# Oxford’s Low Traffic Neighbourhoods cost nearly £4 million amid ongoing local backlash



Oxford's implementation of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) has stirred considerable controversy since their introduction. The scheme, designed to limit vehicle access in specific areas, aims to enhance road safety and air quality while promoting cycling and walking. However, it has resulted in significant expenditures—nearly £4 million since its rollout four years ago, as highlighted by a recent investigation revealing the total cost incurred by the local council. The measures have faced staunch opposition, with many residents expressing their frustration over the operational challenges that seem to come with the initiative.

The £3.8 million spent from 2021 to 2024 on LTNs included funding from a government grant aimed at improving active travel, plus ongoing costs which are now falling onto the local authority’s budget. Critics argue that this expenditure showcases a disconnect between council priorities and the needs of residents. Independent councillor Saj Malik voiced the sentiments of many constituents when he stated, “It’s completely tone deaf... [the LTNs] make our lives a misery on a daily basis,” reflecting widespread discontent particularly in wards like Cowley, where the impact of increased traffic congestion is acutely felt.

Residents have indicated that rather than alleviating congestion, the LTNs have led to heightened traffic in other areas of the city. This is a crucial point of concern, particularly as the council seeks to enact further traffic arrangements, such as the introduction of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras, which would allow specific vehicles—like emergency services and taxis—through restricted zones. This adjustment is part of an ongoing effort to refine the LTN framework in response to public feedback, but it also raises questions about whether these changes will effectively address the growing concerns regarding local accessibility and safety.

Moreover, the social ramifications of LTNs cannot be overlooked. Protests against the introduction of these neighbourhoods have drawn attention to their divisive nature within communities. For instance, opposition has been particularly fierce regarding the impact on local businesses and the difficulties faced by disabled motorists, shedding light on the unintended consequences of the LTNs. Proponents of the scheme argue that it has succeeded in creating quieter and safer streets, yet the balancing of interests remains a point of contention.

The Oxfordshire County Council has pledged to improve the LTN system, exploring options that may include incorporating additional monitoring mechanisms to address ongoing performance issues. However, at a recent council meeting, where decisions about making the LTNs permanent were debated, a mix of public opinions highlighted the persistent dissatisfaction among community members. Echoing these sentiments, Headington Liveable Streets expressed concern over potential safety risks for children, particularly those near local schools, emphasising the importance of maintaining physical barriers to preserve safety.

In summary, the Low Traffic Neighbourhoods initiative in Oxford encapsulates a broader dialogue surrounding urban planning, community engagement, and environmental priorities. As the council navigates the complex landscape of public opinion, the effectiveness of LTNs in genuinely improving urban mobility and community satisfaction remains to be seen. The challenge lies not only in navigating fiscal accountability but also in addressing the profound socio-economic ripples that such initiatives inevitably create.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1: 1
2. Paragraph 2: 2, 3
3. Paragraph 3: 3, 4
4. Paragraph 4: 5, 7
5. Paragraph 5: 6
6. Paragraph 6: 4
7. Conclusion: 5, 7

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2053177/major-uk-city-furious-4m> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/19856520.revealed-much-low-traffic-neighbourhoods-oxford-cost-far/> - An investigation by the Oxford Mail revealed that Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) in Oxford have cost over £100,000. The LTNs aim to reduce motor vehicle traffic on residential streets and promote active travel by installing barriers or cameras. The council received nearly £3 million in 'Active Travel' grants from the Department of Transport to fund these schemes, including improved cycling routes across the county. The costs include monitoring expenses, with £59,663.76 spent as of November 20, 2021, and £16,363.62 for the Cowley LTN area alone.
3. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-62223867> - Oxford's controversial Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) in Cowley have been made permanent by Oxfordshire County Council following a trial period. The decision was met with a wide range of public opinions, with some residents and businesses expressing concerns over increased congestion and adverse effects on local businesses. The council plans to make improvements to the LTNs by spring 2023 and is considering implementing Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras to allow certain vehicles through the LTNs.
4. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-67134823> - Three Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) in Oxford—Divinity Road, St. Clement's, and St. Mary's—have been made permanent by Oxfordshire County Council. The decision followed a heated council meeting where residents expressed strong opinions for and against the LTNs. The council plans to replace wooden bollards with Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras and allow certain vehicles, such as taxis and emergency services, to pass through. The LTNs aim to prevent traffic from taking shortcuts through residential areas and to make streets safer for walking and cycling.
5. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-57540583> - Hundreds of people protested against Oxford's Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) in June, expressing concerns that the schemes divided communities, increased congestion, and made travel more difficult for disabled motorists. The LTNs, which prevent through-traffic, were introduced in Oxford in March, with more planned. Supporters argue they make streets quieter and safer, but opponents want them removed, citing negative impacts on local businesses and increased travel times.
6. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-60621528> - Oxfordshire County Council apologized for releasing a video promoting controversial Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) that was criticized for being biased. The video featured interviews with individuals discussing the potential benefits of the LTNs, without presenting opposing views. The council acknowledged the oversight and apologized for not offering a balanced perspective. A decision on whether to make the three LTNs permanent was delayed following the controversy.
7. <https://www.headingtonliveablestreets.org.uk/east-oxford-low-traffic-neighbourhoods-here-to-stay-but-less-safe/> - Following a council decision to make East Oxford's Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) permanent, Headington Liveable Streets expressed concerns about the safety of children and vulnerable road users. The council plans to replace bollards with Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras and allow certain vehicles through, which the group fears could increase traffic and reduce safety. They highlight the importance of safe routes for children, particularly those attending Cheney School, and advocate for maintaining physical barriers to ensure safety.