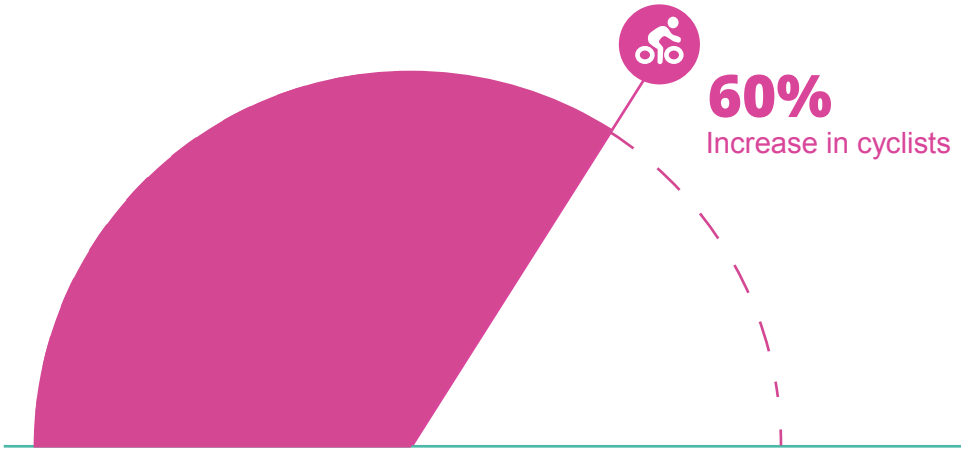


Journeys made by walking and cycling

A large proportion of people in Oxford already walk and cycle. We want to build on that success and traffic filters will help us achieve our county-wide target to increase the number of cyclists on our roads by at least 60%.

Traffic filters will significantly reduce traffic and lead to:

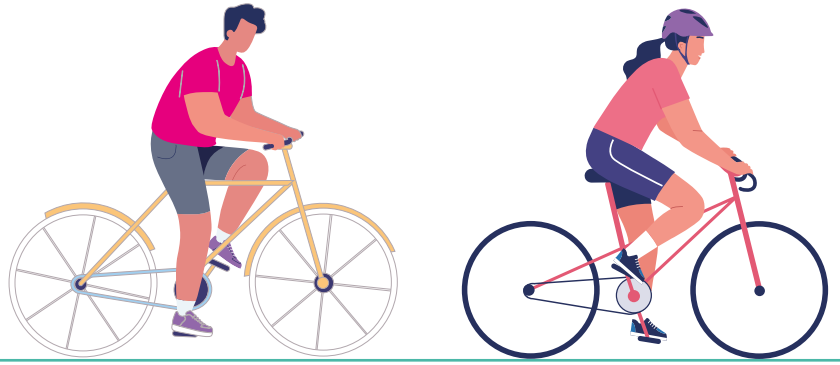
- Better road safety, which will encourage less confident cyclists to get on their bikes.
- Better air quality and more pleasant journeys on foot or by bicycle.
- More space created for walking and cycling in the longer term as road space is re-allocated from general traffic to new cycle tracks and better spaces for pedestrians.



Journeys made by bus

Oxford already has one of best and most successful bus networks in England. Traffic filters will improve our bus network by:

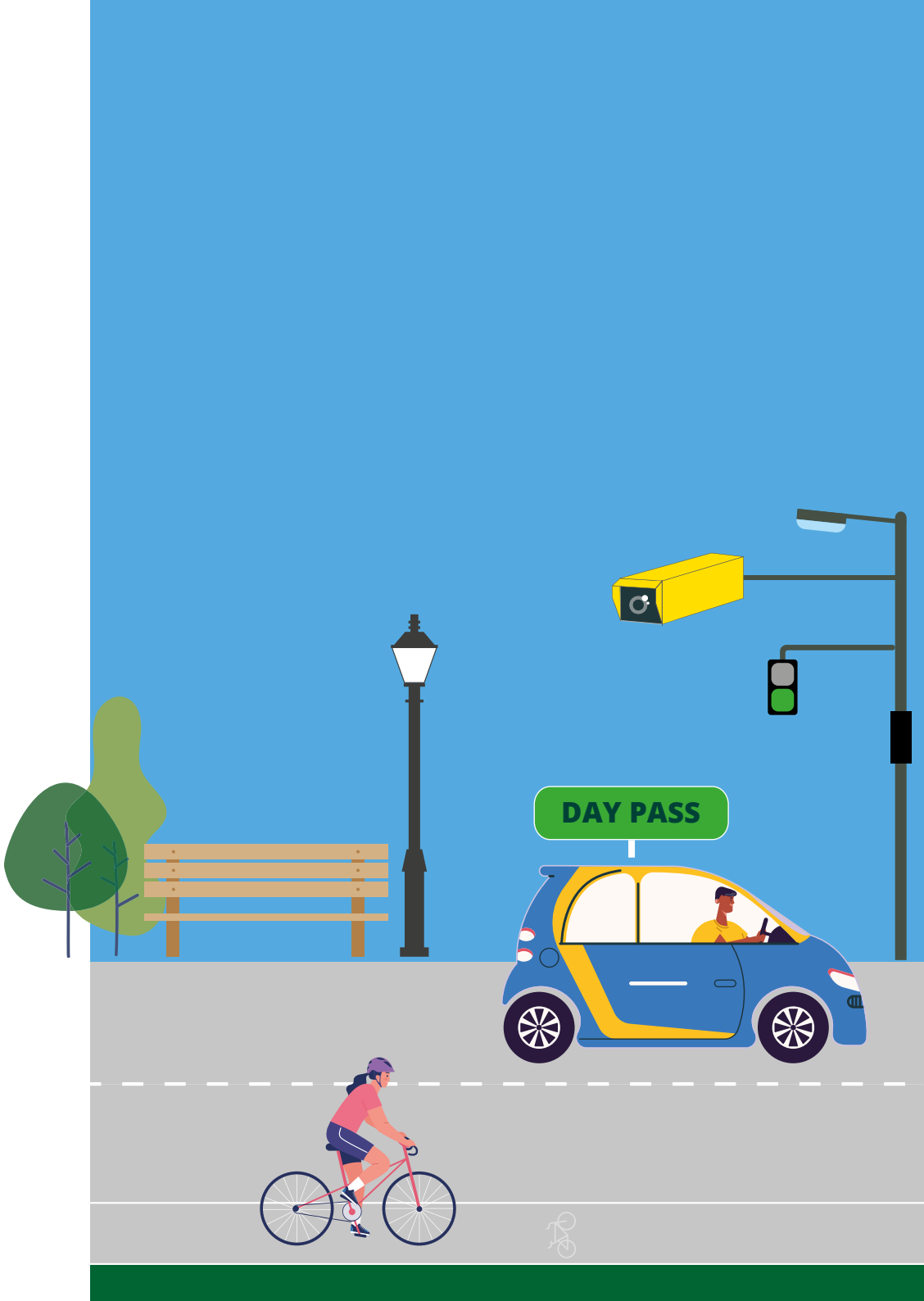
- Shortening bus journey times
- Supporting new bus routes, especially in the eastern part of Oxford including a possible new service through the city centre connecting west and north Oxford.
- Supporting investment in modern buses in Oxford.



Journeys made by private car

We know that business as usual is not an option. We need to reduce our car journeys to reduce traffic congestion, protect our environment and protect the large number of people dependant on buses for their daily needs. This includes businesses who currently rely on people who arrive by bus, on foot or by bike.

- There will be no parts of the city that you will not be able to get to by car. Drivers will still be able to access their destination and there will be no changes to car parking as part of the traffic filter proposals.
- Private cars that do not go past a proposed traffic filter will be unaffected.
- Some car journeys will need to find a different route, usually using the ring road. This may result in longer journey times, mainly for trips between Oxford's suburbs and across the city.
- Day passes will be available for residents of Oxford and some areas to the immediate west of the city. These will allow vehicle owners to travel through all of the traffic filters for up to 100 days per year. This equates to an average of two days per week.
- For people using resident day passes and other exempt users, including Blue Badge holders and carers, journeys through traffic filters especially including to and via the city centre are expected to be faster and more reliable.
- Car journeys most affected will be those that are not exempt, and currently route across the city centre. Alternative public transport, taxi and cycle routes already exist for these journeys, all of which are expected to improve with traffic filters.



Goods vehicles and cars used as goods vehicles for business purposes

We recognise that many journeys made by goods vehicles, (vans and HGVs) do not have a realistic alternative option to avoid traffic filters, and that many businesses rely on frequent deliveries.

That is why all vans and HGVs will be exempt from the filters. Cars used as good vehicles by businesses will also be allowed to travel through the traffic filters, but must apply for a permit.

Reduced congestion will also mean these goods reach their destination quicker.

Taxis and private hire vehicles

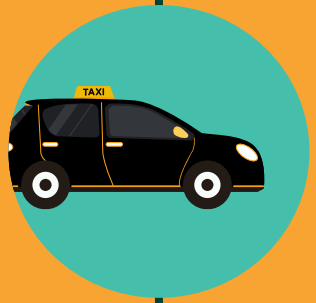
Taxis and private hire vehicles will be exempt from the filters, so journey times will typically be shorter, as they will be less affected by congestion.

Impact of traffic using different routes

We recognise that some drivers may avoid the filters by changing their route and there are likely to be other responses such as changing their time of travel or even travelling less often. We will monitor the impact of the schemes on other roads to establish whether alternative routes become busier. If needed, we could make changes to the scheme, such as the timing of the filters and/or amending permitted access.

Vans and HGVs.

Goods reaching destinations faster.



Taxis + private hire vehicles are exempt.

We will monitor the impact.

How will areas outside the city be affected?

Traffic filters are part an important measure to achieve our countywide transport plan and vision.

Buses:
The six traffic filters will improve overall bus journey times and reliability for all services between other districts and Oxford, including Park & Rides and longer distance bus services to Oxford.

Cycling:
Traffic filters will enhance the attractiveness of cycling to and within Oxford. A large proportion of people living in and around Oxford already cycle into the city. This number is expected to increase because of the improvements delivered by the traffic filters and other county-wide transport investments to support cycling.

Car journeys:
Car journeys within and between districts will be largely unaffected by the traffic filters, although the Oxford ring road might be busier at certain times of the day.

ETRO process

What is an experimental traffic regulation order (ETRO)?

Changes to the way we use roads such as speed limits, parking and vehicle restrictions require legal notices, usually called traffic regulation orders (TROs).

Experimental traffic regulation orders (ETRO) allow a council to introduce traffic measures as a trial and makes changes during that trial if needed. This helps the council and members of the public to test how a scheme works before any permanent decisions are made.

During the trial period, Oxfordshire County Council will collect information on the effects of the scheme such as changes in traffic levels and bus journey times and also ask residents and businesses for their views on the measures.

A second consultation will run alongside the trial period where people can submit their feedback based on their experience of the traffic filters.

At the end of the trial, the council will make decision about the long-term future of the traffic filters based on all the information collected and feedback received.

The scheme will be tested.

We will monitor the scheme.

We will ask for your feedback.

We will review the information.

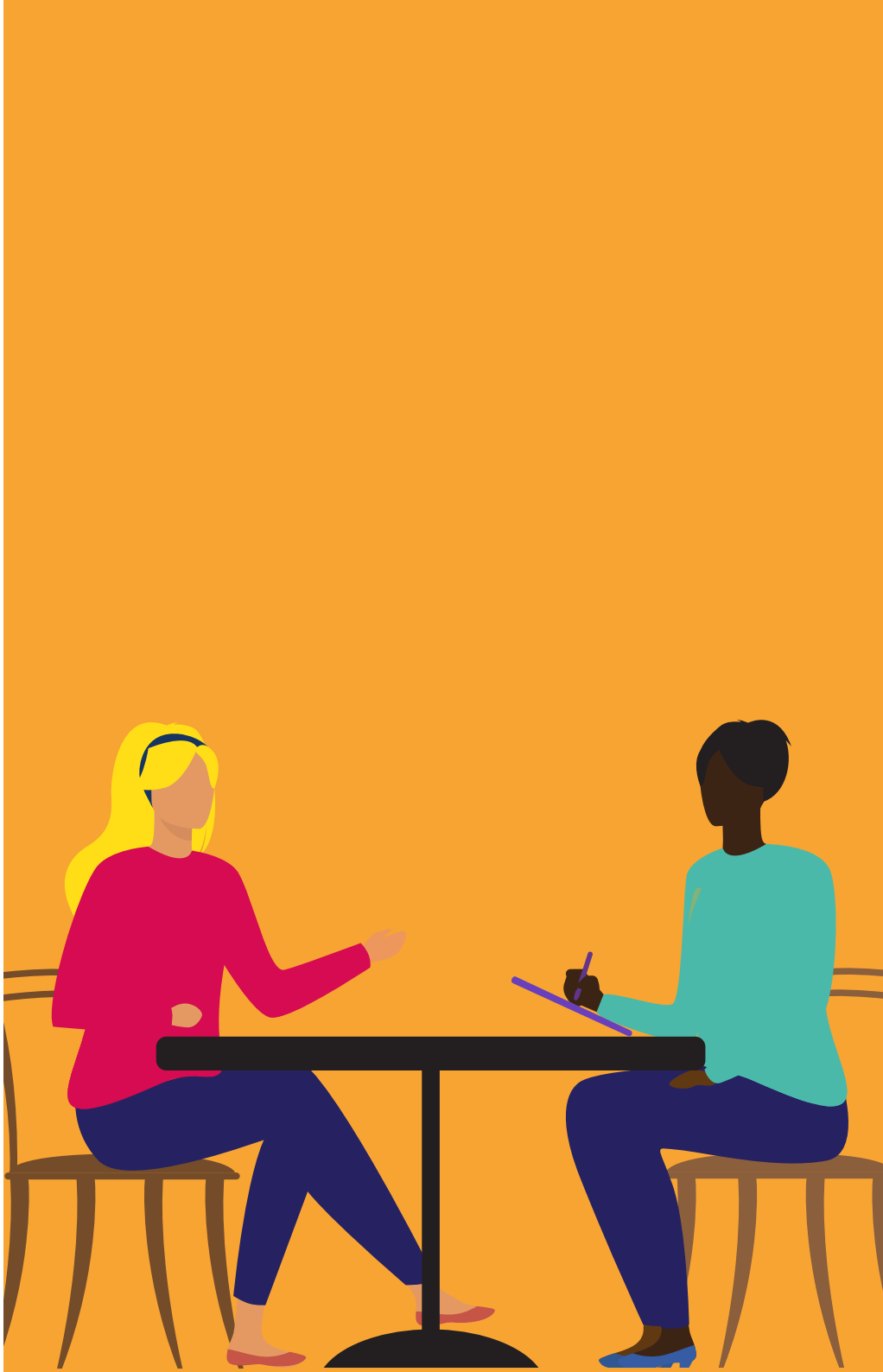
Monitoring and evaluation

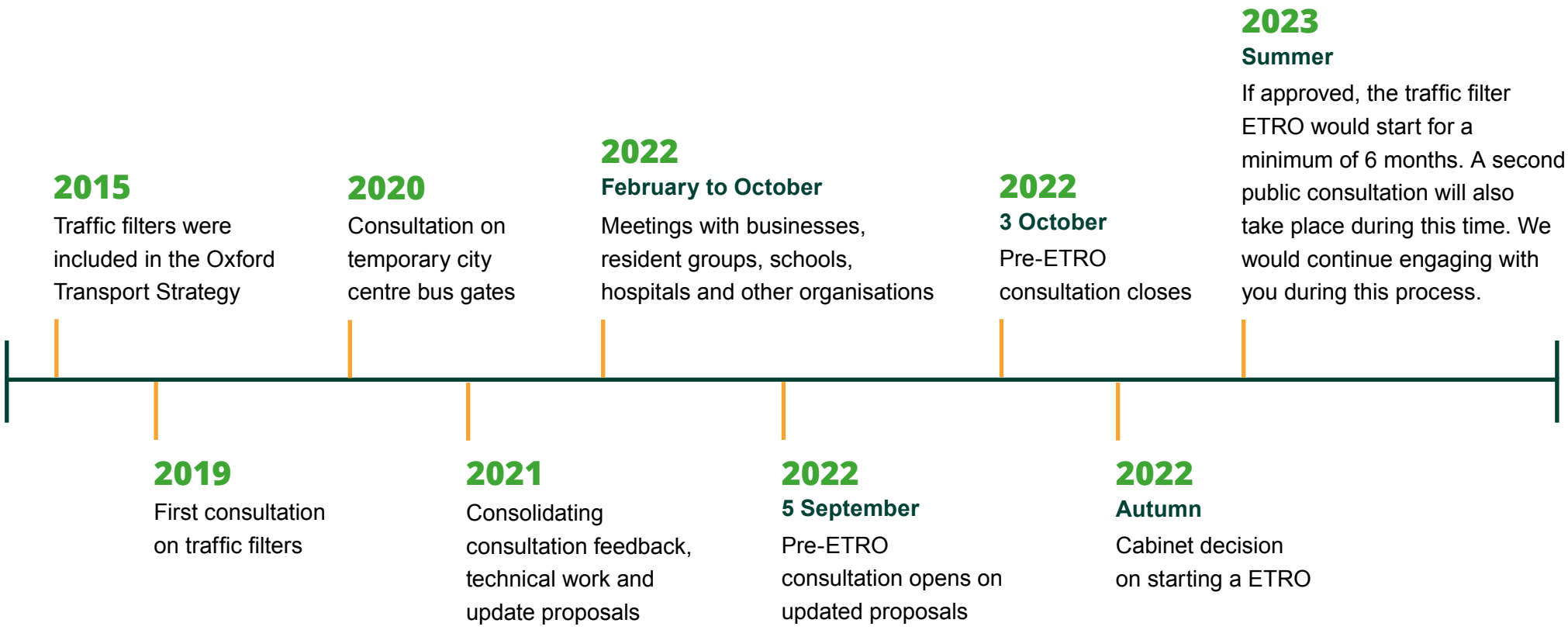
It is proposed that the trial traffic filters will be implemented in summer 2023 for a period of at least six months.

We will assess the impact of the traffic filters during the trial period to understand the effectiveness of the traffic filters and if any changes need to be made to the scheme.

A detailed monitoring and evaluation framework will be developed before implementation. It is anticipated that this will include:

- Changes in traffic levels at traffic count sites across the city. This will include locations inside the traffic filter area, the ring road and locations throughout the city. This data is collected automatically by the county council's traffic counters.
- Changes in the number of people cycling, walking and using public transport.
- Changes in air quality based on air quality monitoring locations throughout the city.
- Changes in traffic congestion and bus journey times for services on all key corridors, and by time of day.
- Monitoring of impacts on specific Protected Characteristics Groups (including gender, age, disability, maternity) to assess whether the scheme has any adverse and/ or unintended consequences.




2015
Traffic filters were included in the Oxford Transport Strategy
2019
First consultation on traffic filters
2020
Consultation on temporary city centre bus gates
2021
Consolidating consultation feedback, technical work and update proposals
2022
February to October
Meetings with businesses, resident groups, schools, hospitals and other organisations
2022
5 September
Pre-ETRO consultation opens on updated proposals
2022
3 October
Pre-ETRO consultation closes
2022
Autumn
Cabinet decision on starting a ETRO
2023
Summer
If approved, the traffic filter ETRO would start for a minimum of 6 months. A second public consultation will also take place during this time. We would continue engaging with you during this process.

Have your say

Visit:
letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/traffic-filters-2022

Email:
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or write to:
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County Hall, New Road,
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